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Groton Community Calendar

Monday, Jan. 9

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

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

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

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

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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

Tuesday, Jan. 10

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

School Breakfast: Sausage, egg and cheese wraps.

School Lunch: Old school BBQ sandwiches, tri taters.

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

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.

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



Wednesday, Jan. 11

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

School Breakfast: Hashbrown pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken alfredo, cooked broccoli.

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

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

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

Thursday, Jan. 12

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

School Breakfast: Oatmeal with toppings.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

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

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

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Critics say South Dakota governor and Legislature falling short in preventing spread of invasive zebra mussels

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

The confirmed finding last summer of zebra mussels in Pactola Reservoir – 15 miles west of Rapid City in the Black Hills National Forest – has sparked greater scrutiny of South Dakota’s efforts to protect bodies of water from aquatic invasive species, which spread exponentially and can negatively impact ecosystems, water intakes, fisheries and beaches.

Zebra mussels, snail-like mollusks that reproduce rapidly and move from lake to lake by attaching to boats or microscopically in ballast tanks and live wells, were first discovered in South Dakota at Lewis and Clark Reservoir in 2015 and have now infested 12 bodies of water, including Lake Sharpe and Lake Francis Case on the Missouri River.

That high speed of spread has led advocacy groups and some state legislators to call for more aggressive mitigation from the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department and Gov. Kristi Noem. The governor signed a law in 2020 to broaden GFP enforcement authority regarding invasive species but has been largely quiet on the issue the past two legislative sessions.

Now, western neighboring states such as Wyoming and Montana are sounding the alarm on aquatic invasive species (AIS) and calling out South Dakota’s relative lack of resources and staffing to carry out boat inspections, decontamination, water testing and other preventative methods. Some worry that South Dakota has been too slow to contain the spread of adult zebra mussels and juveniles known as veligers, free-swimming larvae that can spread through water currents. Female zebra mussels can release as many as 1 million eggs per year, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“We have a new threat right on our doorstep,” Josh Leonard, the Wyoming AIS coordinator, told News Watch. “Before Pactola was infested, the closest zebra mussel population was the Missouri River area. Being 27 miles away from our border versus a couple hundred miles away has heightened the threat to our state. If South Dakota was able to do more at Pactola, we might not have to be doing as much here.”

Alan Osterland, Wyoming chief of fisheries, was even more direct when addressing the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission this past September. “The [South Dakota] response, in our opinion, has been hands off,” he said.

The South Dakota AIS program budget for 2021 was \$538,000, which includes federal grant money through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, which oversees dams, power



Zebra mussels cluster around the base and wheels of a dock pulled from the water at Lake Pickerel in 2021. The lake is one of 12 in South Dakota that have been infested by aquatic invasive species. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Loveland

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plants and canals in the western states. Wyoming has an annual AIS budget of \$1.3 million, paid for partly by fees for AIS decals, which cost \$10 for motorized watercraft registered in Wyoming and \$30 for motorized watercraft registered in other states.

Montana has invested about \$5 million a year to fund water sampling and boat check stations to protect the state's lakes and reservoirs from infestation. The state plans to adjust inspection station operations in 2022 "to address boat traffic from the Black Hills" now that zebra mussels have migrated west in South Dakota.

Minnesota, which first observed zebra mussels in 1989 in the Duluth/Superior harbor, spends about \$10 million each year on AIS prevention and containment efforts, with the money disbursed to counties to formulate their own strategies.

South Dakota doesn't have a dedicated state funding source for its AIS program, relying on federal grants and partnerships with community groups, in addition to coordinating with state agencies such as the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety.

GFP Secretary Kevin Robling and AIS Coordinator Tanner Davis have enacted a strategy of public outreach and education, using signage and marketing to convey a message of "Clean, Drain, Dry" to recreational boaters. That slogan refers to cleaning off boats and trailers, draining live wells and bait buckets and drying off boats and trailers before reintroducing them to a body of water to prevent the spread of zebra mussels.

The GFP strategic management plan notes that there are nearly 10,000 waterbodies and roughly 500 boat ramps statewide and the "geographic size and complexity of South Dakota's aquatic resources make containment efforts challenging." Davis told the GFP Commission on Dec. 9 that the department saw 96% plug compliance in 2022 and that the goal is to educate the other 4% and use enforcement measures when needed.

Legislators, lobbyists criticize lack of urgency

South Dakota GFP officials note the difficulty of finding enough seasonal employees and college interns to fill AIS boat inspection positions throughout the state. South Dakota conducted 18,500 inspections in 2022, far fewer than Minnesota (540,000), Montana (90,000) and Wyoming (65,000), but more than Nebraska (6,600) and North Dakota (5,000).

When asked by legislators during a Government Operations and Audit Committee meeting in October 2022 whether GFP would benefit from more stringent laws or more state funding for AIS programs, Robling replied that things are "working quite well" and that his department is "adamantly trying to slow the spread of aquatic invasive species" with public messaging.

"We feel that we have the necessary statutes in place at this time, so the answer to your question would



Dan Loveland of the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association holds up zebra mussels found on his property at Lake Pickerel in the summer of 2021. The snail-like mollusks reproduce rapidly and move from lake to lake by attaching to boats or microscopically in ballast tanks and live wells. Photo:

Courtesy of Dan Loveland

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"I think there is a sense from Game, Fish and Parks that resistance is futile, and I think they're wrong about that ... what's missing is the political will and leadership to see this as a problem that can be mitigated, and I remain hopeful that the governor is going to step up and do more about this."

-- State Sen. Reynold Nesiba

be no," said Robling, who became Secretary of GFP in December 2020. "We feel like we have the financial resources and staffing, once we fill those positions that we are hoping to fill. Right now, though, the workforce issue is a challenge, no question about it."

Robling's summary didn't sit well with Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, a member of GOAC and the

Senate Appropriations Committee, who wants to see more done to prevent zebra mussels from harming South Dakota waters and infrastructure such as intakes and irrigation systems.

Nesiba said containment is crucial while scientific research is done to determine if impacted lakes can be treated to reduce the ecological impact of zebra mussels and other invasive species such as Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed and starry stonewort. Early detection is a top priority in Montana, which uses techniques such as eDNA testing to pick up an organism's cellular traces in the water column.

"I think there is a sense from Game, Fish and Parks that resistance is futile, and I think they're wrong about that," Nesiba told News Watch. "They aren't communicating with community groups that care deeply about this issue and they're doing far less than other states. What's missing is the political will and leadership to see this as a problem that can be mitigated, and I remain hopeful that the governor is going to step up and do more about this."

South Dakota has so far resisted calls for an economic impact study to determine potential costs to the state if the proliferation worsens, as expected. The fact that the Pactola Reservoir is instrumental for irrigation purposes and for providing water for municipal and industrial users in Rapid City is the newest cause for concern about potential future costs. Zebra mussels can choke off water pipelines and foul irrigation channels, leading to major maintenance costs.

The Minnesota Invasive Species Council released a report in 2019 that estimated an annual economic cost of \$230 million in mitigation expenses and lost revenue if zebra mussels were to infest the state's lakes, a number that was viewed as conservative because it only considered the cost to affected stakeholders and not general state resources.

Gov. Noem did not respond to questions sent by News Watch about her stance on the AIS issue and she has declined meeting requests from the citizen-led South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, of which former Republican state senator Deb Soholt of Sioux Falls is a board member.

Soholt believes the governor's recent inattention to the issue is indicative of a state government response that fails to weigh the potential impact of invasive species on tourism, outdoor recreation, water quality, irrigation and lake and river ecosystems.

"I would hate for her legacy to be the governor who lost control of South Dakota waters under her watch," said Soholt.

Zebra mussel invasion 'absolutely heartbreaking'

Dave Charron has spent much of his life on the water, running a used and new boat dealership in Webster and a marine storage business with locations on Lake Pickerel, Clear Lake and Mina Lake in northeastern South Dakota. He also owns a cabin on Enemy Swim Lake.

Charron has seen several of those Day County lakes infested by zebra mussels in the past few years, causing a loss of recreational opportunities and harm to beaches and shorelines due to sharp-edged shells. The mussels first appeared in the United States in the Great Lakes in the 1980s, carried by ballast water discharged by large ships from Europe. Their introduction to northeast South Dakota became evident when property owners and boaters started seeing clusters of dark, zig-zagged striped shells attached to boat lifts and docks.

"When I saw zebra mussels at Pickerel for the first time, it was absolutely heartbreaking," said Charron,

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who sold Dave's Marine in 2020 but still runs his storage business. "The more I learned about invasive species and what they can do to our lakes, the scarier it got, and it continues to get worse as I learn more about it."

That sense of urgency kept him moving. He joined a group of concerned residents to form the Enemy Swim Preservation Association in March 2021, using private funds and volunteers to assist GFP with inspections around Enemy Swim, located a few miles from Pickerel.

Despite those efforts, Enemy Swim was declared infested by zebra mussels in July 2022. By that time, Charron had teamed with retired financial executive Dan Loveland, who owns a cabin on Pickerel Lake, and Soholt, a seasonal resident of Clear Lake, to retool the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, a mostly dormant nonprofit at the time. The group, which now represents 11 lakes, aims to assist with mitigation efforts and explore research about the impact of AIS, including possible scientific breakthroughs.

Board members met with researchers from the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, who detailed how zebra mussels filter out algae that makes water clearer in the short term but can lead to higher water temperatures, dense plant growth and disrupted food chains. Zebra mussels consume beneficial organisms that serve as a food source for insects that would otherwise provide food for fish. University of Minnesota researchers found that first-year walleyes in infested lakes are 14% smaller than those in non-infested lakes.

"By all accounts, there are methods that have shown effectiveness in mitigating the effects for municipal water users and intake pipes getting clogged," said Loveland, president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams. "In terms of eradicating zebra mussels on Pickerel Lake, that's way down the road. But we need to be more aggressive in spending some money now to try to stop the spread."

That intent to stop the spread differs from the GFP "slow the spread" mantra – a point of contention that sums up contrasting perspectives as South Dakota Lakes and Streams attempts to put pressure on the state executive branch to act with urgency and funnel more resources toward research, prevention and enforcement.

"If you want people to stop doing something, say stop," said Charron, who has communicated with fisheries officials in neighboring states. "Don't say slow. Slow just means somebody else."

Shifting strategies on AIS enforcement

The 2020 state legislature took serious action after zebra mussels were discovered on Lake Sharpe, on the Missouri River between Pierre and Fort Thompson, in the summer of 2019. The tone was set from the governor's office, with Noem filming a public service announcement reminding boaters to pull their plugs and follow the "clean, drain, dry" rules set forth by Game, Fish and Parks.

"We must all recognize the role that we play in stopping the spread of these mussels," Noem said in the August 2019 video. "If you use South Dakota's lakes and rivers in any way, you need to care about the devastating impact of invasive species like zebra mussels."

Noem later signed into law House Bill 1033, which declared an emergency and gave GFP authority to establish inspection and decontamination stations while creating "repercussions for transporting invasive species." Any person possessing, importing or transporting aquatic invasive species faces a Class 2 mis-



A roadside inspection station in Wyoming makes sure boaters are following regulations related to zebra mussels and other invasive species. Boaters are required to clean off boats and trailers, drain live wells and bait buckets and dry off boats and trailers before reintroducing them to a body of water. Photo: Courtesy Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Photo: Courtesy Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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Zebra mussels, seen here adhering to a boat lift at Lake Pickerel, spread exponentially and can negatively impact ecosystems, water intakes, fisheries and beaches. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Loveland

demeanor, while the fine for a boater not pulling the drain plug after leaving the water is \$182.50.

Implementation of the 2020 law was hindered by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic that March as well as the resignation of AIS Coordinator Mike Greiner, later replaced by Davis, a western South Dakota fisheries specialist. Robling, a South Dakota State University graduate who joined the department in 2011, took over the GFP reins at the end of the year from Kelly Hepler, who was appointed in 2015 by then-Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

As the number of infested lakes in the northeast part of the state increased, GFP shifted its focus to protecting western reservoirs such as Pactola, Angostura, Sheridan and Belle Fourche, with fisheries official John Lott telling the GFP Commission in October 2020 that "the horse is out of the barn" when it came to controlling the spread in central and eastern South Dakota.

To Soholt, who served as a Republican state senator for eight years, it seemed like all the momentum from the passage of HB 1033 had been lost, with no clear reason why.

"The frustrating part is the disconnect between what happened (at the legislative session) in 2020 and now," said Soholt. "What changed? The state sort of backpedaled to, 'We can't do anything about it. It's going to spread no matter what.' But the comprehensive programming is not there. Listen, I'm a Republican. I don't want to throw millions of dollars down an unfulfilling rat hole, but when we look at how all these other states are fighting this, it's disappointing."

South Dakota Lakes and Streams worked behind the scenes in Pierre in 2022 to develop legislation that became Senate Concurrent Resolution 602, setting a deadline of Aug. 1, 2022, for the executive branch to provide a "detailed prescription of upgrade efforts to curtail the spread of aquatic invasive species."

When the deadline arrived, GFP had updated data from its management plan, but the lack of detail about "upgrade efforts" drew the attention of the Government Operations and Audit Committee, which submitted questions – mostly formulated by South Dakota Lakes and Streams – to be answered at the GOAC meeting in Pierre in October.

Robling and Davis appeared the first day and presented a power-point summary of the management plan rather than specific answers to the submitted questions. The answers were provided in written form after the Oct. 18 meeting, which led to a rebuke by some of the lawmakers, including Rep. Randy Gross, R-Ekilton, the committee chairman who called upon GFP to return the next day but noted legislators wouldn't have much time to review the responses.

Davis was there the next day, but Robling was not. Director of Wildlife Tom Kirschenmann attended the meeting and reiterated the department's "clean, drain, dry" public communication strategy while stressing the importance of public/private partnerships to address the issue.

Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, joined some legislators in advocating for an economic impact study or cost-benefit analysis to better measure the scope of the AIS problem. Others pointed to the futility of stopping the spread of zebra mussels, comparing such efforts to "trying to stop the sun from rising."

"I think there needs to be more numbers provided to justify the department's position and be comfortable that we're using a good approach," Wheeler said at the GOAC meeting. "It's important that people

get a sense of what the potential damage is. Is it 50 million dollars? Is it 250 million? That would be helpful to know.”



Deb Soholt

Wyoming intensifies fight against zebra mussels

Pam Bogart served as a federal postmaster in Wyoming for 30 years before moving to Hot Springs, S.D., in 2019 to be closer to family. An avid angler who loves exploring lakes and reservoirs in the Black Hills, Bogart became concerned enough about the infestation of zebra mussels to lend a hand at mitigation efforts.

Bogart worked 50 hours a week as an AIS inspector at Angostura Recreation Area in Hot Springs in the summer of 2021, giving her insight into the effort to prevent the spread of zebra mussels to the state’s western lakes and reservoirs, an effort she sees as lacking in urgency and scope.

“When I started my job, there were six infested bodies of water in South Dakota that they knew of,” said Bogart. “Fast forward to spring of 2022 and it was 10. With Pactola, that’s 11. That’s a huge increase. What we’ve done is pretty much a Band-Aid. It looked like we were doing something, but we really dropped the ball when it came to funding a successful operation.”

GFP increased the number of inspections at Angostura from 2,898 in 2021 to 3,928 in 2022, with federal money helping to pay for power washing and decontamination stations. Decontamination consists of a very hot water rinse and a high-pressure spray, which kills and removes zebra mussels from boats or water-based equipment.

The problem is that GFP uses seasonal employees and college interns as inspectors, paying about \$15 an hour, and the department only managed to fill 31 of 53 positions statewide in 2022. There was also a shortage of law enforcement, the only personnel who can write tickets, which made it hard to create a deterrent effect that would spread by word of mouth among boaters. AIS-related citations have decreased from 299 in 2000 to 240 in 2021 to 63 in 2022.

“Angostura has three entrances, and if you leave one entrance open because you don’t have enough employees to work it, you might as well not have anybody out there at all,” said Bogart. “College interns get out of school in the spring and are done inspecting boats and are on their way back to college by the end of August. Unfortunately, zebra mussels don’t have calendars. When 80% of your workforce has to abandon its post, I don’t see how you can call that a credible effort.”

GFP officials have reached out to lake residents to try to find housing for seasonal employees while also working with South Dakota State University on job fairs and other outreach to fill positions for 2022. Nesiba noted that higher salaries could help solve the problem and urged Robling and his staff to ask for more money from the governor in the upcoming budget.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has noted these shortcomings and increased efforts to protect waters near the South Dakota border, hoping to serve as a fire wall for other western states. Wyoming requires all watercraft coming from another state to



A recreational boater in Wyoming goes through inspection and decontamination protocols in order to launch his boat. Wyoming has intensified its mitigation efforts after Pactola Reservoir in western South Dakota was infested with zebra mussels in the summer of 2022. Photo: Courtesy Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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Pam Bogart of Hot Springs is shown working as an Aquatic Invasive Species watercraft inspector for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks during the summer of 2021. Photo: Courtesy

of Pam Bogart

have an inspection before launching, and at Keyhole and Glendo state parks – popular destinations for boaters who visit Pactola – entry is limited to one boat ramp during set hours to ensure that inspections occur.

The practice is similar to regulations in states such as Colorado, where if no one is on hand to inspect boats, the gate is closed. Some states use spike strips or a chain across the launch.

Looking ahead to 2023, Wyoming will increase hourly pay for inspectors to \$18.71 and maintain a presence at inspection stations from the beginning of March through November. Officials are also increasing seasonal staffing by 20% and adding two check stations near the South Dakota border to intercept traffic coming out of the Black Hills to Wyoming, trying to keep the state from experiencing its first infestation.

“Prevention is priority number one for us,” said Shields, the state AIS coordinator. “Once you get zebra mussels, containment is probably the best approach. But the thing to keep in mind is that once you get them in your state, you can’t really just walk away from the prevention side of things. If Wyoming was to see an introduction of zebra mussels, we wouldn’t just walk away from our prevention plan. That containment would be added to what we were already doing.”

SDSU explores citizen detector program

One thing state officials and advocacy groups agree on is that it will take a multi-layered and partner-driven approach to contain the spread of aquatic invasive species in South Dakota.

David Kringen, a water resources field specialist at SDSU, has met with South Dakota Lakes and Streams representatives about developing a “citizen army” of AIS detectors through the SDSU Extension, drawing upon a program already instituted through the University of Minnesota.

The Minnesota AIS Detectors Core Course involves a paid online curriculum, with participants learning “how to report invasive species, best practices for preventing the spread of AIS, relevant rules and regulations, and how to search for AIS on your own.”

The Minnesota program culminates in a pair of 3-hour virtual workshop sessions led by staff professionals, and participants must score 70% or higher in knowledge assessments to successfully complete the course.

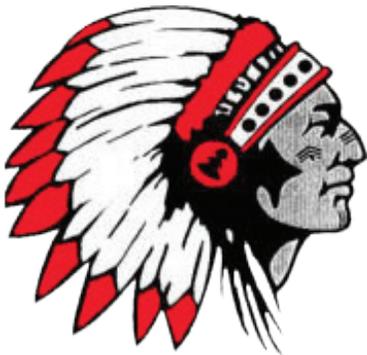
Kringen has met several times with South Dakota Lakes and Streams and thinks there’s a possibility to get the SDSU program up and running for 2023, filling some of the void created by GFP’s workforce issues and other obstacles. Starting with people who are dedicated to addressing the problem is a good place to start, he said.

“With the passion that South Dakota Lakes and Streams is bringing to this issue, people are waking up,” said Kringen. “I think they will get people’s attention, and that’s a good thing. Their goal is to slow and hopefully stop the spread of invasive species in the state, and it’s a big job. Game, Fish and Parks is limited in manpower and resources, so we’re all going to need to work together.”

Soholt acknowledges there is an element of self-interest to property owners wanting to protect and enhance their lake experience, but that’s not where it stops.

“We have people willing to step up and do what they can to inform the public, do what we can with mitigation, do what we can with containment, to hold the problem at bay,” Soholt said. “Do we believe 100% that we can fix this? No. Do we believe there is going to be more spread? Yes. But to the degree that we can fight to hold it off until better solutions can be found, that’s in the best interests of the entire state.”

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Boys Basketball

**Monday, Jan. 9
Sisseton at Groton**



**Livestreaming
Boys JV Game at 6 p.m.**
Sponsored by Mike & Dawn Imrie

followed by Boys Varsity Game

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

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Girls Basketball
Tuesday, Jan. 10
Groton vs. Aberdeen Christian
at the Aberdeen Civic Center



Livestreaming
Girls JV Game at 6 p.m.
Sponsored by Larry & Val Flihs

followed by Boys Varsity Game

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

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Basketball Double Header

Thursday, Jan. 12

Groton at Tiospa Zina



**Livestreaming
Girls JV Game at 5 p.m.**

Sponsored by Larry & Val Flihs

Followed by Boys JV Game

Sponsored by Mike & Dawn Imrie

followed by Girls then Boys Varsity Games

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting

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Friday, Jan. 13, 2:30 p.m.
Groton Area Elementary

Christmas Program

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

Here we are in a new year, and I've been contemplating where we've been over the last 12 months. It happens I posted on January 3, 2022, just a couple of days over a year ago. That was Update #502, so let's have a look. I am pleased to report we're in far better shape today than we were a year ago when the seven-day new-case average was a whopping 405,470 compared to today at midday's 64,087. Here's what I wrote about that: "This is a 200+ percent increase in the last two weeks and 30 percent higher than the worst single-day count last winter, and the trajectory continues upward without pause." It sort of takes your breath away, doesn't it? Of course, the pandemic total had just topped 55 million at that point (having added three million cases in just over a week), and we're now over 100 million, 100,861,755 to be precise, so there's that. Just for kicks, since we're looking back and all, here's the case count roll since the pandemic's beginning. I promise I won't do this to you very often, maybe never again, depending how long this damnedemic goes on yet.

April 28, 2020 – 1 million – 98 days
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days
November 27 – 13 million – 6 days
December 3 – 14 million – 6 days
December 7 – 15 million – 4 days
December 12 – 16 million – 5 days
December 17 – 17 million – 5 days
December 21 – 18 million – 4 days
December 26 – 19 million – 5 days
December 31 – 20 million – 5 days
January 5, 2021 – 21 million – 5 days
January 9 – 22 million – 4 days
January 13 – 23 million – 4 days
January 18 – 24 million – 5 days
January 23 – 25 million – 5 days
January 30 – 26 million – 7 days
February 7 – 27 million – 8 days
February 19 – 28 million – 12 days
March 7 – 29 million – 16 days
March 24 – 30 million – 17 days
April 8 – 31 million – 15 days
April 24 – 32 million – 16 days
May 18 – 33 million – 23 days
July 16 – 34 million – 59 days

July 31 – 35 million – 15 days
August 11 – 36 million – 11 days
August 17 – 37 million – 6 days
August 23 – 38 million – 6 days
August 30 – 39 million – 7 days
September 5 – 40 million – 6 days
September 12 – 41 million – 7 days
September 18 – 42 million – 6 days
September 27 – 43 million – 9 days
October 6 – 44 million – 9 days
October 18 – 45 million – 12 days
November 1 – 46 million – 14 days
November 13 – 47 million – 12 days
November 24 – 48 million – 11 days
December 4 – 49 million – 10 days
December 13 – 50 million – 9 days
December 20 – 51 million – 7 days
December 25 – 52 million – 5 days
December 28 – 53 million – 3 days
December 30 – 54 million – 2 days
January 2, 2022 – 55 million – 3 days
January 3 – 56 million – 1 day
January 4 – 57 million – 1 day
January 6 – 58 million – 2 days
January 7 – 59 million – 1 day
January 9 – 60 million – 2 days
January 10 – 61 million – 1 day
January 11 – 62 million – 1 day
January 12 – 63 million – 1 day
January 13 – 64 million – 1 day
January 14 – 65 million – 1 day
January 17 – 66 million – 3 days
January 18 – 67 million – 1 day
January 19 – 68 million – 1 day

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January 20 – 69 million – 1 day
January 21 – 70 million – 1 day
January 24 – 71 million – 3 days
January 25 – 72 million – 1 day
January 27 – 73 million – 2 days
January 29 – 74 million – 1 day
February 1 – 75 million – 3 days
February 4 – 76 million – 3 days
February 9 – 77 million – 5 days
February 16 – 78 million – 7 days
March 3 – 79 million – 15 days
March 31 – 80 million – 28 days
April 27 – 81 million – 27 days
May 11 – 82 million – 14 days
May 20 – 83 million – 9 days
May 31 – 84 million – 11 days
June 8 – 85 million – 8 days
June 17 – 86 million – 9 days
June 27 – 87 million – 10 days
July 7 – 88 million – 10 days
July 14 – 89 million – 7 days
July 21 – 90 million – 7 days
July 29 – 91 million – 8 days
August 8 – 92 million – 10 days
August 17 – 93 million – 9 days
August 29 – 94 million – 12 days
September 9 – 95 million – 11 days
September 28 – 96 million – 19 days
October 26 – 97 million – 28 days
November 19 – 98 million – 23 days
December 8 – 99 million – 20 days
December 23 – 100 million – 15 days

XBB is increasing fast; a sub-subvariant (I know, sigh) called XBB.1.5 is now up to 40.5 percent of new infections from 18 percent for all sub-subvariants of XBB last week. Right now, all other XBB subvariants are at just three percent of new case reports. This is the first week XBB.1.5 has been broken out from XBB (itself an apparent hybrid of two prior Omicron subvariant strains) into a separate category because this is the first week it's had sufficient numbers to be reported separately, and it has doubled every week since early December—rapid growth, indeed. XBB.1.5 is an offshoot of XBB (which is itself a recombinant hybrid of two subvariants of BA.2, BA.2.10.1 and BA.2.75) with a number of new mutations, including one particular mutation (S486P) that may account for additional transmissibility by

enabling tighter binding to ACE2, the viral entry site on host cells. We will note here that neither XBB nor XBB.1, earlier subvariants, showed particularly enhanced transmissibility, failing to increase in new case reports as this new sub-subvariant has done, so this new mutation may be a key one. On the other hand, the rapid increase in XBB.1.5 cases may just be a matter of good timing that coincides with holiday travel and gatherings. Another mutation (R346T/I) also appears to confer enhanced immune evasiveness, quite possibly a great deal of immune evasiveness. It appears existing antibodies may not address this offshoot highly effectively; none of our antibody therapeutics are effective against it. It does appear, however, that the updated boosters will still provide good protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death from this subvariant, and that is a big deal if this thing continues to rise. In the Northeast, it currently represents around half (53%) of new infections, and in New Jersey through New England, it accounts for more than 75 percent of cases; as of early November, most of the XBB.1.5 cases were centered in New York and Massachusetts. Dr. Barbara Mahon, director of the CDC's Coronavirus and other Respiratory viruses Division, told CBS that, "We're projecting that it's . . . going to increase in all regions of the country." Its rise occurs at the expense of BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. which have together dropped to around 45.2 from 63.1 percent. Where we are today is that together these three subvariants (XBB.1.5, BQ.1, and BQ.1.1) account for about 85 percent of new case reports. This rapid increase in XBB may well be a harbinger of what we're going to see across the country as time goes on; its R_e (effective reproduction number, the average number of people who will become infected from each case) is 1.6, around 40 percent higher than anything else in circulation at the moment. (If you recall from our earlier discussions of R_e , this is reproduction number, the number of people to whom each case will, on average, transmit the infection. When R_e is over 1, the number of new infections will continue to grow; when it is at 1, the number will remain steady; when it is below 1, the number of new infections will decline with time.) I don't think anyone's prepared at this time to say what this trend would mean in terms of overall case numbers, hospitalizations, and deaths—there are no indications at this time it causes more severe

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disease; in fact, it does appear XBB.1.5 is more involved in upper respiratory symptoms rather than lower respiratory disease with lung damage (a good thing), just as is true for BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. We need more data to make more specific projections, but at the moment, I don't think anyone's viewing XBB as significantly more virulent. That said, hospitalizations are significantly higher in the Northeast since this sub-variant's rise, and they're rising around the country. So far, one home test seems to be less sensitive to this sub-variant; if there are others which have become problematic, we should be hearing about those in coming weeks. The viral protein targeted by Paxlovid looks like it is unchanged, and that is a very good thing. Paxlovid appears to be as effective against XBB.1.5 as it is against all the other Omicron subvariants, which is to say, very effective. Likewise, remdesivir is looking good against it.

Hospitalizations were at 93,322, having increased by 35 percent in two weeks, and hospitals were bent to the breaking point. At midday today, we were looking at hospitalizations of 46,534, a 12 percent increase per day, unacceptable, but not what we were seeing a year ago. This picture is complicated by the roaring hospitalization numbers for influenza and RSV.

A year ago, we were losing 1254 people per day, far below the prior winter, but far above where we are today. We had recorded a total of 824,422 deaths a year ago and have at midday today reported 1,102,596 over the course of the pandemic. Deaths today are 457 per day. I'll submit to you that's far too many, but in perspective in the long view, not as bad as they could be.

I find myself wondering whether we might just dodge a bullet with influenza virus this winter. You will recall that we've discussed the very early, very high number of cases in the US and the possibility that this would mean an extremely rough season. While influenza generally doesn't peak until January or February, we are now seeing decreases in hospitalizations for this virus at this time. The level of flu activity is still very high, but a decrease may just mean we're through the peak. We can hope this is a real phenomenon, not just a momentary slowdown or due to holiday reporting gaps. Likewise, RSV hospitalizations have also fallen since mid-November. We need to let the reporting catch up in the next couple of weeks and have yet to see the effects of holiday travel and gatherings on these two viruses, but so far, so good.

We have a new oral therapeutic on the horizon, recently tested in China. The drug is called VV116 at the moment and has somewhat fewer side-effects than Paxlovid. A paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine last week reports on a noninferiority trial (meaning it was tested against Paxlovid to see whether it is inferior to it) in 384 participants that found it did not differ substantially from Paxlovid. That means it worked as well as Paxlovid with fewer safety concerns including medication interactions. We'll wait to see what larger trials show; more available medications is better, so we can hope this works out.

I've read a study from Kaiser Permanente and the University of California San Diego published last month in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine that examined the relationship between exercise habits and serious outcomes from Covid-19 infections, namely hospitalization, deterioration event, or death within 90 days of a diagnosis. This was a retrospective study based on self-reported levels of activity as always inactive, 10 minutes per week or less; mostly inactive, 0-60 minutes per week; some activity, 60-150 minutes per week; or consistently active, over 150 minutes per week. There were 194,191 participants reporting between January 2020 and May 2021 before vaccines were widely available. Findings were striking; there were strong dose-response effects, that is, the more exercise a participant reported, the more protective it was, but even small increases in activity produced increased protection incrementally. The least active group was nearly four times as likely to die if infected than the most active group; but even 11 minutes per week of exercise yielded benefits. These benefits were seen irrespective of other risk factors like obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease. We've known for years that moderate exercise improves immune response, helps avoid respiratory infection, and aids in faster recovery. Adults who work out regularly are about half as likely to develop colds as inactive people. This work simply builds on what we've seen with

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other respiratory infections. Turns out one of the best things you can do to protect yourself is take a walk. That's not difficult and may prove to be well worth the effort.

I've read an analysis of the efficacy of the Chinese vaccines, principal among which are CoronaVac and Sinopharm. Both are inactivated (killed) virus vaccines, a more traditional platform than the mRNA vaccines in wide use in the US. The news may be better than I've seen in earlier reports. A study of 13 million doses of CoronaVac and Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccines in Hong Kong and reported in *The Lancet* in October showed only slightly lower efficacy in people under 60 for the Chinese vaccine, although it is quite a bit less effective in those 60 and over, the highest-risk group in a population. Most of that difference disappears with a third dose of each vaccine. This belies findings from earlier work on the Chinese vaccines. There is still some question, based on studies from Brazil published in October by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, about the durability of the protection for CoronaVac; it appears to decline more quickly in older people and those with weak immune systems. A problem with these studies is that they ended in March 2022, before most of the subvariants of Omicron showed up. With the increased immune evasiveness of those later subvariants, it's difficult to say how the vaccines are holding up against these in the present. What would be most helpful in assessing these vaccines would be data from China, the country with the most doses administered and a current upsurge in cases; but given we have little official information and zero confidence in any official information we have seen, there are still significant questions about how the vaccines are working in their country of origin at this time. After all, China reports just 12 deaths from Covid-19 since December 1—anyone want to believe that? It has been estimated that in December more than 10 million new cases per day have been diagnosed in the country. We do know that, according to the *New York Times*, Chinese doctors have been urged not to "carelessly write Covid" on death certificates. That could be—likely is—a big problem; after all, experts are projecting at least one to two million deaths in early 2023, that is, by April. More conservative estimates are for 300,000 deaths by April 1 and a million and a half by the end of the year. Both ends of these projections are horrifying. Both Chinese vaccines have been administered in the billions of doses around the world and appear to have good safety profiles. There have, however, been (apparently unfounded) safety concerns in China which have limited vaccine uptake; this could spell real trouble in that country and for the rest of us as this thing plays out there.

I've read a fascinating paper from the University of Toronto and Sunnybrook Research Institute which was published last month in the *American Journal of Medicine*. This research team did a longitudinal cohort analysis of adults to determine whether Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy "is a reflection of psychology that might also contribute to traffic safety." In other words, they did a study over time in a group of 11,270,763 adults, 16 percent of whom had not received Covid-19 vaccination, to see whether there is an association between vaccine refusal and traffic crash risk, that is, whether people who refuse vaccination have characteristics which might increase another kind of risk-seeking behavior, the kind of driving that leads to traffic crashes.

In this cohort, there were 6682 traffic crashes over a one-month period serious enough that participants required emergency medical care. While only 16 percent of the people in the cohort were unvaccinated, these people accounted for 25 percent of the traffic crashes, which represents a 72 percent increased relative risk for crashes in this group. This is similar to the relative risk associated with sleep apnea, a condition that interrupts normal sleep and results in excessive tiredness, a well-known risk factor for traffic crashes. The researchers' conclusion says, "These data suggest that COVID vaccine hesitancy is associated with significant increased risks of a traffic crash." And there you go.

I read another paper, this one published this week in *Nature Medicine* by a group of researchers at the University of California San Francisco. This group sought to establish whether prior vaccination and/

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or infection had an effect on the transmissibility of the highly-transmissible Omicron variant. We've been pretty sure immunity from vaccination and infection don't eliminate the possibility a breakthrough case can transmit the virus to others, but we haven't really had a handle on whether there is any effect at all or how large this effect might be.

They "analyzed detailed records of SARS-CoV-2 infection and housing data from all 35 adult institutions in California's state prison system during periods of high-volume testing" in an effort to assess the risk of transmission between individuals sharing a cell. They looked for index cases and analyzed transmission to their contacts over five months from mid-December 2021 to late May 2022, a period during which Omicron was spreading widely. They had 22,334 confirmed cases to work with. Residents were tested on average about every 12 days throughout this period, so it is unlikely too many infections were missed. Now it is important to recognize that this is not a population representative of the general population, primarily because it is predominantly male and also because these people's movements are artificially restricted; but the detailed records that are available about people's movements make this sort of data useful in this kind of assessment. We should also note that most of the vaccinated individuals had only the primary series of two doses without boosters, so we might reasonably conclude boosters would increase the protective effect to some degree in the vaccinated. Individuals who had confirmed cases were placed in isolation, so there were efforts to reduce transmission once a case was identified.

There were 1226 index cases during the period of the study that had a valid close contact identified, that is, residents who shared a cell for at least one night during the infectious period of the case. To consider a close contact negative, the contact had to have a negative test within two days of first exposure and during a follow-up testing period of 14 additional days. The average days of exposure to the index case was 2.3, and the unadjusted transmission risk was 30 percent. Overall findings were that vaccination only or prior infection only reduced transmission risk by 22 to 23 percent, whereas a combination of prior vaccination and prior infection reduced transmission risk by 40 percent. In those who had one booster, transmission risk was reduced a further 11 percent. That's not great (especially compared to what we were seeing in the early days of vaccination), but it's not nothing either. These findings have important implications for protecting incarcerated populations and also in the general population as well. Vaccination does reduce transmission risk enough to make it worthwhile.

We'll wrap this up for tonight; I have plenty more saved up for a future Update. Please keep yourselves safe during these uncertain times. We'll talk again.

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Weekly Vikings Recap - Week 18

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

With a victory over the Chicago Bears this Sunday, the Minnesota Vikings finished the regular season with an impressive 13-4 record. This is only the third time in franchise history that the Vikings have won at least 13 games in a season (2017, 1998). Now, the hope becomes that the playoff performance of this year's team will not match their playoff performances as both those Vikings' teams lost in the NFC Championship game.

Coming into the game, there was a lot of discussion on whether the Vikings would play their starters during the game. With the 2nd seed in the NFC playoffs still in play for the Vikings, Kevin O'Connell decided to play most of the starters for the first half of the game to at least give the team enough cushion before the backups came in. However, Harrison Smith, Brian Asamoah, Cam Dantzler, and Za'Darius Smith were all given the game off to rest up for the playoff game against the New York Giants next week.

For the most part, the game provided little to no excitement as both teams did not need to win the game Sunday. The Vikings did not need to win as they had already locked up a home playoff game when they clinched the NFC North title a few weeks ago and the Bears wanted to lose so they could secure a top 2 pick in this year's NFL Draft. It was evident from the lack of atmosphere in Soldier Field Sunday that even the Bears' fans knew this game meant nothing to either of these teams.

The main notable thing from this game was the performance of the Vikings' running back, Alexander Mattison, who finished the game with two rushing touchdowns. Throughout the whole season, it was clear that Dalvin Cook is the #1 running back for the Vikings as he had almost 200 more carries than any other running back on the team. However, it has also been clear that Cook is not what he used to be from a performance standpoint. Cook, who has been one of the best running backs in the NFL since he was drafted in 2017, has struggled to break tackles or get any extra yards when needed throughout the entire season. In my opinion, if I was Kevin O'Connell, I would consider leaning on Alexander Mattison in the playoffs as he seems to run the ball more effectively than Cook does anymore.

Of the backups who played for the Vikings, Jalen Nailor and Josh Metellus impressed. Nailor, who has played almost entirely on special teams this season, has caught seven passes for 151 yards and a touchdown over the last two games when given the opportunity. Metellus, who has been a special teams star this year with two punt blocks over the past two games, looked so confident on the field Sunday as he made multiple pass breakups and wore the "C" on his jersey as a substitute captain.

Looking ahead to the playoffs, the Vikings will host the New York Giants next week in the Wild Card Round. It will be the second matchup between them this season as the teams faced each other on Christmas Eve, with the Vikings coming out on top thanks to a game-winning 61-yard field goal by Greg Joseph. The Giants, who rested their entire starting lineup in their final game of the regular season Sunday, will come into U.S. Bank Stadium well-rested and ready for their first playoff game since 2016.

For the Vikings, the key to the game will be for the offense to be consistent enough to put together good drive after good drive. This Vikings' team cannot afford to have multiple three-and-outs and fall behind this Giants team with three elite defensive linemen in Dexter Lawrence, Leonard Williams, and Kayvon Thibodeaux waiting to take advantage of the Vikings' offensive line. For the Vikings' defense, the key will be taking away the middle of the field and making Daniel Jones beat you not with his legs but with throws toward the sidelines. It should be a fun one!

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"The Other Skin Cancer"

When people talk about skin cancer the type that most people think about is melanoma. This skin cancer follows the ABCDE rules for diagnosis. A – Asymmetry, B – irregular Border, C – more than 1 Color, D – Diameter more than 6 mm, and E – expanding in size. However, these rules will not help find the most common type of skin cancer called a basal cell carcinoma.

Unlike melanomas, basal cell carcinomas are often symmetric with regular borders in the early stages. They are usually one color, being the same as the surrounding skin, but with a pearlescent sheen, although they can also be reddish or bluish in color. On darker skin tones, they may appear lighter or darker than the overall skin tone. They often start off as bumps with a rolled border or can have a warty appearance. They are also fairly slow growing and can be smaller than 6 mm when forming. As you can see, the ABCDE rules are NOT helpful for diagnosing this type of skin cancer.

Basal cell carcinoma accounts for nearly 80% of all skin cancers and is the most common type of cancer in the world. However, they are rarely fatal, tend to grow slowly, and do not tend to spread to other areas of the body, although, if left untreated, may grow deep and spread out from where they started. They are commonly found on sun-exposed areas of skin – such as the neck, arms and face, especially on the nose and ears. Basal cell carcinomas are most common in elderly males, especially in fair skinned people with blonde or red hair. One example is farmers, who typically spend many hours out in the fields working in the sun. They often wear baseball hats which protect their foreheads and scalps but leave their neck, arms, nose and ears exposed to the sun where they are more likely to have a basal cell carcinoma occur. Another example would be truck drivers, they would most likely have a basal cell carcinoma on the left arm or the left side of their face versus the right due to that side more frequently being in the sun.

As a basal cell progresses, they can develop a central depression that often scabs and bleeds. Oftentimes there are thin red lines visible on the edges of a basal cell carcinoma. Those thin red lines are small blood vessels that can bleed when bumped or scratched. When someone comes to the doctor and describes having a sore that does not seem to heal, a basal cell carcinoma is often on the list of possible causes to rule out.

Do not just follow the ABCDE's for skin cancer detection. No matter what the spot on your skin looks like, if you are concerned, tell your doctor to take a look. It just could be one of the other types of skin cancer. Your skin will thank you.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a hospitalist in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust

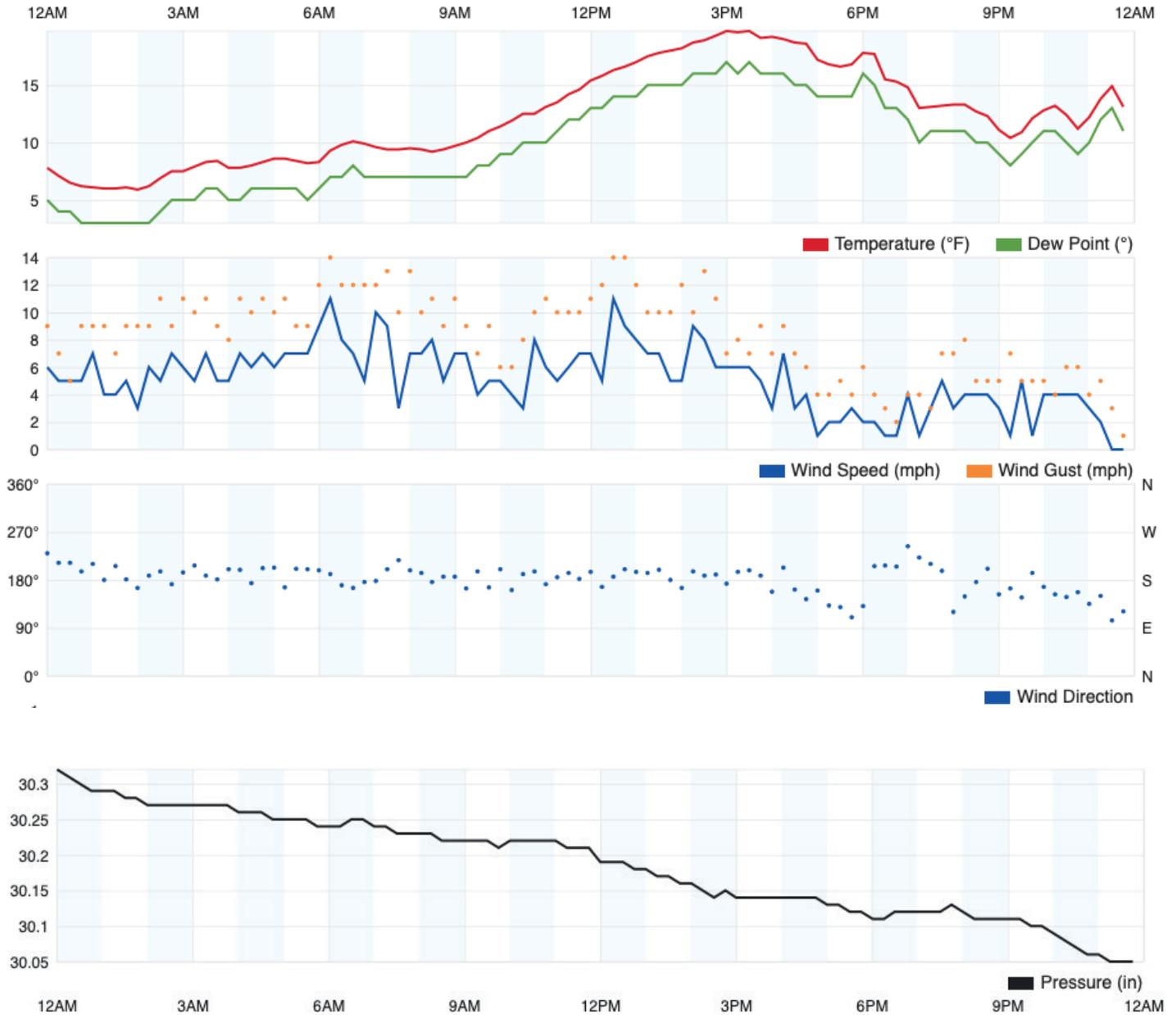


Jill Kruse, DO

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Patchy Fog then Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Patchy Fog	Patchy Fog then Slight Chance Snow	Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 20 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 20 °F



Seasonable Temperatures & Mainly Dry This Week

www.weather.gov/abr
January 9, 2023 4:06 AM

<i>Today</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>
				
Patchy fog this morning and tonight	30% chance of snow north at night			
17-42° warmest central SD	22-37° warmest west	25-32°	18-28°	18-35° warmest west

The upcoming work week will be mostly dry, with seasonal temperatures. There is the potential for some snow late Tuesday afternoon into Tuesday night over northern SD, but there is uncertainty on where the snow will track across the region.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 20 °F at 2:59 PM

Low Temp: 6 °F at 1:14 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 5:49 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 00 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 2012

Record Low: -31 in 2010

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 2°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.19

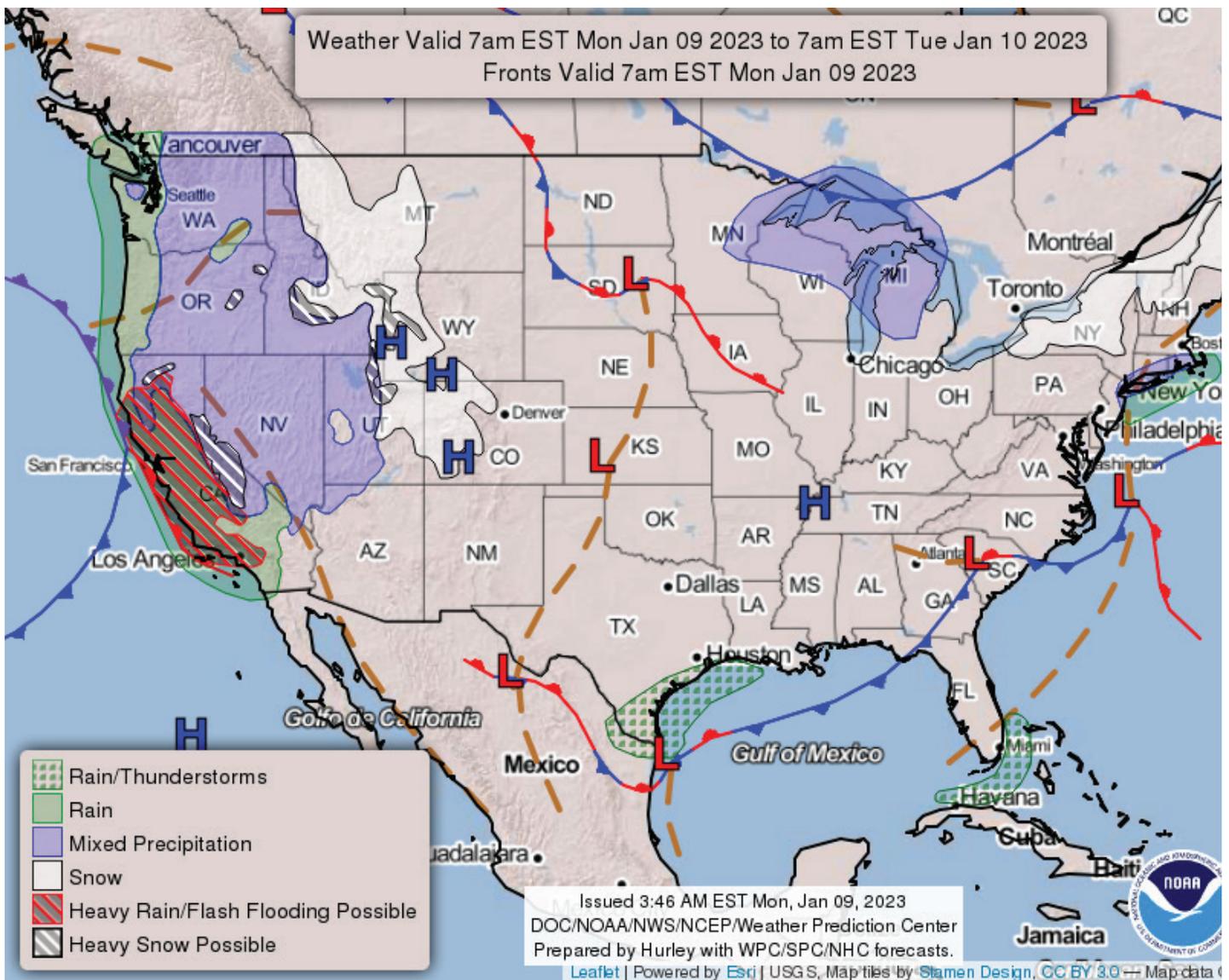
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.19

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:09:42 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08:59 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 9, 1982: Winds of 20 to 40 mph accompanied by 1 to 3 inches of snow created ground blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills from the 9th through mid-afternoon on the 12th. There were two deaths from the exposure attributed to the storm, including a 69-year old Scotland woman and a woman from Veblen in Marshall County. Both tried to walk after their vehicles stalled. Near zero visibilities and snowdrifts to 5 feet high forced closures of numerous highways. Also, minor power outages were reported.

January 9, 1997: A powerful Alberta Clipper and a deep Arctic High brought widespread and prolonged blizzard conditions, heavy drifting snow, and dangerous wind chills of 40 to 80 below to central and north-east South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. North winds were from 30 to 50 mph gusting to 60 mph. The clipper dropped from 2 to 7 inches of snowfall on top of an already solid 2 to the 5-foot snowpack. As with previous storms, most roads again became blocked by huge snowdrifts. As a result of the blockage and the blizzard conditions, both Interstates 29 and 90 closed along with all state highways leaving hundreds of people stranded to wait out the storm. This winter has been the worst for road closings. Many people became stuck in snowdrifts or went off the road because of low visibility and had to be rescued. One dramatic rescue near Webster, involving tens of rescue workers, occurred after a woman was stranded in her vehicle for nearly 40 hours. A couple with a one-year-old was rescued after spending a night in their car, and they were unharmed. A Wakpala woman died from carbon monoxide poisoning in her stalled pickup on Highway 1806 near Wakpala. Emergency personnel had a tough time responding to emergencies. Some emergencies took up to several hours to go short distances. A rural Leola man died when emergency workers could not get to him in time. In McLaughlin, seven people had to be taken by air ambulance because there was no way out.

All area schools were closed on the 9th and 10th, with most schools at this point in the winter season missing over 7 days. A state record was set when Faulkton School had closed for its 13th day. Mail was delayed, and area airports had flight delays or were closed. Many businesses were also closed and were suffering from economic losses due to this storm and previous storms because customers could not get to them. Many grocery stores ran low or out of bread, milk, and other food necessities. There were some power outages across the area, but they were not widespread. The power was out at Isabel, Timber Lake, and Firesteel for as much as 8 hours. The power outage in Isabel resulted in extensive water pipe breaks at the Isabel School. Willow Lake was without power for over 2 days. Some homes across the area were also without heat for several days in the bitter cold. The majority of ranchers were unable to access feed for cattle, sheep, and hogs. As a result of the extreme conditions and lack of food, over fifty thousand livestock died. Also, many livestock suffered frostbite and were significantly weakened. There was also a lot of wildlife and pheasants killed. As a result, the Emergency Feed Grain Donation Program was activated for the ranchers. One rancher said that he had been ranching in this area for 34 years and had never lost cattle before. Also, some dairy farmers had to dump their milk because trucks could not get them in time.

Some people were trapped in their homes for up to several days as snowdrifts buried their homes and blocked the roads, with some people having to crawl out their windows. In Wilmot, a 12-foot drift covered the community home, where residents had to turn the lights on during the day. As a result of snow removal budget depletions and other storm damages, President Clinton declared all of the counties a disaster area. Snowplows from Iowa, Nebraska, and plows and workforce from the South Dakota National Guard helped break through hundreds of roads. The snowdrifts in some places were packed so hard and were measured at 300 pounds per square inch. Some longtime residents said this had been the worst winter they had seen in their lifetimes. The total damage estimate for this January blizzard and the previous January winter storm is 50 million dollars. This includes the added snow removal costs, livestock losses, building damages, and other economic losses.

1880: A rapidly deepening low-pressure system produced powerful winds along the Pacific Northwest coast. While wind measurements were limited, there were widespread reports of wind damage.

2006: With cold air sweeping in from the Himalayas, New Delhi reports frost for the first time in 70 years with a low temperature of 0.2°C (32.3°F). The cold prompted officials to order all schools to close for three days.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

"NO! NO! NO!" How many times have parents scolded their children with those three negative warnings? Index finger pointing, a furrowed scowl on their brow, and a stern warning in their voice to "stop this very instant." Whether or not the threat works the first, second or third time may well depend on the determination of the parent or the will of the child.

"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord" is a powerful statement. Throughout Proverbs, wisdom and insight and plans have had their source in and from God. Here it is quite different. Solomon is warning anyone who wants to challenge God's sovereignty to realize that it is a futile battle. He does not say "there is no insight, wisdom or plan" in a combined statement He emphasizes each one - specifically - by preceding it with "NO!"

Whatever we devise apart from God will ultimately and completely fail. We may have carefully and completely researched the steps to achieve our goal. But it will never replace God's wisdom, and when applied or put into action, it will not succeed.

Apart from God, everything - including wisdom, insight, and plans - will be incomplete. Only in Him and through Him and with Him will whatever we do be complete and succeed. What we say and think, research and reason, talk about and work on will have its flaws. And it is not because God wants us to fail. It is because He demands that we depend completely on Him.

Attempting to do anything without humility, feelings of inadequacy, and complete dependence on God, cannot or will not be as successful as it could be with His wisdom and insight. We can expect His blessings if we acknowledge our need for Him to be at the heart of all we do. Apart from Him, we have no hope to achieve what He has planned for our lives.

Prayer: Lord, if we are honest with ourselves, then with You, we will admit that whatever we do will be incomplete or inadequate. Help us always to depend on You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. Proverbs 21:30



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:
01.04.23

2 12 30 37 46 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$33,970,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 59 Mins 41 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.06.23

7 18 24 33 43 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 29 Mins 41 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

5 18 26 27 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 59 Mins 41 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

22 25 32 41 46 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 58 Mins 40 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

12 32 56 67 68 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$325,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 58 Mins 40 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Different Dakota: SD State wins 1st FCS title over ND State

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — A different Dakota is celebrating a national championship nearly two decades after the border-state rivals moved up together to the Division I level.

"I continue to think back in 2004 and wondering how it was going to work out. Well, this is pretty sweet how it's worked out," coach John Stiegelmeier said after South Dakota State won its first Football Championship Subdivision title Sunday.

Mark Gronowski threw three touchdowns and ran 51 yards for another score as the Jackrabbits won 45-21 win over North Dakota State, which lost for the first time in its 10 FCS title game appearances since the move from NCAA Division II.

As a true freshman two seasons ago, Gronowski tore the ACL in his left knee on the opening series of the FCS title game. Now nearly 20 months after a loss in that unprecedented spring finale, and after the quarterback missed the entire 2021 season, the Jackrabbits (14-1) are national champs in Stiegelmeier's 26th season at his alma mater.

"It's really a storybook ending for us," Gronowski said.

"We made a memory," Stiegelmeier said. "I live through our players and I always will, always have. And so my joy is great today because their joy is great."

Amar Johnson rushed for 126 yards and Isaiah Davis had 119 for his ninth 100-yard game this season, and both scored touchdowns for South Dakota State. Gronowski, who completed 14 of 21 passes for 223 yards had his scoring run on the third play of the second half to stretch the lead to 38-14.

"We knew NDSU was going to fight until the end of the game and we knew that we had to come out in the second half and just start fast, score early," Gronowski said.

Cam Miller threw for 260 yards with two TDs and two interceptions for the Bison (12-3), who went from Fargo to Frisco for the 10th time in 12 seasons.

"So tough to lose," Bison coach Matt Entz said. "Not something we like to do, not something we're going to make a habit of at NDSU. But I'm more concerned about our players right now. ... They'll bounce back, I know that."

The Jackrabbits have won the last four meetings between the Missouri Valley Football Conference rivals, all in less than two years. The previous three had been in regular-season games for the Dakota Marker trophy that wasn't up for grabs in the MLS soccer stadium nearly 1,000 miles from the border of their states. Their 114th meeting since 1903 was only the fifth in the FCS playoffs, and first in the title game.

South Dakota State's only other FCS title game appearance was a last-minute loss to Sam Houston State in May 2021 after the lower-division season was pushed back to the spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Jackrabbits beat NDSU in that abbreviated regular season, then again later that fall before a 23-21 win last October.

Johnson's 32-yard TD run broke a 7-all tie early in the second quarter. The Jackrabbits got the ball right back when Steven Arrell stripped the ball from running back Kobe Johnson at the Bison 34. Gronowski hit wide-open Jaxon Janke for an 18-yard TD four plays later — Janke also had a 30-yard TD catch in the fourth quarter.

There was an exchange of 44-yard TD passes right before halftime. Before Miller hit Eli Green for an NDSU score, Gronowski on a third-and-1 play went forward like he was going to try to run for the first down when he instead stopped and threw to Mike Morgan all alone behind the entire defense.

"It means the world to me," Gronowski said of his comeback from the injury to being the game's most outstanding player and winning a championship. "There's no better feeling in the world."

THE TAKEAWAY

North Dakota State: The Bison have a 44-4 record in the FCS playoffs, and missed a chance to match

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the record of 45 wins by Georgia Southern, which is now playing at the FBS level. They have only 14 losses overall since 2011, when they won the first of their record nine FCS titles, and six of those losses are to South Dakota State — no other team has multiple wins over NDSU in that span.

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits have won a school-record 14 games in a row since opening this season with a 7-3 loss at Big Ten team Iowa.

UP NEXT

North Dakota State opens the 2023 season on Sept. 2 in Minneapolis, one of the school's largest alumni bases, against perennial FCS playoff team Eastern Washington.

South Dakota State still hopes to fill an open slot on its 2023 schedule for Labor Day weekend. As of now, the first set game is Sept. 9 at home against 2021 national runner-up Montana State, which the Jackrabbits beat in this season's national semifinal game.

Biden flies in to López Obrador's new airport for summit

By COLLEEN LONG and MARIA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — One of the most important diplomatic decisions by President Joe Biden at the gathering this week of North American leaders might have been his choice of airport.

Biden arrived in Mexico City on Sunday evening via Mexico's newest hub, the Felipe Angeles International Airport, a prized project by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The hub was christened last year with much fanfare, though it's located more than an hour's drive north of the city center, has few flights and until recently lacked consistent drinking water.

Biden and López Obrador, whose relationship is transactional at best and absent the warmth and camaraderie Biden has with other world leaders, shook hands and walked together down a long red carpet on the tarmac, flanked by soldiers. The two then took the long drive into the city center together.

Along with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who arrives on Monday, the trio will spend the next two days discussing climate change, manufacturing, trade, the economy and the potential global clout of a more collaborative North America.

"This gathering will deepen our coordination and advance our shared priorities for North America," Biden tweeted on Sunday after his arrival.

Migration will also be discussed, but ahead of the summit Biden announced a major U.S.-Mexico 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. The U.S. will accept 30,000 people per month from the four nations — Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela — for two years and offer the ability to work legally.

On Sunday, Biden's spent roughly four hours in El Paso, Texas, his first trip to the border as president and the longest he's spent along the U.S.-Mexico line. The day was highly controlled and seemed designed to showcase a smooth operation to process migrants entering legally, weed out smuggled contraband and humanely treat those who have entered illegally, creating a counter-narrative to Republicans' claims of a crisis situation equivalent to an open border.

But it was likely do little to quell critics from both sides, including immigrant advocates who accuse the Democratic president of establishing cruel policies not unlike those of his hard-line predecessor, Donald Trump, a Republican.

Biden encountered no migrants except when his motorcade drove alongside the border and about a dozen lined up on the Ciudad Juárez side in Mexico. His visit did not include time at a Border Patrol station, where migrants who cross illegally are arrested and held before their release.

Elsewhere in El Paso where Biden did not visit, hundreds of migrants were gathered outside the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, where they have been sleeping outdoors and receiving three meals a day from faith groups and other humanitarian organizations.

The group of migrants had several pregnant women, including 26-year-old Karla Sainz, who is eight months along. She was traveling in a small group that included her 2-year-old son, Joshua. Sainz left her three other children back home in Venezuela with her mother.

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"I would ask President Biden to help me with a permission or something so we can work and continue," she said.

Noengris Garcia, also eight months pregnant, was traveling with her husband, her teenage son and the small family dog from the tiny state of Portuguesa, Venezuela, where she operated a food stall.

"We don't want to be given money or a house," said Garcia, 39. "We just want to work."

Asked what he's learned by seeing the border firsthand and speaking with the officers who work along it, Biden said: "They need a lot of resources. We're going to get it for them."

The number 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 measures that would resemble those of Trump's administration.

From Texas, Biden headed south to Mexico City. López Obrador will formally welcome Biden at the Palacio Nacional on Monday, the first time since 2014 Mexico has hosted a U.S. president. The two will meet before Trudeau joins them for dinner. Biden and Trudeau will hold talks Tuesday, and then the three will gather for discussions.

For the U.S., the major talking points are migration, drug trafficking and building on Biden's push on electric vehicles and manufacturing. Mexico is focused on economic integration for North America, supporting the poor in the Americas and regional relationships that put all governments on equal footing. Canada is looking to expand on green initiatives.

While the three nations work together, it's not all rosy. The leaders of Canada and Mexico have voiced concerns over Biden's "Buy American" 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.

Biden's relationship with Trudeau is warmer, but he still hasn't made it to Canada during his presidency, despite White House officials saying for months he planned to head north following a gathering in Los Angeles last fall.

López Obrador skipped that gathering because Biden did not invite the authoritarian regimes of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. He's also made no secret of his admiration for Trump. And he was one of only three world leaders who did not recognize Biden's election victory until after the formal Electoral College vote and the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. But despite this, they each recognize the other's importance.

"They are both consummate politicians," Andrew Selee, head of the immigration think tank Migration Policy Institute in Washington, said of Biden and López Obrador. "They're looking for what the other person needs, and they're trying to make clear what they need. It's very transactional. There isn't a big vision for the relationship right now."

For Biden, that meant flying into the new airport, one of four keystone projects López Obrador is racing to finish before his term ends next year, as Mexico does not allow reelection. The other projects are an oil refinery, a tourist train in the Yucatan Peninsula and a train linking Gulf coast and Pacific seaports.

The airport was expected to cost \$4.1 billion and was built after López Obrador canceled the partly constructed airport created by his predecessor. During construction of Felipe Angeles in 2020, hundreds of mammoth skeletons were uncovered.

CES 2023: Companies tout environmental tech innovations

By BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The mottled bright green leaves of a pothos plant stood out against the flashy expanse of electric vehicles and smart products at the CES tech show in Las Vegas this year. This particular version

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of the familiar houseplant was bioengineered to remove 30 times the amount of indoor air pollutants of a typical house plant, according to Neoplants, the Paris-based company that created it.

Customers are already joining a waitlist for seedlings still in the nursery.

Neoplants founder and CEO Lionel Mora is a passionate former Google employee who sings a bit of a different tune than other founders at the electronics convention, with its technology-can-solve-anything vibe. He says before people turn to engineering solutions, they need to address consumption. But, "when it comes to innovation, we believe that biology is the way to go because it's sustainable by design," he said.

As countries grapple with how to limit global warming and protect natural resources and biodiversity, more companies are growing their own commitments to building sustainable supply chains and slowing emissions. For others, like Neoplants, addressing environmental issues is their whole reason for being.

Companies and start-ups at CES touched on a broad range of those efforts. Austin-based Pivot showcased biodegradable phone cases. Electric watercraft company Candela unveiled a 28-foot electric speedboat. Ukrainian start-up Melt Water Club presented its water purification method that uses freezing.

The Department of Energy even had a booth — a first, said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, who spoke with The Associated Press ahead of her keynote on Friday.

Granholm said she is excited about a range of technologies at CES and beyond, from John Deere's newest electronic farm equipment, to battery storage using alternative materials such as sodium salt, both of which she said the Department of Energy has helped fund.

Granholm also spoke about expanding the use of clean energy, including some forms of hydrogen, fusion and geothermal energy, highlighting the latter as an opportunity for the oil and gas industry.

"If they've used fracking to be able to get to oil and gas, they could be using that same technology to be able to extract the heat beneath our feet," she said.

It could be a while before the oil and gas industry walks away from extracting fossil fuels. In the meantime, more companies are taking emissions reductions seriously. And the first step to reducing emissions is having a full understanding of them, said GreenSwapp founder Ajay Varadharajan. The Dutch company intends to help online grocers and food delivery services understand their carbon footprint, including those in their supply chain or "Scope 3" — often the toughest to track.

Varadharajan wrote an algorithm that pulls information about various edible products from published research papers, which allows him to assign a carbon footprint to every food's barcode. The algorithm then fine tunes that number with information about a product's farming techniques and packaging.

Using GreenSwapp's app, CES attendees could scan the barcode of various milk containers on display to instantly compare their carbon footprint. The company claims this works on any food item with a barcode.

The information is helpful for conscious consumers, but Varadharajan says the real impact happens when food companies use it to track their emissions.

Some companies may want to share the information with customers. But he expects many to use it internally, preparing for possible regulations, he explained. The Securities and Exchange Commission is expected to soon require publicly-traded U.S. companies to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions. The largest ones may need to disclose Scope 3 emissions related to their supply chain. Once finalized, the U.S. would join a growing number of countries including the U.K. and Japan that require large companies to disclose this information. The European Union is finalizing reporting standards.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company didn't have a booth this year, but it did demo new tires on vehicles plastered in blue and yellow that rolled around Las Vegas.

The company currently has the largest market share for replacement consumer tires in the U.S. It says its new demo tire contains 90% sustainable materials, and has improved rolling efficiency, which helps people save energy, even when the tires are on electric vehicles.

Goodyear didn't specify how much carbon is reduced in the new tire manufacturing process, or how much energy is saved through rolling efficiency.

"It's very dependent on the type of vehicle and the type of tire being used," said CEO Rich Kramer.

But the company's line of ingredients appear to move in the right direction. Tires use many materials

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and this new one transitions away from petroleum products to surplus soybean oil to maintain pliability. It uses silica from rice husk waste residue for grip and fuel efficiency. The list goes on, and Kramer says the tire is an important step toward the company goal of reaching zero emissions by 2050.

Sourcing these materials in large quantities however is an issue, he said.

"Can you get them at scale to be able to increase production? And then how do you change the manufacturing process for that? That's a challenge, but a challenge we welcome," he said.

There's still some room for improvement in the sourcing of Goodyear's rubber, said Sean Nyquist of Forest Stewardship Council, which works to certify sustainable rubber.

"In the last 20 years, there's been significant deforestation as a result of natural rubber," he said, as demand grew for rubber from trees instead of synthetic versions made in a lab.

Goodyear's rubber sourcing follows the guidelines of the Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber. Nyquist says this is an important step, but third party certification would add even more validity to sustainability claims.

Several tire companies are on a similar path, he said. The tires Pirelli makes for the plug-in version of the BMW X5 have obtained FSC certification, which guarantees rubber was sourced ethically, including forest management and labor practices.

There may not be a simple path to reducing emissions and building sustainable supply chains. But one place U.S. companies may now get more help is the record federal funding available to decarbonize buildings and transportation through the Inflation Reduction Act. Granholm says she believes the incentives to reduce energy use and scale clean technology are powerful.

"There's policy innovation and there's technology innovation, she said. "We're all scanning to see what has the best impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and getting to our ultimate goal of saving the planet."

Officials: Grounded ship refloated in Egypt's Suez Canal

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The Suez Canal Authority said a cargo ship carrying corn that went aground early Monday in the Egyptian waterway was refloated and canal traffic was restored.

Adm. Ossama Rabei, head of the authority, said the Marshall Islands-flagged MV Glory suffered a technical failure and the canal deployed four tugboats to help refloat it. He said the vessel was being withdrawn to a nearby maritime park to fix the problem.

Rabei did not elaborate on the nature of the technical failure. Parts of Egypt, including its northern provinces, experienced a wave of bad weather Sunday.

Rabei said in a statement that traffic in the canal resumed after the ship was refloated and 51 vessels were expected to pass through the waterway Monday.

Marwa Maher, a media officer with the canal authority, said the vessel ran aground around 5 a.m. local time and was refloated five hours later.

Canal services firm Leth Agencies said the Glory ran aground near the city of Qantara in the Suez Canal province of Ismailia. Satellite tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed the Glory running aground in a single-lane stretch of the Suez Canal just south of Port Said on the Mediterranean Sea.

Leth Agencies later posted a graphic that suggested the Glory, which is owned by Greek firm Primera Shipping Inc., was against the west bank of the canal, pointed south and not wedged across the channel.

It wasn't the first vessel to run aground in the crucial waterway. The Panama-flagged Ever Given, a colossal container ship, crashed into a bank on a single-lane stretch of the canal in March 2021, blocking the waterway for six days.

The Ever Given was freed in a giant salvage operation by a flotilla of tugboats. The blockage created a massive traffic jam that held up \$9 billion a day in global trade and strained supply chains already burdened by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Ever Given debacle prompted Egyptian authorities to begin widening and deepening the waterway's

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southern part where the vessel hit ground.

In August, the Singaporean-flagged Affinity V oil tanker ran aground in a single-lane stretch of the canal, blocking the waterway for five hours before it was freed.

The Joint Coordination Center listed the Glory as carrying over 65,000 metric tons of corn from Ukraine bound for China.

The Glory was inspected by the Joint Coordination Center off Istanbul on Jan. 3. The center includes Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian and United Nations staffers.

Opened in 1869, the Suez Canal provides a crucial link for oil, natural gas and cargo. It also remains one of Egypt's top foreign currency earners. In 2015, the government of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi completed a major expansion of the canal, allowing it to accommodate the world's largest vessels.

Built in 2005, the Glory is 225 meters (738 feet) long and 32 meters (105 feet) wide.

NFL playoffs: Seahawks are in field after Lions stun Packers

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

The NFL's Week 18 saved its best drama for the final game of the weekend.

The Detroit Lions — eliminated from playoff contention earlier Sunday when the Seahawks beat the Rams — pushed past their disappointment and played the role of a spoiler, rallying to beat Green Bay 20-16 on Sunday night. The win denied quarterback Aaron Rodgers and the Packers a spot in the postseason.

Instead of Green Bay, it's the Seahawks who will be the No. 7 seed in the NFC. They'll travel to face division rival San Francisco in next weekend's wild-card round.

The rest of next weekend's schedule is also set: In the AFC, it'll be the Miami Dolphins at the Buffalo Bills, Baltimore Ravens at the Cincinnati Bengals and Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville Jaguars. In the NFC, the Minnesota Vikings will host the New York Giants and the Tom Brady-led Tampa Bay Bucs host the Dallas Cowboys.

The Lions' upset win capped a weekend that saw the Dolphins make it back to the playoffs for the first time since 2016. The surprising Jaguars also return to the postseason for just the second time since 2007.

Seven of the 14 teams that qualified for the playoffs didn't make the field last season, including the Seahawks, Ravens, Jaguars, Chargers, Dolphins, Vikings and Giants.

Among those headed home: The New England Patriots and six-time Super Bowl-winning coach Bill Belichick, eliminated after a loss to the Bills.

The Lions didn't have much to play for against the Packers other than pride, but that was enough. They were knocked out of playoff contention when Seattle's Jason Myers kicked a 32-yard field goal to beat the Los Angeles Rams 19-16 in overtime.

The No. 1 overall seed in the AFC was claimed by Kansas City with its 31-13 win over Las Vegas on Saturday. The NFC's top spot was taken by Philadelphia, which beat the New York Giants 22-16 on Sunday.

The AFC bracket could still be affected by the cancellation of the Bills-Bengals game after Hamlin's injury. The Bengals avoided a coin flip for home field after beating the Ravens 27-16, but there still could be a neutral field AFC championship game if the Bills line up against the Chiefs.

Here's a look at some other developments as the postseason approaches:

WHAT'S THE WILD-CARD SCHEDULE?

SATURDAY

Seattle Seahawks at San Francisco 49ers, 4:30 p.m. ET, FOX

Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville Jaguars, 8:15 p.m. ET, NBC

SUNDAY

Miami Dolphins at Buffalo Bills, 1 p.m. ET, CBS

New York Giants at Minnesota Vikings, 4:30 p.m. ET, FOX

Baltimore Ravens at Cincinnati Bengals, 8:15 p.m. ET, NBC

MONDAY

Dallas Cowboys at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 8:15 p.m. ET, ESPN/ABC

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WHAT'S THE FORMAT FOR THE PLAYOFFS?

This is the third straight year of the current NFL playoff format, which includes the top seven teams from both the AFC and the NFC.

The four division winners in both conferences automatically get the top four seeds, regardless of record, and then the top three teams with the best record that didn't win their division are the wild-card selections. That's why it's fairly common for a wild-card selection to have a better record — but worse playoff seeding — than a team that finished as a division winner.

The No. 1-seeded team in each conference gets a bye into the second round — that's the Chiefs and Eagles — while No. 2 hosts No. 7, No. 3 hosts No. 6 and No. 4 hosts No. 5 during wild-card weekend.

The NFL has a re-seeding policy after each playoff round. That means that no matter how the bracket started, the lowest-seeded team will always travel to the higher-seeded team.

There are four rounds to the playoffs: The wild-card round is during the upcoming weekend, the divisional round is Jan. 21-22, the conference championship games are on Jan. 29 and the Super Bowl is scheduled for Feb. 12 in Glendale, Arizona.

WHAT CHANGED WITH THE BILLS-BENGALS CANCELLATION?

It's been an eventful week for players and fans, who watched in horror Monday night as Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field and had to be given CPR before leaving the field in an ambulance. A few days later, those same players and fans have watched with joy as Hamlin recovers.

That made it much easier to focus on Week 18 and now the playoffs.

The Bills-Bengals game had major playoff implications in the AFC, so the cancellation of the game due to Hamlin's injury could force some changes depending on playoff results.

The AFC championship game will be played on a neutral site if the Chiefs and Bills reach that point.

Buffalo's 35-23 win over New England on Sunday coupled with Kansas City's 31-13 victory at Las Vegas on Saturday means the No. 1 seed Chiefs (14-3) can't host the conference title game against the Bills (13-3) because the teams played an unequal number of games.

NFL owners approved a resolution Friday that implemented new rules for this postseason in response to the cancellation of the Bills-Bengals game.

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED THIS WEEKEND?

In fairly straightforward playoff drama, the Jaguars beat the Tennessee Titans 20-16 on Saturday night to win the AFC South for the first time in five seasons. The Titans needed a win to advance to the postseason.

The Dolphins and third-string quarterback Skylar Thompson squeezed past the Jets 11-6, snapping a five-game losing streak. Miami then had to wait a few minutes for Buffalo to finish off New England to make the Dolphins' playoff appearance official.

"We're In" was displayed on the videoboard at Hard Rock Stadium.

The Pittsburgh Steelers nearly found a way to sneak into the postseason but couldn't quite make it. They did their part by beating the Browns 28-14 but needed the Patriots and Dolphins to lose.

The Patriots obliged. The Dolphins did not.

Brazil authorities seek to punish pro-Bolsonaro rioters

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazilian authorities were picking up pieces and investigating Monday after thousands of ex-President Jair Bolsonaro's supporters stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and presidential palace then trashed the nation's highest seats of power.

The protesters were seeking military intervention to either restore the far-right Bolsonaro to power or oust the newly inaugurated leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in scenes of chaos and destruction reminiscent of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Rioters donning the green and yellow of the national flag on Sunday broke windows, toppled furniture, hurled computers and printers to the ground. They punctured a massive Emiliano Di Cavalcanti painting in five places, overturned the U-shaped table at which Supreme Court justices convene, ripped a door off

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one justice's office and vandalized an iconic statue outside the court. The monumental buildings' interiors were left in states of ruin.

In a news conference late Sunday, Brazil's minister of institutional relations said the buildings would be inspected for evidence including fingerprints and images to hold people to account, and that the rioters apparently intended to spark similar such actions nationwide. Justice Minister Flávio Dino said the acts amounted to terrorism and coup-mongering and that authorities have begun tracking those who paid for the buses that transported protesters to the capital.

"They will not succeed in destroying Brazilian democracy. We need to say that fully, with all firmness and conviction," Dino said. "We will not accept the path of criminality to carry out political fights in Brazil. A criminal is treated like a criminal."

So far, 300 people have been arrested, the federal district's civil police said on Twitter.

In the months that followed Bolsonaro's Oct. 30 electoral defeat, Brazil was on edge – leery of any avenue he might pursue to cling to power. Bolsonaro had been stoking belief among his hardcore supporters that the electronic voting system was prone to fraud — though he never presented any evidence. And his lawmaker son Eduardo Bolsonaro held several meetings with Trump, Trump's longtime ally Steve Bannon and his senior campaign adviser, Jason Miller.

Results from Brazil's election — the closest in over three decades — were quickly recognized by politicians across the spectrum, including some Bolsonaro allies, as well as dozens of governments. And Bolsonaro surprised nearly everyone by promptly fading from view. He neither conceded defeat nor emphatically cried fraud, though he and his party submitted a request to nullify millions of votes that was swiftly dismissed.

Brazilians have used electronic voting since 1996. Election security experts consider such systems less secure than hand-marked paper ballots because they leave no auditable paper trail. Brazil's system is, however, closely scrutinized and domestic authorities and international observers have never found evidence of it being exploited to commit fraud.

Still, Bolsonaro's supporters refused to accept results. They blocked roads and camped outside military buildings, urging the armed forces to intervene. Protests were overwhelmingly peaceful, but isolated threats of terrorism — including a bomb found on a fuel truck headed to Brasilia's airport — had prompted security concerns.

Two days before Lula's Jan. 1 inauguration, Bolsonaro flew to the U.S. and took up temporary residence in Orlando. Many Brazilians expressed relief that, while he declined to participate in the transition of power, his absence allowed it to occur without incident.

Or so it had been, until Sunday's havoc.

"Bolsonarism mimics the same strategies as Trumpism. Our Jan. 8 — an unprecedented manifestation in Brazilian politics — is clearly copied from Jan. 6 in the Capitol," said Paulo Calmon, a political science professor at the University of Brasilia. "Today's sad episodes represent yet another attempt to destabilize democracy and demonstrate that the authoritarian, populist radicalism of Brazil's extreme right remains active under the command of former President Bolsonaro, the 'Trump of Latin America.'"

U.S. President Joe Biden tweeted that the riots were an "assault on democracy and on the peaceful transfer of power in Brazil," and that he looked forward to continue working with Lula.

In a news conference from Sao Paulo state, Lula read a freshly signed decree for the federal government to assume control of security in the federal district. He said that the so-called "fascist fanatics," as well as those who financed their activities, must be punished, and also accused Bolsonaro of encouraging their uprising.

Bolsonaro repudiated the president's accusation late Sunday. Writing on Twitter, he said peaceful protest is part of democracy, but vandalism and invasion of public buildings are "exceptions to the rule." He made no specific mention of the protesters' actions in Brasilia.

"He is evidently the intellectual mentor of what is happening, so he cannot dissociate from it," said Mario Sérgio Lima, political analyst at Medley Advisors. "These groups were created by him, by the radicalism he imposed on politics. There is no way to undo that. ... It seems his group has already crossed the Rubicon."

Unlike the 2021 attack in the U.S., few officials would have been working in the top government build-

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ings on a Sunday. And videos showed limited presence of the capital's military police. That led many in Brazil to question whether the police had ignored abundant warnings, underestimated their abilities or had been somehow complicit.

One video showed a group of protesters pushing through a police barricade with limited struggle, and only a few officers deploying pepper spray. Another showed officers standing by as protestors stormed Congress, including one recording images on his phone.

"This was a gross error by the federal district's government. It was a tragedy foretold," said Thiago de Aragão, director of strategy at Brasilia-based politican consultancy Arko Advice. "Everyone knew they (the protesters) were coming to Brasilia. The expectation was that the federal district's government was going to mount a response to protect the capital. They didn't do any of that."

Lula said at his news conference there was "incompetence or bad faith" on the part of police, and he promised some would be punished.

Federal District Gov. Ibaneis Rocha confirmed on Twitter he had fired the capital city's head of public security, Anderson Torres. Local media reported that Torres is in Orlando for vacation, and that he denied having met with Bolsonaro there.

"Two years since Jan. 6, Trump's legacy continues to poison our hemisphere," U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, who chairs the Senate's foreign relations committee, tweeted, adding that he blamed Bolsonaro for inciting the acts. "Protecting democracy & holding malign actors to account is essential."

Spielberg, 'Top Gun' feted by National Board of Review

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The prize for best film of the year at the National Board of Review Awards went to "Top Gun: Maverick." Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin" took home the most trophies. But the night belonged to its best-director honoree, Steven Spielberg, and the parade of tributes paid to the 76-year-old filmmaker.

So effusive was the praise for Spielberg that Colin Farrell, there to accept the award for best actor for his performance in "The Banshees of Inisherin," said the experience of first watching "E.T." was the most euphoric of his life, ranking it even above the births of his two children.

"I'm glad this isn't televised," said Farrell.

Despite the lack of a broadcast from Cipriani's 42 Street in midtown Manhattan, the National Board of Review Awards have long been a regular and starry stop in Hollywood's awards season. This year's ceremony, hosted Sunday for the seventh time by Willie Geist, came right in the thick of a battery of big dates on the Oscar calendar. The Golden Globes are Tuesday, the Screen Actor Guild nominations are Wednesday and voting for the Academy Awards starts Thursday.

That meant that the NBR Awards, put on by a long-running group of film enthusiasts, was a chance to stoke buzz and polish acceptance speeches. The National Board of Review makes it easier, too, by announcing winners in advance and pairing each with a lavish introduction from a collaborator or friend. Spielberg, who won best director for his movie-memoir "The Fabelmans," was introduced by "West Side Story" star Ariana DeBose.

DeBose recalled being in a nail salon when "Steven (expletive) Spielberg" called to ask if she would join the cast.

"What I remember most about that moment, aside from the experience of realizing that blood was rushing to my head and to my feet simultaneously, was thinking: Wow, what a gentlemanly, respectful, generous call that that was to make," DeBose said. "To ask someone to join you in an adventure."

Gabriel LaBelle, who plays a fictionalized version of young Spielberg in "The Fabelmans" and was honored for breakthrough performance along with Danielle Deadwyler of "Till," similarly described the life-changing nature of a call from Spielberg.

"I feel like I'm in debt, like I owe you, like I owe you my first born child or something," LaBelle said, still

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in apparent disbelief at his turn of fate. "I don't know how I'll ever pay you back."

When Spielberg took the stage, the crowd rose in a standing ovation.

"My whole career in all the films I've directed — my job, as I have seen it — is as the accompanist and the conductor to whoever or whatever should be the center of your attention," he said. "But when it came time for me to sit down with Tony Kushner to explore the possibilities of a story that became 'The Fabelmans,' I realized for the first time that I couldn't take cover behind a mothership or a T-Rex or a big mechanical shark that never worked."

Much has been made about "The Fabelmans" being Spielberg's most personal film, a classification he didn't dispute. Though he noted that every movie, in any genre, can be personal to a director, Spielberg said making his latest "was like moving back in with my parents and my sisters."

"You say you can't go home again? Oh, no. That's wrong. You can go home again," he said.

Though Spielberg is renowned as a hit-maker, "The Fabelmans" has struggled to ignite at the box office with just \$15.1 million worldwide, sapping some of its Oscar momentum.

Meanwhile, the awards hopes for a pair of theatrical successes — "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Everything Everywhere All at Once" — have risen. "Top Gun" star Tom Cruise didn't attend Sunday, but producer Jerry Bruckheimer applauded him while accepting for best film.

"Simply put: He's a force of nature," Bruckheimer said. "A man with one goal: to entertain audiences."

After being introduced by her "Crazy Rich Asians" co-star Awkwafina, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" star Michelle Yeoh accepted the award for best actress. The Malaysian-born Yeoh noted she was the first Asian to win the award in nearly five decades, something that caused her to reflect on her journey from Hong Kong to Hollywood.

"One day Hollywood did come calling. It was an absolute dream come true. We all wanted to go to Hollywood — until I got there," Yeoh said. "Suddenly, I was a minority. I mean, how did that happen? There are more of me than you! I was typecast. I didn't see faces like mine on the screen. I met with people who didn't know where Korea and China and Japan were."

Best supporting actress went to Janelle Monáe for the whodunit sequel "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery." Her introduction came from Benoit Blanc, himself: Daniel Craig. "Are you kidding me?" Monáe exclaimed. "You guys got (expletive) James Bond?"

"When Janelle floats, when she glides into a room, the chemicals in the air change," Craig said of his "Glass Onion" co-star. "When I had the privilege of working with her, every day she lifted me up."

Brendan Gleeson, who stars opposite Farrell in "The Banshees of Inisherin," wasn't there to accept his award for best supporting actor, though Farrell read a letter from him. Gleeson remarked on the success of Martin McDonagh's movie: "Happy days for a sad film."

McDonagh was also honored with the award for best original screenplay. Oscar Isaac, who stars in the playwright's next film, introduced McDonagh by recalling his first meeting with him at a London pub, an encounter that ended in the two sharing mushrooms. Once he reached the stage, McDonagh thanked Isaac "for revealing only one of my drug preferences."

McDonagh then made one of the night's most pointed remarks, applauding his film's distributor, Searchlight Pictures, for giving him no notes on the screenplay: "Which is probably why I'm up here tonight."

Hurts returns from injury, leads Eagles to No. 1 seed in NFC

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jalen Hurts walked into the Linc wearing a Michael Jordan "I'm Back" T-shirt from the former Chicago Bulls' star's first unretirement.

Yeah, Hurts is back — and now, so are the Eagles as a Super Bowl threat.

Hurts returned from a sprained right shoulder and threw for 229 yards under a conservative game plan, and the Philadelphia Eagles clinched the No. 1 seed in the NFC with a 22-16 win over the New York Giants on Sunday night.

"It's really tough being out," Hurts said. "I was pushing myself to be available and it wasn't an easy thing."

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Hurts wasn't asked to do much against New York's B-team — with the Giants' No. 6 seed already secured, they rested the bulk of their starting lineup — and he won without the explosive plays, the head-first rushes on fourth down, the scrambles that turn into 20-yard gains, the type of breakout plays that had defined his season. They weren't needed.

His mere presence was the emotional boost the Eagles needed after the stumbles each of the last two weeks.

The Eagles rebounded from two straight losses behind backup QB Gardner Minshew to clinch the NFC East, the top spot in the conference and home field throughout the playoffs. The team also gets a bye, one more pivotal week of rest for Hurts.

Hurts received a roaring ovation and "MVP!" chants as he ran out of the tunnel during pregame introductions. The Eagles had clearly missed their QB, who had grown into an MVP front-runner until he was hurt on a hard tackle against Chicago.

Hurts was 20-of-35 passing in a game that had a preseason feel — the Eagles were only 1 of 5 in the red zone — and played the entire game. The Eagles also earned the No. 1 seed in the 2017 season and won the Super Bowl. They have 5-1 odds to win it this year, per FanDuel Sportsbook, trailing only Kansas City and Buffalo.

Hurts completed a 35-yard pass to A.J. Brown on the Eagles' first play of the game and showed no ill-effects from the sprained right shoulder suffered three weeks ago. The Eagles played at half-speed against the Giants backups and refused to risk Hurts' health — they did not have a called rushing play for him. The dynamic QB that ran for 747 yards and 13 touchdowns entering the game mostly stayed in the pocket, the Eagles clearly wary Hurts could take another hard hit on his shoulder.

"I know he was hurting," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "He was hurting bad."

The Eagles didn't get much offensively but really didn't have to against a Giants (9-7-1) team that had already secured the No. 6 seed in the NFC and rested the bulk of their starters. Saquon Barkley and his 1,312 yards rushing took a seat. So did starting QB Daniel Jones.

The Giants, who play at Minnesota next Sunday, instead passed over No. 2 QB Tyrod Taylor and started practice squad regular Davis Webb.

Webb, in his first career start, rushed for a 14-yard touchdown in the fourth that made it 19-9. He tossed a 25-yard TD pass to Kenny Golladay late in the fourth that made it 22-16. He threw for 168 yards on 23-of-40 passing.

Hurts, whose 35 total touchdowns this season tied the franchise record set by Randall Cunningham in 1990, had a TD pass in the third quarter wiped out because of a penalty and then threw his sixth interception of the season on the next play.

This game for the Eagles was all about stabilizing themselves and reclaiming the swagger and confidence they had earlier this season as they steamrolled behind Hurts to a 13-1 record. Hurts likely wouldn't have played had the Eagles beaten either Dallas or New Orleans in each of the last games and clinched the No. 1 seed. Instead, it was the Eagles playing with everything to lose while the nine-win Giants were secure in their spot.

"It's the NFL, so the guys you have on the team, you have confidence in," Giants rookie coach Brian Daboll said. "I thought our guys competed all the way to the end."

Jake Elliott kicked field goals of 32, 52 and 39 yards in the first half. Boston Scott ran for an 8-yard touchdown — a whopping 10 of his 17 career TDs are against the Giants — and the Eagles took a 16-0 lead into halftime.

Elliott added field goals of 54 and 22 yards in the second half. Graham Gano kicked a 24-yarder in the third for the Giants.

RECORD DAY

Brown had four catches for 95 yards and finished with 1,496 for the team's season record. Mike Quick held the yards receiving mark of 1,409 in 1983 in the 16-game season.

"It means a lot to leave my footprint on this organization," Brown said. "There were a lot of great receiv-

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ers before me. For me to do it the first year, it means the world. I told Mike thank you for everything he has done for the game.”

Quick is a radio analyst for the Eagles. “Just as he told me before the game, he said the first pass is going to come to me and I’m going to break your record,” he said.

DeVonta Smith set the Eagles’ season record for receptions with 95 (and 1,196 yards receiving). He had seven receptions against the Giants. Irving Fryar had 88 catches in 1996.

The 14 wins are also the most in a season for the Eagles.

UP NEXT

Eagles: enjoy the spoils of an off week.

Giants: head to Minnesota to play the Vikings next Sunday.

Kemp done being underestimated, aims to steer GOP past Trump

By JEFF AMY and BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp is done being underestimated.

Having vanquished both a Donald Trump-backed Republican challenger and Democratic star Stacey Abrams to win reelection, Kemp is looking to expand his influence in his second term, free from the caricature of the gun-toting, pickup-driving, migrant-catching country boy that emerged during his first campaign for governor.

A new vision of Kemp steering his party toward a non-Trumpian conservatism made its debut in his November victory speech after it became clear that he had defeated Abrams by a much larger margin in their rematch than he had in their tight 2018 matchup.

“This election proves that when Republicans stay focused on real-world solutions that put hardworking people first we can win now, but also in the future, y’all,” Kemp said.

Kemp pledged that night to “stay in the fight” and followed with concrete steps: He kept his political operation running and lent it to the unsuccessful Senate runoff campaign of Herschel Walker, while forming a federal political action committee that lets the governor influence races for Congress and president. He hasn’t ruled out running for the U.S. Senate in 2026 or even seeking the White House.

Beyond his own advancement, Kemp’s victory could provide a blueprint for Republicans in competitive states after voters rejected many of the Trump-molded candidates in 2022. It’s a less showy approach, aimed at luring independents and moderates while still achieving conservative policy goals.

“If Republicans looking forward are focused on winning, I think a lot of folks will be calling Gov. Kemp and wanting his advice, but also trying to replicate the things he did here,” said Cody Hall, Kemp’s political adviser.

Kemp, now 59, was a real estate developer and state senator before Gov. Sonny Perdue appointed him secretary of state in 2010. Eight years later, Kemp was on his way to defeating an establishment candidate for the GOP nomination for governor when Trump’s endorsement supercharged his campaign, which focused on gun rights and opposition to illegal immigration.

After Kemp defeated Abrams in the 2018 general election by just 1.4 percentage points, she accused him of using the secretary of state’s office to improperly purge likely Democratic voters. A federal court later rejected legal claims questioning Kemp’s actions.

In his first term, Kemp logged some big conservative achievements, including signing stringent abortion limits in 2019. He also made a diverse slate of appointments and kept his promise of \$5,000 raises for public school teachers, moves aimed at solidifying his appeal to the middle in an anticipated Abrams rematch.

Kemp’s relationship with Trump began to deteriorate after the governor appointed Kelly Loeffler to the Senate instead of Trump’s preferred pick. Trump later took shots at Kemp over his decision to reopen businesses early in the COVID-19 pandemic, and the president’s rage boiled over when Kemp refused to help Trump and his allies overturn Joe Biden’s narrow victory in Georgia in the 2020 election — efforts that are now the subject of investigations by state and federal prosecutors.

Trump vowed revenge against Kemp, but the governor pressed forward. In 2021, Kemp signed into law

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a sweeping Republican-sponsored overhaul of state elections inspired by Trump's false claims of fraud in the 2020 election. He also pushed through a bill loosening gun laws.

Trump endorsed former Sen. David Perdue as a primary challenger to the governor. Kemp, who never publicly challenged Trump or even responded directly to his tirades, ended up crushing Perdue in the primary. In the meantime, his distance from Trump provided Kemp with credibility among independents and even some Democrats.

"It's just given him a gravitas you can't buy," said Brian Robinson, a Republican political consultant.

Even some Democrats acknowledge Kemp's increasing political strength after his nearly 8 percentage-point victory over Abrams. State Rep. Al Williams, long close to Abrams, said Kemp is "at the height of his powers" going into a second term. His inauguration is Thursday.

Williams and other backers say that Kemp's incumbency, plus the billions in federal COVID-19 aid that he alone decided how to spend under Georgia law, were factors in his win. "He spent it very effectively and spread the net wide," Williams said.

As the Senate race turned to overtime, Kemp was called on to help Walker in his runoff against Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock. Kemp, who had secured GOP donors and built his own political organization independent from a state party run by Trump acolytes, turned over his voter data operation to allow the Walker campaign to tailor messages to different factions of Republican voters.

Still, Kemp largely maintained his distance from Walker, whose campaign was beset by accusations that he had paid for abortions, behaved violently toward women and lied about his education, work history and personal background. Shortly before the runoff, Kemp agreed to appear in a television ad endorsing Walker but made sure that it was his own political team that wrote the script.

Steven Law, who leads the political action committee aligned with Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, said Kemp did what savvy political heavyweights do: He helped his party while establishing and protecting his own brand.

"We've had a party where Trump has had a decisive gravitational pull, and here's a person in Brian Kemp who just stayed apart from that orbit, made his own calls, decided things his way — not in opposition to Trump, but at the same time not in obedience to him," Law said, calling Kemp's balancing act "remarkable."

Kemp's future political path remains unclear, but he has options.

In Georgia, he's never been identified as having open national ambitions, either for the presidency or Senate, and Robinson noted that Kemp "has never spoken of Washington fondly."

Law demurred when asked whether McConnell or his team has broached the possibility of Kemp running for the Senate in 2026, when Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff would face voters again.

There's also the possibility of a vice presidential bid or a future Cabinet post. Perhaps most likely is a larger role in the Republican Governors Association: He's now on the RGA's executive committee and could become chair in 2025 or 2026.

Hall said Kemp wants to help other states elect conservatives who advocate "freedom and liberty and personal responsibility" while promoting education, a strong economy and good jobs. "Whatever he can do to help more folks like that get elected, I'm sure he will," Hall said.

At home, Kemp is the paramount party leader and unchallenged boss of state government in a way that's new for him. With a new House speaker and lieutenant governor leading the General Assembly, Kemp is unlikely to meet resistance from GOP majorities.

So far, though, he's offered a minimalist second-term agenda: income tax and property tax rebates, some criminal justice measures and minor education changes. His biggest promise is continuity, adding four more years to 20 years of Republican rule in Georgia.

The governor could also take firmer control of GOP machinery if he backs an effort to push out Georgia Republican Chair David Shafer, a Trump ally.

"He is carrying around bags of political capital like the Monopoly man," Robinson said, marveling at what he calls Kemp's "clear and very empowering" mandates from the primary and general election. "Go ahead and put a monocle and top hat on him."

New guidance: Use drugs, surgery early for obesity in kids

BY JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Children struggling with obesity should be evaluated and treated early and aggressively, including with medications for kids as young as 12 and surgery for those as young as 13, according to new guidelines released Monday.

The longstanding practice of “watchful waiting,” or delaying treatment to see whether children and teens outgrow or overcome obesity on their own only worsens the problem that affects more than 14.4 million young people in the U.S. Left untreated, obesity can lead to lifelong health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes and depression.

“Waiting doesn’t work,” said Dr. Ihuoma Eneli, co-author of the first guidance on childhood obesity in 15 years from the American Academy of Pediatrics. “What we see is a continuation of weight gain and the likelihood that they’ll have (obesity) in adulthood.”

For the first time, the group’s guidance sets ages at which kids and teens should be offered medical treatments such as drugs and surgery -- in addition to intensive diet, exercise and other behavior and lifestyle interventions, said Eneli, director of the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

In general, doctors should offer adolescents 12 and older who have obesity access to appropriate drugs and teens 13 and older with severe obesity referrals for weight-loss surgery, though situations may vary.

The guidelines aim to reset the inaccurate view of obesity as “a personal problem, maybe a failure of the person’s diligence,” said Dr. Sandra Hassink, medical director for the AAP Institute for Healthy Childhood weight, and a co-author of the guidelines.

“This is not different than you have asthma and now we have an inhaler for you,” Hassink said.

Young people who have a body mass index that meets or exceeds the 95th percentile for kids of the same age and gender are considered obese. Kids who reach or exceed the 120th percentile are considered to have severe obesity. BMI is a measure of body size based on a calculation of height and weight.

Obesity affects nearly 20% of kids and teens in the U.S. and about 42% of adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The group’s guidance takes into consideration that obesity is a biological problem and that the condition is a complex, chronic disease, said Aaron Kelly, co-director of the Center for Pediatric Obesity Medicine at the University of Minnesota.

“Obesity is not a lifestyle problem. It is not a lifestyle disease,” he said. “It predominately emerges from biological factors.”

The guidelines come as new drug treatments for obesity in kids have emerged, including approval late last month of Wegovy, a weekly injection, for use in children ages 12 and older. Different doses of the drug, called semaglutide, are also used under different names to treat diabetes. A recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that Wegovy, made by Novo Nordisk, helped teens reduce their BMI by about 16% on average, better than the results in adults.

Within days of the Dec. 23 authorization, pediatrician Dr. Claudia Fox had prescribed the drug for one of her patients, a 12-year-old girl.

“What it offers patients is the possibility of even having an almost normal body mass index,” said Fox, also a weight management specialist at the University of Minnesota. “It’s like a whole different level of improvement.”

The drug affects how the pathways between the brain and the gut regulate energy, said Dr. Justin Ryder, an obesity researcher at Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago.

“It works on how your brain and stomach communicate with one another and helps you feel more full than you would be,” he said.

Still, specific doses of semaglutide and other anti-obesity drugs have been hard to get because of recent shortages caused by manufacturing problems and high demand, spurred in part by celebrities on TikTok

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and other social media platforms boasting about enhanced weight loss.

In addition, many insurers won't pay for the medication, which costs about \$1,300 a month. "I sent the prescription yesterday," Fox said. "I'm not holding my breath that insurance will cover it."

One expert in pediatric obesity cautioned that while kids with obesity must be treated early and intensively, he worries that some doctors may turn too quickly to drugs or surgery.

"It's not that I'm against the medications," said Dr. Robert Lustig, a longtime specialist in pediatric endocrinology at the University of California, San Francisco. "I'm against the willy-nilly use of those medications without addressing the cause of the problem."

Lustig said children must be evaluated individually to understand all of the factors that contribute to obesity. He has long blamed too much sugar for the rise in obesity. He urges a sharp focus on diet, particularly ultraprocessed foods that are high in sugar and low in fiber.

Dr. Stephanie Byrne, a pediatrician at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, said she'd like more research about the drug's efficacy in a more diverse group of children and about potential long-term effects before she begins prescribing it regularly.

"I would want to see it be used on a little more consistent basis," she said. "And I would have to have that patient come in pretty frequently to be monitored."

At the same time, she welcomed the group's new emphasis on prompt, intensive treatment for obesity in kids.

"I definitely think this is a realization that diet and exercise is not going to do it for a number of teens who are struggling with this – maybe the majority," she said.

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California hit by more storms, braces for potential floods

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California was hit with more turbulent weather Sunday as thunderstorms, snow and damaging winds swept into the northern part the state, preceding another series of incoming storms and raising the potential for road flooding, rising rivers and mudslides on soils already saturated after days of rain.

The National Weather Service warned of a "relentless parade of atmospheric rivers" — storms that are long plumes of moisture stretching out into the Pacific capable of dropping staggering amounts of rain and snow.

In the state capital, more than 60,000 customers were still without electricity Sunday evening — down from more than 350,000 — after gusts of 60 mph (97 kph) knocked trees into power lines, according to the Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

Joey Kleemann was listening to the winds howling shortly after midnight, wondering whether she should move her car, when she heard a "gigantic, thumping, crashing sound" as a massive tree fell onto the Sacramento home where she's lived for 25 years.

The gusts were strong enough to rip the tree from its roots, pulling the concrete sidewalk up with it.

Cracks in Kleemann's roof meant rain streamed into her dining area throughout the night. She planned to place a tarp over the damaged area in anticipation of another deluge.

"I just had a feeling with the winds. They were scary winds," she said. "Mostly I focused on: It could be so much worse."

Gov. Gavin Newsom said 12 people lost their lives as a result of violent weather during the past 10 days, and he warned that this week's storms could be even more dangerous. He urged people to stay home.

"Just be cautious over the course of the next week, particularly the next day or two or so," Newsom said during a briefing with California officials outlining the state's storm preparations.

The weather service's Sacramento office said the region should brace for the latest atmospheric river to roar ashore late Sunday and early Monday.

"Widespread power outages, downed trees and difficult driving conditions will be possible," the office

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said on Twitter.

Evacuation warnings were in place for about 13,000 residents of a flood-prone area of Sonoma County north of San Francisco, where the swollen Russian River was expected to overspill its banks in the coming days.

And Sacramento County ordered evacuations for people living around Wilton, a town of about 6,000 roughly 20 miles southeast of downtown Sacramento, with warnings of imminent flooding. The rural area along the Cosumnes River saw flooding in an earlier storm.

"Residents must leave now before roads become impassable," the county said.

The state Department of Transportation warned motorists to stay off mountain roads after closing a stretch of U.S. 395 in Mono County, along the Eastern Sierra, due to heavy snow, ice and whiteout conditions.

"With the severe nature of this storm, Caltrans is asking all drivers to limit nonessential travel until the peak of the storm has passed," the department said in a statement.

The wet weather comes after days of rain in California from Pacific storms that last week knocked out power to thousands, flooded streets, battered the coastline and caused at least six deaths.

The first of the newest, heavier storms prompted the weather service to issue a flood watch for a large swath of Northern and Central California with 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain expected through Wednesday in the already saturated Sacramento-area foothills.

In the Los Angeles region, scattered rain fell during the weekend while stormy conditions were expected to return Monday, with the potential for up to 8 inches (20 cm) in foothill areas. High surf was expected through Tuesday, with large waves on west-facing beaches.

Since Dec. 26, San Francisco has received more than 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain, while Mammoth Mountain, a popular ski area in the Eastern Sierra, got nearly 10 feet (3 meters) of snow, the National Weather Service reported.

The storms won't be enough to officially end California's ongoing drought — but they have helped.

State climatologist Michael Anderson told a news briefing late Saturday that officials were closely monitoring Monday's incoming storm and another behind it and were keeping an eye on three other systems farther out in the Pacific.

Hamlin in their hearts, the NFL pays tribute to No. 3

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Damar Hamlin's old high school teammate clutched the ball he had just intercepted, jogged to the 30-yard line, gingerly placed the pigskin at the top of the red-outlined "3," raised his hands over his head and formed them in the shape of a heart.

"I'm just glad I got a chance to go out there and make a play and honor him the way I did," said Hamlin's buddy, Colts safety Rodney Thomas II.

Thomas' gesture might have been the most poignant moment, but it was far from the only shout-out to the Bills safety on an NFL Sunday filled with love for a stricken player whose impact is being felt across the nation.

Hamlin's number — number "3" — was on display everywhere across the league, outlined on 30-yard lines on fields, worn on special patches on the Bills uniforms and featured on jackets and sweatshirts and even on red hearts dangling from the tailgate tents outside the Bills home stadium.

The highest volume of tribute poured in, naturally, from that parking lot in Orchard Park, New York, where Buffalo's 35-23 victory over New England was punctuated by a 96-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by Nyheim Hines on the game's opening play.

"OMFG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!," Hamlin tweeted after the quick score.

The safety, whose recovery after his collapse on the field Monday night in Cincinnati has overtaken every NFL story line, also shared a photo of himself making a heart with his hands from his hospital bed shortly before kickoff with the text "GAMETIME!!! @BuffaloBills."

Before that, in the lot outside of Highmark Stadium, Ryan Magnuson stood in front of a 4-x-10-foot can-

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was greeting card that he placed at the foot of the Bills stadium entrance for fans to sign. The message on the card: "If you get a chance to show some love today, do it. It won't cost you nothing" — a reprise of a tweet Hamlin sent back in 2021.

"It's been very positive. I've seen Bills fans, I've seen Patriots fans and people wearing other NFL jerseys coming up. I think this is bigger than a team thing at this point," Magnuson said.

Fifteen-hundred miles away, and three hours later in Denver, the Chargers and Broncos each walked to the numbers and linked arms near their respective sidelines before the game's first snap while the No. 3s on both teams — Russell Wilson and Derwin James Jr. — met at the 50-yard-line, shook hands and knelt in prayer.

Philly running back Miles Sanders tweeted a picture of himself, wearing a "Love For Damar" sweatshirt, and flashing the number "3" while FaceTiming with Hamlin from his hospital.

Not all was warm and fuzzy.

In Cincinnati, Bengals running back Joe Mixon celebrated a touchdown by mimicking a coin flip — the likes of which could have happened, per a late NFL contingency plan — to decide home-field advantage in a potential playoff game between the Bengals and Ravens.

Cincinnati's 27-16 win over the Ravens on Sunday staved off that possibility. The Ravens will visit Cincy next week in the wild-card round. But saying all is back to normal in the NFL this week, or for the upcoming playoffs, still feels like a bit of a stretch.

The postseason is bound to be outfitted in "Love For Damar" sweatshirts and others embroidered with "Hamlin Strong," the likes of which Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes wore during Saturday's win over the Raiders. Some might even wear shirts being sold by Hamlin himself, with proceeds going to first responders and the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, where he's been since he collapsed on the field and had to have his heartbeat restored by medical staff last Monday.

It is bound to be filled with reminders that the high stakes of these games are about more than a trophy to be awarded at the end of the Super Bowl.

It is bound to feel a little bit off. If the Chiefs and Bills advance to the AFC title game, for instance, that game will be played on a neutral field, in a city still to be determined.

The heart of this league was beating most strongly in Buffalo on Sunday.

In the vast parking lots circling the stadium, fans wore self-made shirts and jerseys honoring Hamlin.

Sue Sonner wore a former Bills quarterback EJ Manuel's No. 3 jersey; her husband creatively covered over Manuel's name and replaced it with Hamlin's.

"It's going to be very emotional. I'm taking some tissues with me for sure," said Sonner, who is from Corning, New York, and was also in the stadium in Cincinnati last Monday.

"We could see the scurry and the trauma and the panic and all of that. So very somber, very somber environment," she said. "Now that he's progressing and we think he's going to be okay, now we're excited to play football again. And hopefully he's on the road to recovery."

Biden inspects US-Mexico border in face of GOP criticism

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — President Joe Biden walked a muddy stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border and inspected a busy port of entry Sunday on his first trip to the region after two years in office, a visit shadowed by the fraught politics of immigration as Republicans blame him for record numbers of migrants crossing into the country.

At his first stop, the president observed as border officers in El Paso demonstrated how they search vehicles for drugs, money and other contraband. Next, he traveled to a dusty street with abandoned buildings and walked along a metal border fence that separated the U.S. city from Ciudad Juarez.

His last stop was the El Paso County Migrant Services Center — but there were no migrants in sight. As he learned about the services offered there, he asked an aid worker, "If I could wave the wand, what should I do?" The answer was not audible.

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Biden's nearly four-hour visit to El Paso was highly controlled. He encountered no migrants except when his motorcade drove alongside the border and about a dozen were visible on the Ciudad Juárez side. His visit did not include time at a Border Patrol station, where migrants who cross illegally are arrested and held before their release. He delivered no public remarks.

The visit seemed designed to showcase a smooth operation to process legal migrants, weed out smuggled contraband and humanely treat those who have entered illegally, creating a counter-narrative to Republicans' claims of a crisis situation equivalent to an open border.

But his visit was likely do little to quell critics from both sides, including immigrant advocates who accuse him of establishing cruel policies not unlike those of his hard-line predecessor, Donald Trump.

In a sign of the deep tensions over immigration, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, handed Biden a letter as soon as he touched down in the state that said the "chaos" at the border was a "direct result" of the president's failure to enforce federal laws. Biden later took the letter out of his jacket pocket during his tour, telling reporters, "I haven't read it yet."

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy dismissed Biden's visit as a "photo op," saying on Twitter that the Republican majority would hold the administration "accountable for creating the most dangerous border crisis in American history."

El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego welcomed Biden's visit, but said a current lull in arrivals prevented the president from seeing how large the group of newcomers has been.

"He didn't get to see the real difficulties," said Samaniego, who was in the local delegation that greeted Biden. "It was good that he was here. It's a first step. But we still need to do more and have more time with him."

Elsewhere in El Paso where Biden did not visit, hundreds of migrants were gathered Sunday outside the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, where they have been sleeping outdoors and receiving three meals a day from faith groups and other humanitarian organizations.

The migrants included several pregnant women, including Karla Sainz, 26, eight months along. She was traveling in a small group that included her 2-year-old son, Joshua. Sainz left her three other children back home in Venezuela with her mother.

"I would ask President Biden to help me with a permission or something so we can work and continue," she said.

Juan Tovar, 32, one of several people in her group, suggested he also had political reasons for leaving his home country.

"Socialism is the worst," he said. "In Venezuela, they kill us, they torture us, we can't talk bad about the government. We are worse off than in Cuba."

Noengris Garcia, also eight months pregnant, was traveling with her husband, teen son and the small family dog from the tiny state of Portuguesa, Venezuela, where she operated a food stall.

"We don't want to be given money or a house," said Garcia, 39. "We just want to work."

Asked what he's learned by seeing the border firsthand and speaking with the officers who work along it, Biden said: "They need a lot of resources. We're going to get it for them."

El Paso is currently the biggest corridor for illegal crossings, in large part due 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 that drew strong criticism from immigration advocates.

Biden's recent policy announcements on border security and his visit to the border were aimed in part at 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.

From Texas, Biden traveled 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. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador met Biden at the airport Sunday night and joined him in the presidential limousine for the ride to Biden's hotel.

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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 measures that would resemble those of Trump's 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. Migrants are being asked to complete a form on a phone app so that they they can go to a port of entry at a pre-scheduled date and time.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters aboard Air Force One that the administration is trying to "incentivize a safe and orderly way and cut out the smuggling organizations," saying the policies are "not a ban at all" but an attempt to protect migrants from the trauma that smuggling can create.

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. Administration officials disputed that characterization.

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.

Trump, who made hardening immigration a signature issue, traveled to the border several times.

Prince Harry says explosive book is a bid to 'own my story'

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry defended his decision to publish a memoir that lays bare rifts inside Britain's royal family, saying it's an attempt to "own my story" after 38 years of "spin and distortion" by others.

Harry spoke to Britain's ITV and CBS's "60 Minutes" to promote his book, "Spare," which has generated incendiary headlines with its details of private emotional turmoil and bitter family resentments.

In interviews broadcast Sunday, Harry accused members of the royal family of getting "into bed with the devil" to gain favorable tabloid coverage, claimed his stepmother Camilla, the queen consort, had leaked private conversations to the media and said his family was "complicit" in his wife Meghan's "pain and suffering."

Harry said Camilla had to rehabilitate her image with the British people after her longtime affair with his father and that he was one of the victims of her efforts for better coverage in the tabloids.

"That made her dangerous because of the connections that she was forging within the British press," he told CBS. "There was open willingness on both sides to trade information. And with a family built on hierarchy, and with her, on the way to being queen consort, there was gonna be people or bodies left in the street."

He repeated his claim on ITV that there was "concern" in the royal family about his unborn child's skin color after he married biracial American actress Meghan Markle, and said the British monarchy should address its attitudes to race.

Harry and Meghan first mentioned the incident during an interview with Oprah Winfrey in 2021. They have not identified the family member who expressed concern.

Harry said the episode was an example of unconscious bias rather than racism, adding that the royal family needed to "learn and grow" in order to be "part of the solution rather than part of the problem."

"Otherwise unconscious bias then moves into the category of racism," Harry said. He said that "especially

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when you are the monarchy – you have a responsibility, and quite rightly people hold you to a higher standard than others.”

He said a recent incident in which a former lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth II asked a Black British woman where she was “really” from was “a very good example of the environment within the institution.”

“Spare” explores Harry’s 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.

Harry told ITV that he cried only once after his mother’s death — at her burial. He said he feels guilty about not showing emotion when he and William greeted crowds of mourners outside Kensington Palace, Diana’s London home.

In the book Harry blames his family’s stiff-upper-lip ethos, saying he had “learned too well ... the family maxim that crying is not an option.” The Associated Press purchased a Spanish-language copy of the book in advance of its publication around the world on Tuesday.

“There were 50,000 bouquets of flowers to our mother and there we were shaking people’s hands, smiling,” Harry told ITV journalist Tom Bradby. “I’ve seen the videos, right, I looked back over it all. And the wet hands that we were shaking, we couldn’t understand why their hands were wet, but it was all the tears that they were wiping away.

“Everyone thought and felt like they knew our mum, and the two closest people to her, the two most loved people by her, were unable to show any emotion in that moment.”

Harry told “60 Minutes” that it took him over a decade to accept that his mother was dead. He and his brother often discussed the notion that she had gone into hiding and would reappear later.

“I had huge amounts of hope,” he said.

It was only after reading the police report of his mother’s death, seeing photos from the scene and later — at the age of 23 — following the same route into the Paris tunnel where his mother died when her driver crashed while evading paparazzi that her death became a reality, he said.

“Spare” is the latest in a string of public pronouncements by Harry and Meghan since they quit royal life and moved to California in 2020, citing what they saw as the media’s racist treatment of Meghan and a lack of support from the palace. It follows the Winfrey interview and a six-part Netflix documentary released last month.

In the ghostwritten memoir, Harry, 38, describes the couple’s acrimonious split from the royal family in early 2020, after their request for a part-time royal role was rejected.

Harry contrasts the withdrawal of the couple’s taxpayer-funded security with the case of his uncle, Prince Andrew, who was removed as a working royal over his friendship with the U.S. sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Last year, Andrew settled a lawsuit from a woman who accused him of sexually abusing her while she traveled with financier Epstein when she was 17. Andrew paid an undisclosed sum as part of the settlement, but didn’t admit wrongdoing.

Harry alleges that no one considered removing Andrew’s security despite the “shameful scandal.”

The TV interviews are just two of several given by Harry that are set to heap more pressure on the royal family. He is also appearing on “Good Morning America” and “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.”

Royal officials haven’t commented on any of the allegations, though allies have pushed back on the claims, largely anonymously.

Veteran British journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, a biographer and friend of King Charles III, said Saturday that 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.

In the “60 Minutes” interview, Harry denied that his description of his brother’s “alarming baldness” and fading resemblance to their mother as he aged was harsh and said his book was not intended to hurt

his family.

While he said that he hadn't spoken with his father or brother in a while, he hopes to find peace with them. Harry told ITV that he wants reconciliation with the royal family, but "the ball is in their court."

"They've shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile," he said.

Pro-Bolsonaro rioters storm Brazil's top government offices

By DIANE JEANTET and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Supporters of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro who refuse to accept his election defeat stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and presidential palace Sunday, a week after the inauguration of his leftist rival, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Thousands of demonstrators bypassed security barricades, climbed on roofs, smashed windows and invaded all three buildings, which were believed to be largely vacant on the weekend. Some of the demonstrators called for a military intervention to either restore the far-right Bolsonaro to power or oust Lula from the presidency.

Hours went by before control of the buildings on Brasilia's vast Three Powers Square was reestablished, with hundreds of the participants arrested.

In a news conference from Sao Paulo state, Lula accused Bolsonaro of encouraging the uprising by those he termed "fascist fanatics," and he read a freshly signed decree for the federal government to take control of security in the federal district.

"There is no precedent for what they did and these people need to be punished," Lula said.

TV channel Globo News showed protesters wearing the green and yellow colors of the national flag that also have come to symbolize the nation's conservative movement and were adopted by Bolsonaro's supporters.

The former president has repeatedly sparred with Supreme Court justices, and the room where they convene was trashed by the rioters. They sprayed fire hoses inside the Congress building and ransacked offices at the presidential palace. Windows were broken in all of the buildings.

Bolsonaro, who flew to Florida ahead of Lula's inauguration, repudiated the president's accusation late Sunday. He wrote on Twitter that peaceful protest is part of democracy but vandalism and invasion of public buildings are "exceptions to the rule."

Police fired tear gas in their efforts to recover the buildings, and were shown on television in the late afternoon marching protesters down a ramp from the presidential palace with their hands secured behind their backs. By early evening, with authorities' control of the buildings restored, Justice Minister Flavio Dino said in a news conference that roughly 200 people had been arrested and officers were firing more tear gas to drive away lingering protesters.

But with the damage already done, many in Brazil were questioning how the police had ignored abundant warnings, were unprepared or were somehow complicit.

Lula said at his news conference there was "incompetence or bad faith" on the part of police, and that they had been likewise complacent when Bolsonaro supporters rioted in the capital weeks ago. He promised those officers would be punished and expelled from the corps.

The incident recalled the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump. Political analysts have warned for months that a similar storming was a possibility in Brazil, given that Bolsonaro has sown doubt about the reliability of the nation's electronic voting system — without any evidence. The results were recognized as legitimate by politicians from across the spectrum, including some Bolsonaro allies, as well as dozens of foreign governments.

Unlike the 2021 attack in the U.S., few officials were likely to have been working in the Brazilian Congress and Supreme Court on a Sunday.

U.S. President Joe Biden told reporters that the riots in Brazil were "outrageous." His national security adviser Jake Sullivan went a step further on Twitter and said the U.S. "condemns any effort to undermine democracy in Brazil."

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Biden later tweeted that he looked forward to continuing to work with Lula, calling the riots an "assault on democracy and on the peaceful transfer of power in Brazil."

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly tweeted: "The violent attempts to undermine democracy in Brazil are unjustifiable. President @LulaOfficial and the government of Brazil have the full support of the UK."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also said on Twitter that he condemned the assault on Brazil's democratic institutions but he was confident "the will of the Brazilian people and the country's institutions" would be respected.

Earlier videos on social media showed a limited presence of the capital's military police; one showed officers standing by as people flooded into Congress, with one using his phone to record images. The capital's security secretariat didn't respond to a request from The Associated Press for comment about the relative absence of the police.

"Brazilian authorities had two years to learn the lessons from the Capitol invasion and to prepare themselves for something similar in Brazil," said Maurício Santoro, political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. "Local security forces in Brasilia failed in a systematic way to prevent and to respond to extremist actions in the city. And the new federal authorities, such as the ministers of justice and of defense, were not able to act in a decisive way."

Federal District Gov. Ibaneis Rocha confirmed on Twitter he had fired the capital city's head of public security, Anderson Torres. Local media reported that Torres is currently in the U.S.

The office of Lula's attorney general asked the Supreme Court to order Torres' imprisonment.

Bolsonaro supporters have been protesting Lula's electoral win since Oct. 30, blocking roads, setting vehicles on fire and gathering outside military buildings, urging the armed forces to intervene. The head of Brazil's electoral authority rejected the request from Bolsonaro and his political party to nullify ballots cast on most electronic voting machines.

"Two years since Jan. 6, Trump's legacy continues to poison our hemisphere," U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, who chairs the Senate's foreign relations committee, tweeted, adding that he blamed Bolsonaro for inciting the acts. "Protecting democracy & holding malign actors to account is essential."

McCarthy's next big task: Win GOP support for House rules

By HOPE YEN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After an epic 15-ballot election to become House speaker, Republican Kevin McCarthy faces his next big test in governing a fractious, slim majority: passing a rules package to govern the House.

The drafting and approval of a set of rules is normally a fairly routine legislative affair, but in these times, it's the next showdown for the embattled McCarthy.

To become speaker and win over skeptics, McCarthy had to make concessions to a small group of hard-liners who refused to support his ascension until he yielded to their demands.

Now those promises — or at least some of them — are being put into writing to be voted on when lawmakers return this week for their first votes as the majority party.

On Sunday, at least two moderate Republicans expressed their reservations about supporting the rules package, citing what they described as secret deals and the disproportionate power potentially being handed out to a group of 20 conservatives.

The concessions included limits on McCarthy's power, such as by allowing a single lawmaker to initiate a vote to remove him as speaker and curtailing government spending, which could include defense cuts. They also give the conservative Freedom Caucus more seats on the committee that decides which legislation reaches the House floor.

They also raise questions about whether McCarthy can garner enough support from Republicans, who hold a 222-212 edge, on a critical vote in the coming months to raise the debt limit, given conservatives' demand that there also be significant spending cuts, over opposition from the White House and a Democratic-controlled Senate.

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Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., a strong McCarthy supporter, said she currently is "on the fence" about the proposed rules.

"I like the rules package," Mace said, in reference to what has been released publicly. "What I don't support is a small number of people trying to get a deal done or deals done for themselves in private, in secret."

She said it will be hard to get anything done in the House if a small band is given a stronger hand compared with the larger number of moderates. "I am concerned that commonsense legislation will not get through to get a vote on the floor," she said.

Rep. Tony Gonzales, R-Texas, was an outright "no" against the rules package, decrying an "insurgency caucus" that he said would cut defense spending and push extremist legislation, such as on immigration.

Democrats are expected to be united against the package.

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a member of the Freedom Caucus who is expected to lead the House Judiciary Committee, defended the concessions McCarthy made and said he believes the rules package will get enough Republican support to pass. He insisted that the agreements will help ensure broader representation on committees and will curtail unfettered government spending.

"We'll see tomorrow," he said Sunday, but "I think we'll get the 218 votes needed to pass the rules package."

In the coming months, Congress will have to work to raise the debt limit before the government reaches its borrowing cap or face a devastating default on payments, including those for Social Security, military troops and federal benefits such as food assistance. Lawmakers will also have to fund federal agencies and programs for the next budget year, which begins Oct. 1.

"Our general concern is that the dysfunction — that was historic — that we saw this week is not at an end, it's just the beginning," said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York.

The White House has rejected Republican calls to slash spending in return for an increase in the federal government's borrowing authority. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre went so far on Sunday as to call House Republicans' likely demands "hostage taking" that would risk default, an event that could trigger an economic crisis.

"Congress is going to need to raise the debt limit without — without — conditions and it's just that simple," Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One as President Joe Biden flew to Texas. "Attempts to exploit the debt ceiling as leverage will not work. There will be no hostage taking."

Yet the White House also said it had no plans to sidestep the needed congressional approval through possible budget gimmicks such as the minting of a coin to help cover a deficit that could be roughly \$1 trillion this fiscal year.

"We're not considering any measures that would go around Congress," Jean-Pierre said. "That's not what we're doing. This is a fundamental congressional responsibility, and Congress must act."

Jordan argued that "everything has to be on the table" when it comes to spending cuts, including in defense, in light of the government's \$32 trillion debt. "Frankly we better look at the money we send to Ukraine as well and say, how can we best spend the money to protect America?" he said.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, one of the 20 who initially voted against McCarthy before throwing his support behind the Californian, said he and other conservatives will be holding their position that there should be spending cuts in a debt ceiling bill. Asked whether he would exercise members' new authority and unilaterally initiate a vote to remove the speaker if McCarthy doesn't ultimately agree, Roy offered a warning.

"I'm not going to play the 'what if' games on how we're going to use the tools of the House to make sure that we enforce the terms of the agreement, but we will use the tools of the House to enforce the terms of the agreement," Roy said.

Mace and Gonzales appeared on CBS' "Face the Nation," Jordan spoke on "Fox News Sunday," Jeffries was on NBC's "Meet the Press," and Roy was on CNN's "State of the Union."

Alabama woman who joined IS hopes to return from Syria camp

ROJ CAMP, Syria (AP) — A woman who ran away from home in Alabama at the age of 20, joined the

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Islamic State group and had a child with one of its fighters says she still hopes to return to the United States, serve prison time if necessary, and advocate against the extremists.

In a rare interview from the Roj detention camp in Syria where she is being held by U.S.-allied Kurdish forces, Hoda Muthana said she was brainwashed by online traffickers into joining the group in 2014 and regrets everything except her young son, now of pre-school age.

"If I need to sit in prison, and do my time, I will do it. ... I won't fight against it," the 28-year-old told The News Movement. "I'm hoping my government looks at me as someone young at the time and naive."

It's a line she's repeated in various media interviews since fleeing from one of the extremist group's last enclaves in Syria in early 2019.

But four years earlier, at the height of the extremists' power, she had voiced enthusiastic support for them on social media and in an interview with BuzzFeed News. IS then ruled a self-declared Islamic caliphate stretching across roughly a third of both Syria and Iraq. In posts sent from her Twitter account in 2015 she called on Americans to join the group and carry out attacks in the U.S., suggesting drive-by shootings or vehicle rammings targeting gatherings for national holidays.

In her interview with TNM, Muthana now says her phone was taken from her and that the tweets were sent by IS supporters.

Muthana was born in New Jersey to Yemeni immigrants and once had a U.S. passport. She was raised in a conservative Muslim household in Hoover, Alabama, just outside Birmingham. In 2014, she told her family she was going on a school trip but flew to Turkey and crossed into Syria instead, funding the travel with tuition checks that she had secretly cashed.

The Obama administration cancelled her citizenship in 2016, saying her father was an accredited Yemeni diplomat at the time she was born — a rare revocation of birthright citizenship. Her lawyers have disputed that move, arguing that the father's diplomatic accreditation ended before she was born.

The Trump administration maintained that she was not a citizen and barred her from returning, even as it pressed European allies to repatriate their own detained nationals to reduce pressure on the detention camps.

U.S. courts have sided with the government on the question of Muthana's citizenship, and last January the Supreme Court declined to consider her lawsuit seeking re-entry.

That has left her and her son languishing in a detention camp in northern Syria housing thousands of widows of Islamic State fighters and their children.

Some 65,600 suspected Islamic State members and their families — both Syrians and foreign citizens — are held in camps and prisons in northeastern Syria run by U.S.-allied Kurdish groups, according to a Human Rights Watch report released last month.

Women accused of affiliation with IS and their minor children are largely housed in the al-Hol and Roj camps, under what the rights group described as "life threatening conditions." The camp inmates include more than 37,400 foreigners, among them Europeans and North Americans.

Human Rights Watch and other monitors have cited dire living conditions in the camps, including inadequate food, water and medical care, as well as the physical and sexual abuse of inmates by guards and fellow detainees.

Kurdish-led authorities and activists have blamed IS sleeper cells for surging violence within the facilities, including the beheading of two Egyptian girls, aged 11 and 13, in al-Hol camp in November. Turkish airstrikes targeting the Kurdish groups launched that month also hit close to al-Hol. Camp officials alleged that the Turkish strikes were targeting security forces guarding the camp.

"None of the foreigners have been brought before a judicial authority ... to determine the necessity and legality of their detention, making their captivity arbitrary and unlawful," Human Rights Watch wrote. "Detention based solely on family ties amounts to collective punishment, a war crime."

Calls to repatriate the detainees were largely ignored in the immediate aftermath of IS' bloody reign, which was marked by massacres, beheadings and other atrocities, many of which were broadcast to the world in graphic films circulated on social media.

But with the passage of time, the pace of repatriations has started to pick up. Human Rights Watch

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said some 3,100 foreigners — mostly women and children — have been sent home over the past year. Most were Iraqis, who comprise the majority of detainees, but citizens were also repatriated to Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia and the United Kingdom.

The U.S. has repatriated a total of 39 American nationals. It's unclear how many other Americans remain in the camps.

These days, Muthana portrays herself as a victim of the Islamic State.

Speaking with TNM, she describes how, after arriving in Syria in 2014, she was detained in a guest house reserved for unmarried women and children. "I've never seen that kind of filthiness in my life, like there was 100 women and twice as much kids, running around, too much noise, filthy beds," she said.

The only way to escape was to marry a fighter. She eventually married and remarried three times. Her first two husbands, including the father of her son, were killed in battle. She reportedly divorced her third husband.

The extremist group, which is also known as ISIS, no longer controls any territory in Syria or Iraq but continues to carry out sporadic attacks and has supporters in the camps themselves. Muthana says she still has to be careful about what she says because of fear of reprisal.

"Even here, right now, I can't fully say everything I want to say. But once I do leave, I will. I will be an advocate against this," she said. "I wish I can help the victims of ISIS in the West understand that someone like me is not part of it, that I as well am a victim of ISIS."

Hassan Shibly, an attorney who has assisted Muthana's family, said it is "absolutely clear that she was brainwashed and taken advantage of."

He said her family wishes she could come back, pay her debt to society and then help others from "falling into the dark path that she was led down."

"She was absolutely misguided, and no one is denying that. But again, she was a teenager who was the victim of a very sophisticated recruitment operation that focuses on taking advantage of the young, the vulnerable, the disenfranchised," he said.

Adam Rich, former 'Eight Is Enough' child star, dies at 54

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Adam Rich, the child actor with a pageboy mop-top who charmed TV audiences as "America's little brother" on "Eight is Enough," has died. He was 54.

Rich died Saturday at his home in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles, said Lt. Aimee Earl of the Los Angeles County Medical-Examiner Coroner's office. The cause of death was under investigation but was not considered to be suspicious.

Rich had a limited acting career after starring at age 8 as Nicholas Bradford, the youngest of eight children, on the ABC hit dramedy that ran from from 1977 to 1981.

Betty Buckley, who played his stepmother on the show, said on Instagram that she was shocked to learn of his death Sunday and referred to Rich as a "light," her "young pal" on set and friend ever since.

"I adored him and loved working with him," said Buckley, who posted photos from the show of the two of them together on a swing set, on horseback and with her arm around him while he was sleeping. "He was so sweet, funny, fresh and natural. He brought a lot of joy to all of us on the show and to our audiences."

Rich's public life after stardom was similar to that other child actors whose promising careers are later derailed by drugs and alcohol, and run-ins with the law.

He was arrested for driving under the influence in 2002 after nearly striking a parked California Highway Patrol cruiser in a freeway lane closed for maintenance. He was arrested in April 1991 for attempting to break into a pharmacy and in October of that year for allegedly stealing a drug-filled syringe at a hospital where he was being treated for a dislocated shoulder.

Rich suffered from a type of depression that defied treatment and he had tried to erase the stigma of talking about mental illness, said publicist Danny Deraney. He unsuccessfully tried experimental cures over the years.

Deraney said he and others close to Rich were worried in recent weeks when they couldn't reach him.

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"He was just a very kind, generous, loving soul," Deraney told The Associated Press. "Being a famous actor is not necessarily what he wanted to be. ... He had no ego, not an ounce of it."

Rich discussed his mental health on Twitter and noted in October that he'd been sober for seven years. He said he wasn't perfect — referring to arrests, many stints in rehab, several overdoses and "countless detoxes (and) relapses" — and urged his nearly 19,000 followers to never give up.

"Human beings weren't built to endure mental illness," Rich tweeted in September. "The mere fact that some people consider those to be weak, or have a lack of will is totally laughable ... because it's the total opposite! It takes a very, very strong person ... a warrior if you will ... to battle such illnesses."

Rich posted a picture of himself from his heyday with one-time child star Mickey Rooney.

"Everyone used to say to me, 'You are the modern day Mickey Rooney,'" he tweeted. "But when Mickey Rooney told me that himself, it meant a helluva a lot more to me!"

Nearly 27 years ago, Rich participated in a hoax that *Might* magazine created about the actor getting killed in a robbery outside a Los Angeles nightclub in 1996. The article for the little-known magazine was intended as a satire of America's celebrity obsession but fizzled when the spoof was revealed.

"I think we were a little too subtle. People were not getting the joke," Rich later told the *Chicago Tribune*. "I don't want to be dead."

Rich was the little brother to a generation of TV viewers as the mop-top son of a newspaper columnist played by Dick Van Patten, who has to raise eight children alone after his wife in the show — and the actress who played her — died during filming of the first season.

Rich starred in the series "Code Red" from 1981-82 and voiced the character of Presto the Magician on "Dungeons & Dragons" from 1983-85, according to the IMDB.com. He reprised his best-known role in two "Eight is Enough" TV movie reunions.

But the balance of his acting career was in single-episode appearances on some of the most popular TV shows of the time: "The Love Boat," "The Six Million Dollar Man," "Silver Spoons," and "Baywatch." His most recent credit listed on IMDB was playing Crocodile Dundee on "Reel Comedy" in 2003.

Russia claims deadly attack, but Kyiv denies anyone killed

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Russian military claimed Sunday to have carried out deadly missile strikes on barracks used by Ukrainian troops in retaliation for the deaths of dozens of Russian soldiers in a rocket attack a week ago. Ukrainian officials denied there were any casualties.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its missiles hit two temporary bases housing 1,300 Ukrainian troops in Kramatorsk, in the eastern Donetsk region, killing 600 of them. Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenko said the strikes were retaliation for Ukraine's attack in Makiivka, in which at least 89 Russian soldiers died.

Serhii Cherevatyi, a spokesperson for Ukraine's forces in the east, told The Associated Press that Russian strikes on Kramatorsk damaged only civilian infrastructure, adding: "The armed forces of Ukraine weren't affected."

The Donetsk regional administration said seven Russian missiles hit Kramatorsk and two more hit Kostyantynivka, without causing any casualties. It said an educational institution, an industrial facility and garages were damaged in Kramatorsk, and an industrial zone was hit in Kostyantynivka.

Kramatorsk Mayor Oleksandr Honcharenko said two school buildings and eight apartment houses were hit overnight. Photos he posted showed no indication that it had been an attack on the scale claimed by the Russians or that anyone had been in the buildings when they were struck.

"The world saw again these days that Russia lies even when it draws attention to the situation at the front with its own statements," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

"Russian shelling of Kherson with incendiary ammunition right after Christmas. The strikes on Kramatorsk and other cities of the Donbas — aimed right at civilian sites and right when Moscow was reporting the supposed 'silence' of its army."

Russia had declared a 36-hour cease-fire timed to coincide with Orthodox Christmas celebrations on

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Saturday. Ukraine denounced the pause as a ploy.

Russia said the attack on Kramatorsk was in retaliation for the Ukrainian rockets that destroyed a facility in Makiivka, also in the eastern Donetsk region, where Russian soldiers were gathered in the early hours of Jan. 1. It was one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago.

Also on Sunday, the Ukrainian military claimed to have hit a residential hall of a medical university in Rubizhne, a town in the Russian-occupied eastern Luhansk region, killing 14 Russian soldiers housed there. The number of wounded was unknown, it said.

Elsewhere in the east, Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said one person was killed in strikes on Bakhmut, and eight others were wounded. The battles for Bakhmut and the nearby town of Soledar remained among the bloodiest on the front, Zelenskyy said.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, the town of Merefa was hit during the night, killing one person, and two other settlements in the region were shelled, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

Russia and Ukraine exchanged prisoners Sunday, swapping 50 on each side, according to Konashenkov, the spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, and Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian president's office.

Germany: Iranians held in suspected poison plot after US tip

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Two Iranian men have been detained in Germany following a tip from U.S. security officials that at least one of them could be planning an attack with deadly chemicals, officials said Sunday.

Police and prosecutors said the brothers, aged 32 and 25, were detained overnight in the town of Castrop-Rauxel, northwest of Dortmund.

The authorities said in a joint statement the men are suspected to have planned a serious attack motivated by Islamic extremism, for which they had allegedly sought to obtain the potent toxins cyanide and ricin.

Specialists wearing anti-contamination suits were seen carrying evidence out of the older man's home. Duesseldorf prosecutors later said an initial search of the premises turned up no toxic substances.

It wasn't immediately clear how far advanced the plans for an attack were and whether the suspects had picked a specific target, but prosecutors said they would ask a court to keep the men jailed pending further investigation.

If convicted of jointly arranging a deadly attack, the men — who were identified by prosecutors only as M.J. and J.J. due to German privacy rules — could face between three and 15 years imprisonment.

German news agency 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." Duesseldorf prosecutors said the information came from authorities in the United States, but declined to elaborate.

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.

Teacher shot by 6-year-old known as devoted to students

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The Virginia teacher who authorities say was shot by a 6-year-old student is known as a hard-working educator who is devoted to her students and enthusiastic about the profession that runs in her family, according to fellow teachers and city officials.

John Eley III, a former member of the Newport News School Board, identified the first-grade teacher as Abby Zwerner, 25. Zwerner was shot Friday at Richneck Elementary School, authorities said.

Shortly after the shooting, police said Zwerner had life-threatening injuries, but she has improved and was listed in stable condition at a local hospital.

Eley and other city officials met with teachers and the principal at the school Friday and later went to the hospital, where they met with members of Zwerner's family, including several aunts who also are teachers.

"The family was all educators and said she was excited about doing the job," said Eley, who was recently elected to the Newport News City Council.

"The custodians and other teachers spoke about how she's a good teammate, she's a team player, she loves her children, she's just an all-around good teacher."

Cindy Hurst said her granddaughter, 8, is still rattled by the shooting. She was in Zwerner's class last year, and told her grandmother she is a great teacher.

"I just hate that this happened," Hurst told The Virginian-Pilot. "But life as we know it may not ever be the same — I don't know."

Zwerner attended James Madison University, graduating in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies and minors in Elementary Education and Music. She graduated from JMU's College of Education in 2020 with a master's degree in Education.

JMU President Jonathan Alger offered a message of support for Zwerner, her family, friends and fellow teachers, students and their families.

"JMU is prepared to support those impacted by this incident now and in the weeks to come," Alger tweeted Saturday.

Police Chief Steve Drew said the boy shot and wounded the teacher with a handgun in a first-grade classroom. He was later taken into police custody. Drew said the shooting was not accidental and was part of an altercation. No students were injured.

Police have declined to describe what led to the altercation or any other details about what happened in the classroom, citing the ongoing investigation. They have also declined to say how the boy got access to the gun or who owns the weapon.

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.

Mayor Phillip 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 Saturday.

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.

Newport News is a city of about 185,000 people in southeastern Virginia known for its shipyard, which

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builds the nation's aircraft carriers and other U.S. Navy vessels.

Richneck has about 550 students 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.

Russell Banks, praised author of 'Cloudsplitter,' dies at 82

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Russell Banks, an award-winning fiction writer who rooted such novels as "Affliction" and "The Sweet Hereafter" in the wintry, rural communities of his native Northeast and imagined the dreams and downfalls of everyone from modern blue-collar workers to the radical abolitionist John Brown in "Cloudsplitter," has died. He was 82.

Banks, a professor emeritus at Princeton University, died Saturday in upstate New York, his editor, Dan Halpern, told The Associated Press. Banks was being treated for cancer, Halpern said.

Joyce Carol Oates, a former Princeton colleague who referred to Banks on Twitter as a great American writer and "beloved friend of so many," said he died peacefully in his home.

"I loved Russell & loved his tremendous talent & magnanimous heart," Oates wrote. "Cloudsplitter" (was) his masterpiece, but all his work is exceptional."

Born in Newton, Massachusetts, and raised in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Banks was a self-styled heir to such 19th century writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman, aspiring to high art and a deep grasp of the country's spirit. He was a plumber's son who wrote often about working class families — whether those who died trying to break out, caught up in a "kind of madness" that the past can be erased, or those like himself who got away and survived and asked "Why me, Lord?"

Banks lived part of the year in Florida, and for a time had a home in Jamaica, but he was essentially a man of the North, with an old Puritan's sense of consequences. Snow fell often in his fiction, from the upstate New York community torn by a bus crash in "The Sweet Hereafter" to the desperate, divorced New Hampshire policeman undone by his paranoid fantasies in "Affliction."

In Banks' critical breakthrough "Continental Drift," published in 1985, oil burner repairman Bob Dubois flees from his native New Hampshire and goes into business with his wealthy brother in Florida, only to learn his brother's life was as hollow as his own.

"His brother's strut and brag were empty from the start, and in a deep, barely conscious way, Bob knew that all along and forgave him his strut and brag simply because he knew they were empty. But he had never believed it would come to this, to nothing," Banks wrote.

"Cloudsplitter" was his most ambitious novel, a 750-page narrative on John Brown and his improbable quest to rid the country of slavery. The story long precedes Banks' lifetime, but the inspiration was literally close to home. Banks lived near Brown's burial ground in North Elba, New York, and he would pass by often enough that Brown "became a kind of ghostly presence," the author told the AP in 1998.

"Cloudsplitter" reads like a prequel to Banks' contemporary works, a summoning of Hawthorne and other early influences. As remembered by son Owen Brown, John Brown was a haunted man of the Old World whose resolve to free the slaves and punish the enslavers made his face burn like a revivalist preacher's.

"I was a boy; I was frightened by my father's face," Banks' narrator explains. "I remember father looking straight into our eyes, burning us with his gaze, as he told us to hear him now. He had determined that he would henceforth put his sins of pride and vanity behind him. And he would go out from here and wage war on slavery. The time has come, he declared, and he wished to join the time in full cry."

Banks was a Pulitzer finalist for "Cloudsplitter" in 1999 and had been one 13 years earlier for "Continental Drift." His other honors included the Anisfeld-Book Award for "Cloudsplitter" and membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Two of his books were adapted into acclaimed film releases in the late 1990s: "The Sweet Hereafter," directed by Atom Egoyan and starring Ian Holm, and director Paul Schrader's "Affliction," which brought James Coburn an Academy Award for best supporting actor.

More recent works by Banks included the story collection "A Permanent Member of the Family" and the

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2021 novel "Foregone," in which an American filmmaker who moved to Canada during the Vietnam War looks back on his impulsive youth — a background Banks understood from the inside.

His books often told of absent and otherwise failing fathers and Banks' own father, Earl Banks, was an alcoholic whom the author says beat him as a child and left him with a permanently damaged left eye. Russell was meant for other worlds, smart enough to have the nickname "Teacher" in high school and become the first of his family to attend college, receiving a full scholarship from Colgate University.

He was an idealist in search of ideals, among countless young people of the 1960s to adopt Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" as a kind of Bible. He dropped out of Colgate and drove South with dreams of joining Fidel Castro's revolutionary army in Cuba, a quest which ended in St. Petersburg, Florida.

He was married twice by his early 20s (and eventually had four children), endured more than a few bar fights, wrote poetry bad enough that he later wished he had burned it, worked for a time with his father as a plumber back in New Hampshire and resumed his education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He was in his mid-30s, and nearing the end of his second marriage, when he published his first story collection, "Searching for Survivors," and first novel, "Family Life." By the start of the 1990s, when he turned 50, he was an established author and had settled into a lasting marriage with his fourth wife, the poet Chase Twichell.

"Over the years, I think that I've been able to make my anger coherent to myself, and that's allowed me to become more lucid as a human being, as a writer, as — I hope — a husband, father, and friend," he told Ploughshares for an interview that appeared in the magazine's Winter 1993-94 issue. "It's very hard to be a decent human being if you're controlled by anger that you can't understand. When you begin to acquire that understanding, you begin to become useful to other people."

40 people killed, dozens injured in bus crash in Senegal

By BABACAR DIONE Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — At least 40 people were killed and dozens injured in a bus crash in central Senegal, the country's president said Sunday.

President Macky Sall tweeted that the collision happened in Gnivy village, in the Kaffrine region, at about 3:30 a.m.

"I am deeply saddened by the tragic road accident today in Gniby causing 40 deaths and many serious injuries. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to the injured," said Sall.

He declared three days of mourning starting Monday and said he will hold an inter-ministerial council to discuss road safety measures.

Public prosecutor Cheikh Dieng said the crash happened on National Road No. 1 when a public bus punctured a tire and veered across the road, colliding with another bus coming from the opposite direction. At least 78 people are injured, some of them seriously, he said.

Images of the crash on social media show the damaged buses rammed into each other and a trail of debris along the road.

Traffic crashes happen regularly in the West African nation because of poor roads, bad cars and drivers not adhering to the rules, locals say.

In 2017, at least 25 people were killed when two buses also crashed. Many of those people were heading toward the central town of Touba for the annual Muslim pilgrimage.

'M3gan' dolls up with \$30.2M while 'Avatar' stays No. 1

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Blumhouse evil-doll horror film "M3gan" got off to a killer start, debuting with \$30.2 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates, while "Avatar: The Way of Water" continued its box-office reign in the top spot.

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Universal Pictures' "M3gan," about a robot companion built for a young girl after her parents are killed in a car accident, rode strong buzz and viral dancing memes to an above-expectations debut. In the low-budget slasher, starring Allison Williams, Blumhouse and producer James Wan crafted Hollywood's first hit of the new year, likely spawning a new high-concept horror franchise.

Audiences gave the PG-13 film a "B" CinemaScore — though reviews (94% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) were stronger for the modern, techy twist on a "Child's Play"-like thriller. It added \$10 million internationally.

But while "M3gan" drew audiences largely in 2D showings, large-format screens continued to be soaked up by James Cameron's "Avatar: The Way of Water." The 3-D three-hour sequel remained No. 1 for the fourth straight week in U.S. and Canadian theaters with \$45 million in sales.

Cameron's sci-fi spectacle has now surpassed \$500 million domestically and \$1.7 billion globally. After dominating the otherwise lackluster holiday corridor, the "Avatar" sequel is nearly matching the original's pace; the 2009 "Avatar" scored \$50.3 million in its fourth weekend. "The Way of Water" already ranks as the seventh highest grossing film ever, not accounting for inflation — a total particularly owed to its strong overseas performance. The film's \$1.2 billion in international ticket sales exceeds that of any film released since the start of the pandemic.

"M3gan" was the only new film in wide release, though Sony Pictures' "A Man Called Otto," starring Tom Hanks, played in 637 theaters after first launching in four theaters. The film, a remake of the Swedish film "A Man Called Ove," managed a solid \$4.2 million ahead of its nationwide release on Friday.

Third place went to "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," with \$13.1 million in its third week of release. The animated Universal Pictures sequel has tallied \$87.7 million in three weeks, plus \$109.7 million internationally.

While many awards contenders have struggled in recent months at the box office, Darren Aronofsky's "The Whale" is proving a modest exception. The A24 indie starring Brendan Fraser ranked seventh in its fifth week of release with \$1.5 million and a cumulative total of \$8.6 million — a good return for a film that cost an estimated \$3 million to make.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Avatar: The Way of Water," \$45 million.
2. "M3gan," \$30.2 million.
3. "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," \$13.1 million.
4. "A Man Called Otto," \$4.2 million.
5. "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," \$4 million.
6. "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody," \$2.4 million.
7. "The Whale," \$1.5 million.
8. "Babylon," \$1.4 million.
9. "Violent Night," \$740,000.
10. "The Menu," \$713,000.

CES 2023: Smelling, touching take center stage in metaverse

By HALELUYA HADERO and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Is the metaverse closer than we think?

It depends on who you ask at CES, where companies are showing off innovations that could immerse us deeper into virtual reality, otherwise known as VR.

The metaverse — essentially a buzzword for three-dimensional virtual communities where people can meet, work and play — was a key theme during the four-day tech gathering in Las Vegas that ends Sunday.

Taiwanese tech giant HTC unveiled a high-end VR headset that aims to compete with market leader Meta, and a slew of other companies and startups touted augmented reality glasses and sensory technologies that can help users feel — and even smell — in a virtual environment.

Among them, Vermont-based OVR Technology showcased a headset containing a cartridge with eight primary aromas that can be combined to create different scents. It's scheduled to be released later this year.

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An earlier, business-focused version used primarily for marketing fragrances and beauty products is integrated into VR goggles and allows users to smell anything from a romantic bed of roses to a marshmallow roasting over a fire at a campsite.

The company says it aims to help consumers relax and is marketing the product, which comes with an app, as a sort of digital spa mixed with Instagram.

"We are entering an era in which extended reality will drive commerce, entertainment, education, social connection, and wellbeing," the company's CEO and co-founder Aaron Wisniewski said in a statement. "The quality of these experiences will be measured by how immersive and emotionally engaging they are. Scent imbues them with an unmatched power."

But more robust and immersive uses of scent — and its close cousin, taste — are still further away on the innovation spectrum. Experts say even VR technologies that are more accessible are in the early days of their development and too expensive for many consumers to purchase.

The numbers show there's waning interest. According to the research firm NPD Group, sales of VR headsets, which found popular use in gaming, declined by 2% last year, a sour note for companies betting big on more adoption.

Still, big companies like Microsoft and Meta are investing billions. And many others are joining the race to grab some market share in supporting technologies, including wearables that replicate touch.

Customers, though, aren't always impressed by what they find. Ozan Ozaskinli, a tech consultant who traveled more than 29 hours from Istanbul to attend CES, suited up with yellow gloves and a black vest to test out a so-called haptics product, which relays sensations through buzzes and vibrations and stimulates our sense of touch.

Ozaskinli was attempting to punch in a code on a keypad that allowed him to pull a lever and unlock a box containing a shiny gemstone. But the experience was mostly a letdown.

"I think that's far from reality right now," Ozaskinli said. "But if I was considering it to replace Zoom meetings, why not? At least you can feel something."

Proponents say widespread adoption of virtual reality will ultimately benefit different parts of society by essentially unlocking the ability to be with anyone, anywhere at any time. Though it's too early to know what these technologies can do once they fully mature, companies looking to achieve the most immersive experiences for users are welcoming them with open arms.

Aurora Townsend, the chief marketing officer at Flare, a company slated to launch a VR dating app called Planet Theta next month, said her team is building its app to incorporate more sensations like touch once the technology becomes more widely available on the consumer market.

"Being able to feel the ground when you're walking with your partner, or holding their hands while you're doing that... subtle ways we engage people will change once haptic technology is fully immersive in VR," Townsend said.

Still, it's unlikely that many of these products will become widely used in the next few years, even in gaming, said Matthew Ball, a metaverse expert. Instead, he said the pioneers of adoption are likely to be fields that have higher budgets and more precise needs, such as bomb units using haptics and virtual reality to help with their work and others in the medical field.

In 2021, Johns Hopkins neurosurgeons said they used augmented reality to perform spinal fusion surgery and remove a cancerous tumor from a patient's spine.

And optical technology from Lumus, an Israeli company that makes AR glasses, is already being used by underwater welders, fighter pilots and surgeons who want to monitor a patient's vital signs or MRI scans during a procedure without having to look up at several screens, said David Goldman, vice president of marketing for the company.

Meanwhile, Xander, a Boston-based startup which makes smart glasses that display real-time captions of in-person conversations for people with hearing loss, will launch a pilot program with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs next month to test out some of its technology, said Alex Westner, the company's co-founder and CEO. He said the agency will allow veterans who have appointments for hearing loss or

other audio issues to try out the glasses in some of their clinics. And if it goes well, the agency would likely become a customer, Westner said.

Elsewhere, big companies from Walmart to Nike have been launching different initiatives in virtual reality. But it's unclear how much they can benefit during the early stages of the technology. The consulting firm McKinsey says the metaverse could generate up to \$5 trillion by 2030. But outside of gaming, much of today's VR use remains somewhat of a marginal amusement, said Michael Kleeman, a tech strategist and visiting scholar at the University of California San Diego.

"When people are promoting this, what they have to answer is — where's the value in this? Where's the profit? Not what's fun, what's cute and what's interesting."

Shiffrin shows her emotions after matching Vonn's record

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia (AP) — The emotions came pouring out of Mikaela Shiffrin when she matched Lindsey Vonn's women's World Cup skiing record with her 82nd win Sunday.

First there was a scream of delight following a serious case of nerves that had been building inside her throughout the day. Then came tears during the playing of the American anthem when her thoughts turned to her father, Jeff, who died three years ago.

"My dad used to be there and taking pictures. Most races these days I'll think about him and I'm able to kind of refocus," Shiffrin said. "But when I'm singing the national anthem (it's different). It was just before I ever won my first World Cup, he said, 'You better memorize the words of the national anthem, because if you ever win, you better sing it.' And so I always think about him when I'm up there."

There were also an emotional embrace between Shiffrin and her mother, Eileen, who has coached the skier since childhood and been with her daughter every step of the way since her first World Cup win slightly more than a decade ago.

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."

Where other skiers struggled on a dark, bumpy and unusually steep course, Shiffrin was able to ski smoothly.

"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.

Vonn wrote in an AP diary that "if anyone is to break my record, I'm really happy that it's an American."

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.

"I knew from the very beginning that she would be the one to break all the records," Vonn wrote. "But to be able to do it at such a young age is really impressive."

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.

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"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.

"She was almost perfect," said Brignone, a former overall World Cup champion. "When she's skiing like that she's unbeatable."

Added Gut-Behrami, the reigning world champion in giant slalom and the Olympic super-G champion, "It's good to have these athletes that are making history. Without that, we wouldn't be so addicted to sport."

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.

'The money is gone': Bahamas tries to turn page after FTX

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NASSAU, Bahamas (AP) — Dressed in a canary blue suit on a warm December night, sweat dripping from his brow, Bishop Lawrence Rolle belts out the lyrics to his latest hit song for the hundreds of children and adults gathered to celebrate Christmas.

"FTX!," he sings, bent over and shaking his head for emphasis. "The money is gone!"

"FTX!," his backup singer and audience scream back. "The money have done gone!"

The cryptocurrency exchange FTX was supposed to be the crown jewel of the Bahamian government's push to be the global destination for all things crypto, after years of having an economy overly reliant on tourism and banking. Instead, FTX is bankrupt and Bahamians are trying to figure out what's next for their country and whether their national crypto experiment has failed. Regulators are trying to locate FTX's customers' missing money.

Meanwhile, charities like Rolle's and dozens of contractors now out of work hope that another company will come along and bring new opportunities to the island nation, without the complications and embarrassment of an alleged billion-dollar fraud.

Rolle, a Pentecostal preacher known as the "singing bishop," is a prominent figure in the Bahamas. For decades, he's cooked and donated food to the poor and provided school lunches from his neighborhood kitchen at International Deliverance Praying Ministry in Over-The-Hill, one of the most impoverished parts of the capital of Nassau. Rolle and his staff feed roughly 2,500 people a week.

Rolle had been invited by Kirby Samuel, the principal of Mt. Carmel Preparatory Academy, to sing as part of the school's Christmas celebration. His act consisted mostly of a half dozen Afro-Caribbean gospel songs, but one number stood out — his social media hit about the recent collapse of FTX.

Rolle's ministry received \$50,000 from FTX in early 2022, one of several donations FTX made to the Bahamian people when it relocated to the Caribbean island nation in 2021. It was money, he said, that was used to restore a food storage trailer and make additional food donations. Rolle said it cost upward of \$10,000 a week to run his food donation program.

Asked about the failure of FTX, Rolle described it as a sad distraction from the many issues facing the country. Others are angry, particularly with Sam Bankman-Fried, the young founder of FTX. The Bahamas had a reputation, like some other Caribbean isles, as a destination for illicit and offshore finance. There was a belief that crypto would allow the island to diversify its economy, give Bahamians more financial opportunities and overall help provide the country a more prosperous future.

The country enacted the Digital Assets and Registered Exchanges Act in 2020, making the Bahamas one

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of the first countries to put together a regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies and other digital assets. The prime minister, Philip Davis, participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for FTX's new \$60 million headquarters in Nassau in April, along with Bankman-Fried.

"Their arrival was sort of the culmination of the work the Bahamians did to move in this direction," said Stefen Deleveaux, president and CEO of the Caribbean Blockchain Association.

Several other crypto companies and startups are headquartered in the Bahamas, some of them at an incubator known as Crypto Isle, not far from downtown Nassau.

Deleveaux said he became interested in crypto as early as 2014, and mostly has been trying to focus his organizations' efforts on the non-trading parts of crypto, like blockchain technology, financial inclusion and technological uses. He remains skeptical about cryptocurrency trading.

"It's frustrating. Now when people think about crypto they are going to think of FTX," Deleveaux said. "That's going to make my own job much harder."

In some ways, FTX was both ubiquitous and removed from the local community, Bahamians said. Its ads were everywhere, most notably at the Nassau Airport in the hall for tourist arrivals. But at the same time, FTX ran most of its operations from the secure luxury compound known as Albany, where residents like Tiger Woods and Justin Timberlake can be regularly spotted. Albany is located on the opposite side of New Providence, the most populated island in the Bahamas and the location of Nassau.

"You don't casually wander into Albany," Deleveaux said.

One bartender at the Margaritaville Resort, where FTX ran up an unpaid \$55,000 tab, described a group of 10 to 15 mostly white FTX employees who would eat in the restaurant, faces buried in their laptops the entire time. While FTX did hire Bahamians or contracted with Bahamian businesses, it was almost entirely for logistics jobs like construction, janitor services or food catering.

Just as quickly as FTX became engrained in elite Bahamian circles did the whole thing unravel. FTX failed in spectacular fashion in early November, going from solvent to bankrupt in less than a week. One food catering servicer said he had to let go most of his workers after FTX, his biggest contract, went bankrupt.

Bankman-Fried, 30, was arrested last month in the Bahamas, and extradited to the U.S. to face criminal charges in what U.S. Attorney Damian Williams has called "one of the biggest frauds in American history." The floppy-haired crypto entrepreneur has been released on bail and is scheduled to go on trial in October.

Meanwhile, law enforcement and regulators in the U.S. and the Bahamas, as well as lawyers and FTX's new management, are trying to determine how much of investors' and customers' money "is gone," as Bishop Rolle repeats often in his song. Estimates of how much money was lost in the FTX collapse have varied significantly, since some assets are still being recovered, but one estimate puts the losses at around \$8 billion to \$10 billion.

"Like the rest of the world, I've been glued to my television set since (FTX's) collapse," said Mt. Carmel's principal Samuel, in an interview.

Other Bahamians, however, said the FTX collapse has diverted attention away from the ongoing issues facing the Caribbean country.

The Bahamian economy was sorely tested in the coronavirus pandemic. The country effectively banned outside visitors for nearly two years, and only started letting cruise ships dock at its popular dock about eight months ago. In Nassau, there is widespread evidence of the pandemic's economic toll. The British Colonial hotel, best known for being the site of the James Bond movie "Never Say Never Again," was boarded up and closed in February. Rooms once went for \$400 a night there.

Despite miles of pristine beaches, beautiful resorts, and the richest economy of the Caribbean, the Bahamas remains a country riven by inequality. Taxi drivers spoke about the inability to get even a \$6,000 loan to buy their own vehicle. Roughly one out of five Bahamians do not have a bank account, according to the country's central bank.

Late last year, the Bahamian government had to impose price controls on dozens of food staples in a desperate attempt to combat inflation.

FTX officials seemed to recognize food and hunger as an issue to tackle to develop goodwill with its

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new neighbors. Along with the \$50,000 donation to Rolle's ministry, FTX donated \$250,000 to Hands for Hunger and poured \$1.1 million into a new non-profit known as the Agricultural Development Committee, focused on building up the nation's food security. The founder of the Committee, Phillip Smith, did not respond to several requests for comment on the donation.

As FTX filed for bankruptcy, there was speculation in Bahamian media about whether Rolle might have to return the \$50,000 donation, which he said was spent in roughly a month after it was received.

"We pinched that money the best we could, buying flour, rice," Rolle said. "There's just too many hungry people."

"It's a difficult issue for the Bishop, but it's one thing I think everyone in the country will agree: whatever they gave him, he did not spend it on himself," Mt. Carmel's Samuel said.

"I just wish there will be better companies than FTX," Rolle said. "Many of our children got no parents, or we got parents who have two or four or five children, or kids have no father. We can barely afford to feed them. I pray to God that someone comes to donate even more."

Ukrainians honor dead fighter at outdoor funeral in capital

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian soldiers, family and mourners gathered in frigid weather in Kyiv on Sunday to pay tribute to a soldier killed fighting against Russian forces in Bakhmut, the strategic city under siege on the eastern front.

An open casket, outdoor service was held in Kyiv's Independence Square for Maj. Oleh Yurchenko who was killed in Bakhmut on Jan. 2. Fellow soldiers carried the coffin while others knelt on the ground. A bugle played and later a male quartet sang solemn hymns as an Orthodox priest conducted the service attended by about 200 people.

Yurchenko, 45, nicknamed "Happy," volunteered for the army after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24. He had been head of security for TIU Canada, an energy company operating in Ukraine, according to a Facebook post.

Yurchenko was well-known as a Ukrainian patriot as he had been a participant in pro-democracy demonstrations in 2004-2005 and later in 2014 which ousted Viktor Yanukovich as president. Kyiv's Independence Square was the center of both demonstrations so it was fitting as the site for the religious ceremony for Yurchenko.

"He was the best Ukrainian, a kind father, a very responsible person," said Yurii Zhukovskiy, a Ukrainian soldier. "It is a very heavy loss, because these are the best people in Ukraine, and they are dying. It is a great pity. And no matter how many enemies are killed, we are sorry for (the death of) one such person."

Another fellow soldier, Ruslan Boyko, praised Yurchenko's positive outlook.

"He was a very brave, very cheerful person who always tried to help everyone, to be ahead in any situation," Boiko said. He said that Yurchenko was always ready "to take on more responsibility, more tasks and protect everyone as much as possible."

Olesia Yurchenko, the fallen soldier's 22-year-old daughter and eldest child, said the family is grieving his death but trying to live by his principles.

"It is about everyone cherishing their virtues: hard work, kindness, honesty, loyalty to their country, their family," she said. "Because this is what my father taught me. Not to give up, not to retreat."

She said that her father "always said that we still have to build the country ... build Ukraine."

State lawmakers turn to creative solutions in speaker fights

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — As Republican infighting debilitates Washington, lawmakers at some U.S. statehouses have managed to launch sessions complicated by similar GOP partisan divides or razor-thin margins of party control with a host of creative — if yet untested — solutions.

The approaches differ by state: a delicate working agreement here, a bipartisan truce there. "The com-

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monality is the standing on the edge of the precipice," said David Niven, an associate professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati.

America's fiercely divided politics are not limited to national government, where Republicans won a threadbare majority in the U.S. House in November and elected Rep. Kevin McCarthy as speaker early Saturday on the 15th ballot.

In the states, a combination of factors — including an influx of Republicans from the far right -- have contributed to an air of uncertainty in some places as state legislatures begin business. The nation's shifting political sands left parties in some state legislative chambers with such small majorities that each unexpected departure or death might threaten a scramble for control.

In New Hampshire, for example, the 400-member House convened this week with Republicans holding a razor thin 201-197 majority, with two seats vacant. Slightly more Democrats than Republicans were absent last month when members chose their leader, though, which gave the GOP a bit of breathing room when it came to re-electing state Rep. Sherm Packard, of Londonderry, as House speaker.

"The voters have sent us here with a never before seen balance of partisan makeup," Packard said. "The only way we can forge ahead and be successful in this environment is by working together."

In his inaugural address Thursday, Republican Gov. Chris Sununu called the nearly even division a "awesome opportunity" for cooperation.

"And we have a speaker," he said, referring to the chaos in Washington. "What a great civics lesson and challenge that we find ourselves in."

The margin of control is even narrower in the Pennsylvania House, where the November election gave Democrats hopes of reclaiming the majority in the often bitterly partisan chamber after more than a decade.

Their 102-101 margin included one Democratic incumbent who died a few weeks before being reelected, however, and two others who resigned after winning election to higher offices.

The House's top Republican is claiming majority status as a result and has sued to delay filling two of the vacancies. When lawmakers convened on Tuesday to take oaths of office and pick a speaker, the deadlock was broken only when all seven members of GOP leadership and nine other Republicans joined all Democrats to elect Democratic state Rep. Mark Rozzi, of the Reading area, as House speaker.

Rozzi promised to act as an independent, saying he would caucus with neither party.

"The speakership is a nonpartisan — and I want to repeat that, nonpartisan — officer of the House, entrusted with maintaining the integrity of the House," he told reporters Tuesday night. "That will be my focus as speaker."

Bipartisanship was also the byword in Ohio, which saw a surprising turn in its speaker's race on Tuesday despite Republicans holding a formidable supermajority in the Ohio House.

Though Republican state Rep. Derek Merrin had appeared to seal the deal in a preliminary vote before the holidays, the conservative's hopes were dashed at the last minute by a deal between more moderate GOP backers of rival Rep. Jason Stephens and the House Democratic caucus.

"I intend to listen, and I intend to be very open and receptive to all members of the Ohio House," Stephens said after winning the speakership with more Democratic votes than Republican ones. "We represent all of Ohio."

Political scientist Niven called Stephens' election in Ohio "mountain-moving," making a pivot away from the hyper conservative politics that the state has seen in recent years. Meanwhile, McCarthy's efforts to appease his far-right detractors in Washington rather than to work with Democrats may leave GOP moderates in Washington wanting, he said.

"I think there is a lesson here that there are some very happy Republicans in the Ohio Legislature because they were willing to see beyond their own caucus, and there are Republicans in the U.S. House who, in the end, aren't going to get what they want because they aren't willing to take a few steps across the aisle," he said.

Deal-making across party lines has long been a part of governing, including within state legislatures. In Alaska, state lawmakers have a history of crossing party lines to form majorities. In North Carolina, a notorious yet effective power-sharing deal for speaker was struck in 2003, allowing a Democrat and Republican to preside over sessions on alternate days.

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House Republicans at the time included Rep. Patrick McHenry, who is now a congressman and one of Kevin McCarthy's top lieutenants.

Criminal investigations later led GOP North Carolina Rep. Michael Decker, whose switch to the Democrats in 2003 caused a seat deadlock between the parties, to admit in federal court that he took \$50,000 in exchange for supporting Democrat Jim Black for speaker. Decker received prison time, as did Black, who accepted punishment in state court for bribing Decker without pleading guilty to the charge.

This year, it remains to be seen whether unusual legislative deals are functional. In New Hampshire, Ohio and Pennsylvania, some typically routine operational issues have been rancorous — or left in limbo.

The all-important vote on Pennsylvania House rules for the next session did not take place, as it normally does, immediately after Rozzi was elected speaker. The House has yet to determine how many members of each party will make up committees, much less the members' individual committee assignments.

Rozzi promised a bipartisan staff, but nothing has been announced.

Republican House Leader Bryan Cutler of Lancaster County, who argues his caucus' total of 101 current members makes him majority leader, said the choice of Rozzi was "absolutely bipartisan in nature, and I think you saw that trend, kind of, across the country. I think that kind of bipartisanship is good, I think us taking that first step is good."

Session dates and committee assignments also have not been announced in the Ohio House, where Stephens, the House speaker, was scrambling after his surprise victory to pick a leadership team, hire a staff and unify his caucus. Matters for the chamber — which must begin deliberations on Ohio's two-year state operating budget soon — were potentially complicated Friday. That's when the Ohio Republican Party's central committee voted to censure the GOP lawmakers who joined Democrats in supporting Stephens. Champions of the move called their actions a betrayal.

In New Hampshire, lawmakers divided over proposed rules changes that reflected the dramatically divided House, including grappling with the extra importance of attendance over the next two years.

One rejected rule change would have allowed members unable to attend sessions because of illness to vote by proxy. Supporters argued that the change would help members stay healthy while also fulfilling their duty to constituents, but — even amid rising COVID-19 infections — the proposal failed.

Conservatives take aim at tenure for university professors

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — When Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick asked Texas colleges to disavow critical race theory, the University of Texas faculty approved a resolution defending their freedom to decide for themselves how to teach about race.

Patrick said he took it as a message to "go to hell."

In turn, Patrick, a Republican, said it was time to consider holding the faculty accountable, by targeting one of the top perks of their jobs.

"Maybe we need to look at tenure," Patrick said at a news conference in November.

It's a sentiment being echoed by conservative officials in red states across the country. The indefinite academic appointments that come with tenure — the holy grail of university employment — have faced review from lawmakers or state oversight boards in at least half a dozen states, often presented as bids to rein in academics with liberal views.

Tenure advocates are bracing for the possibility of new threats as lawmakers return to statehouses around the country.

The trend reflects how conservative scrutiny of instruction related to race, gender and sexuality has extended from schools to higher education. But budget considerations also play a role. Tenured faculty numbers have been declining even in more liberal states. Universities are hiring more part-time, adjunct instructors amid declines in financial support from state governments.

Traditionally, tenured professors can be terminated only under extreme circumstances, such as professional misconduct or a financial emergency. Advocates for tenure say it is a crucial component of academic

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freedom — especially as controversy grows over scholarly discussions about history and identity.

Without tenure, faculty are “liable to play it safe when it comes time to have a classroom discussion about a difficult topic,” said Irene Mulvey, president of the American Association of University Professors.

But in difficult financial and political times, even tenured professors may not be guaranteed employment. In Kansas, Emporia State University this fall cut 33 faculty — most of them tenured — using an emergency pandemic measure that allowed universities to bypass policies on staff terminations to balance budgets.

Max McCoy, Emporia State’s sole journalism professor, penned a column that began, “I may be fired for writing this” — before learning this would be his last year teaching at the school.

“This is a purge,” he said. He said all the fired professors were “Democrats or liberal in our thinking.”

University spokesperson Gwen Larson said individual professors were not targeted for dismissal. She said the cuts followed a review of how demand for academic programs is changing and “where we needed to move in the future.

Attacks on higher education have been fueled by a shift in how conservatives see colleges and universities, said Jeremy Young, of the free-expression group PEN America. The share of Republicans and independent-leaning Republicans who said higher education was having a negative effect on the country grew from 37% to 59% from 2015 to 2019 in Pew Research Center polling.

In Texas, university administrators are working behind the scenes to squash anticipated legislation that would target tenure, fearful it will hurt recruitment, said Jeff Blodgett, president of the Texas Conference of AAUP.

Some people already aren’t applying for university jobs because of the discussions, said Pat Heintzelman, president of the Texas Faculty Association.

In Florida, a federal judge in November blocked the “Stop-WOKE” Act, a law pushed by Gov. Ron DeSantis that restricts certain race-based conversations and analysis in colleges. The governor’s office is appealing the injunction. Compliance with the law would be part of the criteria for evaluating tenured professors under a review process that the university system’s Board of Governors is weighing.

“They’ve latched onto the idea that many totalitarian regimes have done over the years, which is if you can stop students from learning about ideas that a political party in power disagrees with, that is one way to stop those ideas from existing in the society at all,” said Andrew Gothard, president of United Faculty of Florida.

DeSantis, though, has questioned the argument that tenure provides academic freedom.

“If anything, it’s created more of an intellectual orthodoxy where people that have dissenting views, it’s harder for them to be tenured in the first place,” he said at a news conference in April.

In Louisiana, lawmakers set up a task force to study tenure with the Republican-backed resolution noting that students should be confident that courses are free of “political, ideological, religious, or antireligious indoctrination.” Professors raised concerns until they learned the task force’s members were mostly tenure supporters.

In Georgia, the state’s Board of Regents approved a policy that made it easier to remove tenured faculty who have had a negative performance review. Elsewhere, legislation to ban or restrict tenure also has been introduced in recent years in Iowa, South Carolina and Mississippi, but failed to win passage.

The pushback follows decades of declining rates of tenured faculty. According to the AAUP, 24% of faculty members held full-time tenured appointments in fall 2020, compared with 39% in fall 1987, the first year for which directly comparable information is available.

Part-time college instructors rarely receive benefits. They frequently must travel from campus to campus to cobble together a living.

“It’s a nightmare,” said Caprice Lawless, who wrote the “Adjunct Cookbook,” replete with recipes that poorly compensated Ph.D.s can cobble together with food pantry staples.

“I’ve taken Ph.D.s to foodbanks and watched them cry because they can’t get enough food for their family,” said Lawless, who said she served as a social worker of sorts before retiring two years ago from Front Range Community College in Westminster, Colorado.

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The opposition to tenure has united conservatives for different reasons: Not all share the same concerns about “woke higher education,” said Marc Stein, a San Francisco State University history professor, who has written about the shift to part-time faculty.

“But,” he said, “if you attack the ‘wokeness’ of higher education and that leads to declining funding for higher education, then economic conservatives are happy.”

Tenure exploded after World War II when it helped with recruitment as the GI Bill sent enrollment soaring, said Sol Gittleman, a former provost of Tufts University who has written on the issue. Lately, the country has overproduced Ph.D.s, said Gittleman, who predicts tenure will largely disappear in the coming decades outside the top 100 colleges and universities.

“Critical race theory — that’s an excuse,” he said. “If there was a shortage of faculty, you wouldn’t hear that.”

France’s Macron opens up about love to autistic interviewers

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LE PECQ, France (AP) — The question for France’s president about his teenage romance with a teacher at his high school was so close to the bone, so eye-popping in a country where politicians largely keep their private lives to themselves, that the interviewer couldn’t quite rustle up the courage to ask it.

So he got Emmanuel Macron to pose it to himself.

“He is the president,” the French leader said, reading the question out loud from a piece of paper his interviewer handed to him.

“He should set the example and not marry his teacher.”

Ouch.

A group of interviewers on the autism spectrum, described by their publication as “atypical journalists,” got France’s 45-year-old president to talk about himself with unusual and illuminating candor in a televised interview this weekend, with frank but fair no-filter questions that professional journalists mostly don’t dare ask of the French leader.

The interviewers from Le Papotin, a journal founded in 1990 in a Paris-region day care center for young people with autism, playfully grilled Macron about his marriage to Brigitte, his friends (he said he doesn’t have many), Russian President Vladimir Putin and other matters in his heart and thoughts.

In the process, they winkled out some remarkably intimate details and gave Macron a platform to show a more personal side at a critical juncture in his second term as president. His government is embarking on a high-risk effort to push back France’s retirement age, a promised reform of the pension system that is infuriating critics and threatens to bring protesters onto the streets.

Le Papotin’s interviewers have over the years questioned numerous people of note, including former Presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, and actor Vincent Cassel (“Ocean’s Twelve,” “Black Swan”). Their Macron interview was filmed in Paris in November and broadcast by France Televisions, which said the only rule was: “Anything can be said to the Papotin but, most of all, anything can happen!”

Macron responded gamefully, even to the probing about his romance with Brigitte, 24 years his senior. She was Brigitte Auzière, a married mother of three children, when they met at the high school where he was a student and she was a teacher. She later moved to the French capital to join Macron and divorced. They married in 2007.

“It’s not about setting an example or not, you see? When you’re in love, the choice isn’t yours,” Macron said in his defense.

“She wasn’t really my teacher. She was my drama teacher. It’s not quite the same,” he additionally ventured, a wiggle-round that Macron himself chuckled at and which provoked peals of laughter and a teasing “he’s crafty!” from one of the interviewers sat beside him.

To another delicate question — “Do you have a lot of dough?” — the former banker said he earns less now as president, without divulging figures.

On friendship, he said: “It’s not the best job to have lots of friends.”

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And of Putin, whom he's met, and the Russian president's war in Ukraine, the French leader said: "When you meet him like that, he's not unpleasant. That's the paradox."

At the end of the half-hour question-and-answer session, Macron thanked his interviewers for a job well done.

"Your questions took me onto grounds ... where I'd not been in other interviews, with other journalists," he said.

Boebert's backers urge her to 'tone down the nasty rhetoric'

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

RIFLE, Colo. (AP) — Debbie Hartman voted for Lauren Boebert for Congress in 2020 and again in 2022, delighted by Boebert's unequivocal defense of cultural issues that animate the Republican Party's far right flank. But as Hartman shopped recently at a supermarket in this Rocky Mountain ranching outpost, she had one piece of advice for the Colorado lawmaker.

"Tone down the nasty rhetoric on occasion and just stick with the point at hand," said Hartman, 65, a veterinary tech assistant.

That sentiment reflects Boebert's challenge as she begins her second term in the House. In her relatively short time in Washington, she has built a national profile with a combative style embracing everything from gun ownership to apocalyptic religious rhetoric. Constituents such as Hartman in the Republican-leaning 3rd Congressional District laud Boebert for defending their rights, but cringe at her provocations, contributing to an unexpectedly tight race last year that she won by just 546 votes out of more than 300,000 cast.

"She tapped into what Trump was doing, and she maybe took it too far in some instances," said Alex Mason, 27, adding that Boebert, whom he supports, is still more tactful than former President Donald Trump.

In an interview, Boebert said "this slim victory, it opened my eyes to another chance to do everything that I've been promising to do."

To the congresswoman, that means being "more focused on delivering the policies I ran on than owning the left," adding she hoped "to bring the temperature down, to bring unity."

For much of past week, however, the temperature on Capitol Hill was only rising. Boebert was a leading voice among a group of lawmakers who refused to support Rep. Kevin McCarthy's bid to become House speaker, a historic revolt against a party leader. McCarthy finally won the gavel early Saturday morning.

Some of Boebert's toughest words are increasingly aimed at fellow Republicans, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, another controversial Trump acolyte who was one of McCarthy's most prominent conservative supporters.

"I have been asked to explain MTG's beliefs on Jewish space lasers, on why she showed up to a white supremacist conference. ... I'm just not going to go there," Boebert said over the phone as she rode in a car winding through the high canyons near her hometown of Silt before the speakership vote. "She wants to say all these things and seem unhinged on Twitter, so be it."

Boebert, 36, insisted that while she may try to pick fewer fights with the left, she's not going to become a different person even after barely beating an opponent, Democrat Adam Frisch, who had targeted what he called Boebert's "angertainment."

"A lot of those on the left have said: 'Look at your election, are you going to tone it down, little girl?'" she said. "I'm still going to be me."

The slim margin has stirred discussion about whether she might be vulnerable in another race next year, with Frisch saying he has received encouragement from lawmakers in Washington to run again..

But, she said, she's thinking more about what it's like to be a member of the majority party.

"In the minority, all I had was my voice, the only thing I could do was be loud about the things I'm passionate about," she said. Now, "We have to lead right now, we have to show Americans that we deserve to be in the majority."

People in Boebert's district, which runs from the ruddy red mesas in Grand Junction that stand sentry over rugged, high-desert terrain to the coal mining hamlets nestled in the Rockies, say the landscape

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promotes a kind of frontier libertarianism. To many voters, Boebert became a standard-bearer for a rural way of life and values that they feel are being both persecuted and forgotten.

Larry Clark, who spent 50 years tending to his family's 160-acre ranch before his relatives sought cash for the land, points to one example. Many more liberal city-dwellers east of the Rockies voted to reintroduce wolves to the Western Slope, where the predators' prey includes livestock that drives the local economy.

"They don't understand what rural life is like," said Clark, who only had encouraging words for Boebert, a staunch opponent of reintroduction. "Send the wolves to Boulder."

Even if they've grown wary of her excesses, many of Boebert's supporters say she's amplified their concerns nationally and served as an antidote to progressive Democrats such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.

Raleigh Snyder, a retired aircraft mechanic in Grand Junction, said Boebert was America's only chance against "endemic corruption" in Washington. Still, he said "she's probably going to have to learn to temper her approach, but don't change her goals."

Outside Rifle's City Market, Maryann Tonder said she doesn't want Boebert "even to feel that she has to compromise principles to get stuff done." But, she added, "you can do it in a way that is not over the top."

Another Boebert supporter in Rifle, Julie Ottman, who was pushing a cart out of City Market, said, "sometimes you got to give a little bit in order to get."

But others are pressing Boebert to stand firm.

"I don't want her to bow," said Mike Gush, 64, a coal miner from the small town of Craig. "I would stop supporting her."

Today in History: JAN 09, Conn. ratifies U.S. Constitution

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 9, the ninth day of 2023. There are 356 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 9, 2015, French security forces shot and killed two al-Qaida-linked brothers suspected of carrying out the rampage at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo that had claimed 12 lives.

On this date:

In 1788, Connecticut became the fifth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1793, Frenchman Jean Pierre Blanchard, using a hot-air balloon, flew from Philadelphia to Woodbury, New Jersey.

In 1861, Mississippi became the second state to secede from the Union, the same day the Star of the West, a merchant vessel bringing reinforcements and supplies to Federal troops at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, retreated because of artillery fire.

In 1913, Richard Milhous Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, was born in Yorba Linda, California.

In 1914, the County of Los Angeles opened the country's first public defender's office.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of Gallipoli ended after eight months with an Ottoman Empire victory as Allied forces withdrew.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces began landing on the shores of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines as the Battle of Luzon got underway, resulting in an Allied victory over Imperial Japanese forces.

In 1951, the United Nations headquarters in New York officially opened.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his State of the Union address to Congress, warned of the threat of Communist imperialism.

In 1972, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes, speaking by telephone from the Bahamas to reporters in Hollywood, said a purported autobiography of him, as told to writer Clifford Irving, was a fake.

In 1987, the White House released a January 1986 memorandum prepared for President Ronald Reagan by Lt. Col. Oliver L. North showing a link between U.S. arms sales to Iran and the release of American hostages in Lebanon.

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In 2003, U.N. weapons inspectors said there was no "smoking gun" to prove Iraq had nuclear, chemical or biological weapons but they demanded that Baghdad provide private access to scientists and fresh evidence to back its claim that it had destroyed its weapons of mass destruction.

In 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, the No. 2 man in the Palestinian hierarchy during Yasser Arafat's rule, was elected president of the Palestinian Authority by a landslide.

In 2020, Chinese state media said a preliminary investigation into recent cases of viral pneumonia had identified the probable cause as a new type of coronavirus.

Ten years ago: Vice President Joe Biden heard personal stories of gun violence from representatives of victims groups and gun-safety organizations at the White House as he undertook to draft the Obama administration's response to the shooting at a Connecticut elementary school. The Seastreak Wall Street, a commuter ferry, made a hard landing into a Manhattan pier, injuring 85 people. No one was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame; for the second time in four decades.

Five years ago: Downpours sent mud and boulders roaring down Southern California hillsides that had been stripped of vegetation by a gigantic wildfire; more than 20 people died and hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed. Breitbart News Network announced that Steve Bannon was stepping down as chairman after his public break with President Donald Trump.

One year ago: Seventeen people, including eight children, died after a fire sparked by a malfunctioning space heater filled a high-rise apartment building with smoke in the New York City borough of the Bronx; it was the city's deadliest blaze in three decades. Comedian and actor Bob Saget, best known for his role on the sitcom "Full House," was found dead in a hotel room in Orlando, Florida. (A medical examiner later determined that Saget died from an accidental blow to the head, likely from a backward fall.) Dwayne Hickman, an actor and TV executive remembered for his role as TV's Dobie Gillis from 1959 to 1963, died of complications from Parkinson's at his Los Angeles home; he was 87.

Today's birthdays: Actor K Callan is 87. Folk singer Joan Baez is 82. Rock musician Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) is 79. Actor John Doman is 78. Singer David Johansen (aka Buster Poindexter) is 73. Singer Crystal Gayle is 72. Actor J.K. Simmons is 68. Actor Imelda Staunton is 67. Nobel Peace laureate Rigoberta Menchú is 64. Rock musician Eric Erlandson is 60. Actor Joely Richardson is 58. Rock musician Carl Bell (Fuel) is 56. Actor David Costabile ("Breaking Bad") is 56. Rock singer Steve Harwell (Smash Mouth) is 56. Rock singer-musician Dave Matthews is 56. Actor-director Joey Lauren Adams is 55. Comedian/actor Deon Cole is 52. Actor Angela Bettis is 50. Actor Omari Hardwick is 49. Roots singer-songwriter Hayes Carll is 47. Singer A.J. McLean (Backstreet Boys) is 45. Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, is 41. Pop-rock musician Drew Brown (OneRepublic) is 39. Rock-soul singer Paolo Nutini is 36. Actor Nina Dobrev is 34. Actor Basil Eidenbenz is 30. Actor Kerris Dorsey is 25. Actor Tyree Brown is 19.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

January 9, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of December 12, 2022 board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of December 2022 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of December 2022 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of December 2022 School Transportation Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. South Dakota Department of Education CTE Innovative Equipment Grant Award – Health Science Simulation Lab.
3. Approval of December 2022 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Set date and time for annual school board election – April 11, 2023 (7:00 AM to 7:00 PM), and authorize Business Manager to designate officials, with voting precincts in Andover, Bristol, Columbia, and Groton. [3-year terms expiring: Grant Rix, Steve Smith]
2. First reading of proposed amendments to job descriptions for Business Manager and 6-12 Principal.
3. Discussion or necessary action relating to 2022-2023 school calendar adjustments.
4. Approve bid specifications for school bus and set bid opening for 1:00 PM on Monday, February 13, 2023.
5. Approve bid specifications for elementary roofing replacement and set bid opening for 2:00 PM on Monday, February 13, 2023.
6. Approve resignation of Nicole Barton, MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional.
7. Approve hiring Jana Simunek, food service staff, for 3.5 hours/day at \$14.00/hour.

ADJOURN