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Groton Community Calendar Friday, Jan. 20

Senior Menu: Breaded codfish, rice pilaf, pea and cheese salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.
School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.
Wrestling hosts Deuel at 6 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 21

Wrestling at Arlington, 10 a.m.
Girls Basketball at Great Plains Lutheran: C game at 11 a.m. followed by JV and Varsity.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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



Sunday, Jan. 22

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

CLOSED: 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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Groton Area boys win, girls lose at Milbank double header

Milbank's girls took control of the second half to beat the Lady Tigers, 40-33. Groton Area led after the first quarter, 10-6, and at half time, 17-16. Milbank took the lead after three quarters of play, 30-26.

Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with 13 points, four rebounds and one steal. Jaedyn Penning had 10 points, four rebounds, one assist and one steal. Kennedy Hansen had five points and one assist. Brooke Gengerke had three points, four rebounds, one assist and one steal. Jerica Locke had two points, seven rebounds, six assists and three steals. Aspen Johnson had five rebounds. Faith Traphagen had one rebounds and three steals. The Tigers made 10 of 33 two-pointers for 30 percent, three of 19 three-pointers for 16 percent, one of four free throws for 25 percent, had 25 rebounds, 12 turnovers, nine assists, nine steals and 16 team fouls.

Maurina Street led Milbank with 13 points while Siera Wenzel had 10, Clare Snaza had six and Tyra Berry added five points. 41 -33 points

Groton led at the quarter stops at 15-8, 28-12 and 37-17 en route to a 45-20 junior varsity game win.

Faith Traphagen led the Tigers with nine points followed by Laila Roberts with eight, Kennedy Hansen, Rylee Dunker and Talli Wright each had six, Taryn Traphagen had three points and Brooklyn Hansen, Elizabeth Flihs, Mia Crank and Emily Clark each had two points.

Anna Neugebauer led Milbank with six points while Ella Sandvig and four, Rylee Schoular had three and Avery Schueman, Josie Riveland and Belle Pauli each had two points and Ivy Lewno added a free throw.

Groton girls won the C game, 19-15. Taryn Traphagen and McKenna Tietz each had six points, Mia Crank had five and Kella Tracy added two points. Paelle Pauli led Milbank with 10 points.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops, 16-9, 37-22 and 50-28 en route to a 64-36 win in the varsity boys game.

Lane Tietz led the Tigers with 23 points, two rebounds, four assists and three steals. Jacob Zak had 13 points, seven rebounds and one assist. Tate Larson had nine points, three rebounds and four assists. Cole Simon had seven points, five rebounds, two assists and three steals. Ryder Johnson had six points, one rebound, one assist and one block. Cade Larson had three points and four rebounds. Keegan Tracy had three points and one rebound. Braxton Imrie had an assist and Dillon Abeln had a block. The Tigers made 21 of 30 two-pointers for 70 percent, five of 18 three-pointers for 28 percent, seven of 15 free throws for 47 percent, had 23 rebounds, seven turnovers, 13 assists, 10 steals, 16 team fouls and two blocks.

Sisseton made a three-pointer at the buzzer to edge past Groton Area in the junior varsity game, 43-42. Groton had taken the lead with 8.6 seconds left on a rebound and put back by Gage Sippel, 42-40.

Ryder Johnson led Groton Area with 19 points followed by Logan Ringgenberg with seven points, Colby Dunker had five points, Gage Sippel and Braxton Imrie each had four points and Dillon Abeln had two points. Groton made four of nine free throws.

Groton Area won the boys C game, 22-11. Gage Sippel had 10 points followed by Logan Warrington with five, Blake Pauli, Carter Simon and Turner Thompson each had two points and JD Schwan had one free throw.

All of the games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with lots of help. Thanks to Ryan and Carla Tracy for calling the JV and varsity games and for getting Jeslyn and the equipment to the game. To Jeslyn Kosel for getting everything up and going. To Tami Zimney and Darci Moody for running the iPad during the C Games.

Varsity game sponsors were Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Chamber of Commerce, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Locke Electric, Spanier Harvesting & Trucking, Bahr Spray Foam, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting. C game sponsors were Darcie and Eric Moody and Russ and Dixie Clark. JV sponsors were Kent and Darcy Muller and the Imrie family in memory of Jay Imrie.

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Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #12 Results

Team Standings: Jackelopes – 15, Chipmunks – 14, Coyotes – 12, Shihtzus – 7, Foxes – 6, Cheetahs – 6

Men's High Games: Randy Stanley – 233, Brad Waage – 189, Brody Sombke – 188

Women's High Games: Dar Larson – 201, Brenda Madsen – 173, Darci Spanier & Vicki Walter – 168

Men's High Series: Randy Stanley – 591, Brad Waage – 526, Brody Sombke – 522

Women's High Series: Dar Larson – 482, Darci Spanier – 481, Vicki Walter – 480

Fun Game: Most Splits – Coyotes with 17!

Northern State University releases fall 2022 dean's list

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D., has released the dean's list for the fall 2022 semester.

Caitlynn Barse, Andover

Samantha Ferguson, Bath

Bryce Peterson, Bristol

Emily Richie, Bristol

Anna Witt, Bristol

Kayla Jensen, Claremont

Lauren Geranen, Frederick

Miranda Lai, Frederick

Jaimen Farrell, Groton

Carrie Feser Cole, Groton

Alyssa Fordham, Groton

Braden Freeman, Groton

Alexis Hanten, Groton

Logan Hinman, Groton

Eh Tha You Say, Groton

Grace Wiedrick, Groton

Hailey Buckmeier, Houghton

Emily Palmer, Langford

Landon Leidholt, Warner

Mckenzie Hassebroek, Westport

Katelyn Mehlhaff, Westport

Gov. Noem Announces Bill to Preserve Agriculture

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and legislators announced legislation to preserve agriculture.

“Agriculture is by far our state’s largest industry, accounting for 1 out of every 5 jobs in South Dakota. We need to preserve it,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “When agriculture operations are attacked with frivolous claims, it can delay development and increase costs for producers.”

The prime sponsors of the legislation will be Representative James D. Wangness (R-23) and Senator Joshua Klumb (R-20).

“Agriculture drives our economy and fuels development in rural South Dakota,” said Rep. Wangness. “This legislation enhances the state’s ag nuisance laws to provide additional protections for our producers while ensuring their ability to continue feeding America.”

This bill provides additional liability protection for agricultural operations in the event that a nuisance claim is filed against them. The bill does so by:

Setting specific conditions and limitations to compensatory and punitive damages awarded from such a claim;

Adding “agritourism” to the definition of an agricultural operation;

Expanding the protected status of agricultural operations by allowing them to change the product they produce to maintain protected status; and,

Clarifying that the plaintiff must prove by clear and convincing evidence that the nuisance is caused by activity or conduct that does not comply with state or federal environmental laws or regulations.

“As a lifelong farmer, my family depends on a fair and level playing field to make ends meet. Our producers need dependability to preserve their operations, so they cannot have frivolous nuisance complaints undermining their work to feed the world,” said Sen. Klumb.

South Dakota agriculture is a \$32 billion industry. Governor Noem addressed the importance of agriculture in her State of the State Address; you can find those remarks [here](#).

Community is invited to **EMILY'S HOPE PRESENTATION**



with

*Angela
Kennecke*

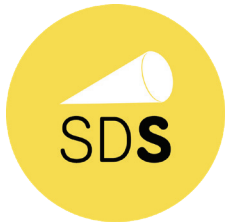
SPONSORED BY GROTON RESCUE

JAN | WED | 2023
25
1PM

GROTON AREA H.S. ARENA

ANGELA KENNECKE IS TURNING HER HEARTBREAK INTO ACTION BY TRAVELING THE COUNTRY TO BRING EMILY'S STORY TO COMMUNITIES, CONFERENCES AND SCHOOLS.

"MY NUMBER ONE REASON FOR TALKING ABOUT EMILY'S DEATH IS TO ERASE THE STIGMA SURROUNDING ADDICTION, ESPECIALLY THE USE OF HEROIN OR OPIOIDS OF ANY KIND.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Jackley: Hold abusers accountable for manipulation

Witness tampering bill would make charges easier to levy in domestic violence cases

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 19, 2023 5:17 PM

Abusive partners could face a decade in prison for trying to convince their significant others to change their story, under a bill promoted by Attorney General Marty Jackley.

Senate Bill 50 would apply the crime of witness tampering to anyone who "corruptly persuades or corruptly influences another person" to alter their testimony "with an intent to impede the administration of justice."

The updated verbiage is necessary because the language of the current witness tampering law isn't clear enough to be used in most circumstances, Jackley told the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday.

"I think the real reason we need this is in the realm of domestic violence," Jackley said. "We're experiencing a lot of questionable conduct, conduct where it doesn't necessarily fit into a bribery and there isn't any money exchanged, but clearly you have individuals that have done wrong and are continuing to do wrong."

If passed and signed into law, prosecutors would be able to charge those who coerce victims to recant with a class 4 felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine.

Manipulation common in domestic violence cases

The change could be a significant tool for law enforcement in partner abuse cases. Such cases typically represent an outsize share of assault arrests for local agencies. The Sioux Falls Police Department logged 1,233 domestic simple assault arrests in 2021. Simple assaults without a domestic violence component added up to 890.

The dynamics of personal or familial relationships complicate matters in those cases, Jackley said. Success in court hinges on the cooperation of a victim whose life is entwined with the defendant.

"Domestic violence is much more challenging to prosecute than a bar fight that was caught on video," Jackley said.

Victim manipulation is common, but consequences for manipulation are not. Spouses may threaten to draw out a custody battle over a child if their partner cooperates with police, or vow to change their ways if their partner stops returning calls from detectives. But they're unlikely to face a witness tampering charge under current law, because it doesn't define "tampering" with specificity.

"The current language 'with intent to influence a witness' is pretty broad and general," Jackley told lawmakers. "And the case law gives us instruction that we need to basically have 'corruption' as part of it."

An amendment offered by Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, added a definition of "corruption" to Jackley's original bill. The attorney general described that as a friendly move that would make it easier for prosecutors to make a case if the bill becomes law.

Update could aid other types of cases

The update could be useful for any crime that leans on witness testimony.

"What we also see in a lot of cases where we have juvenile victims is maybe you have a parent, a significant other or the other parent that is a suspect in these cases, and they attempt to get the child to change their story, bribe them or remove them from the situation," said Madison Police Chief Justin Meyer, who was among those testifying in favor of the bill.

Statistics from the Unified Judicial System show that for all but one of the past nine calendar years, fewer than 50 cases of witness tampering have been filed statewide, with a high of 62 in 2019. That year also saw the highest number of prison sentences, at 11.

Jackley's bill did not pass out of committee on Thursday, however. Sen. Wheeler suggested that the new

language, while important, might overlap with the crime of subornation of perjury. That statute applies to those who induce others to lie under oath, as opposed to tampering with a witness more broadly to convince them to adjust or withdraw testimony.

The committee voted to defer action on the bill while Wheeler and Jackley work out an update to clarify the respective roles of that subornation law and witness tampering.

"I think this is good movement towards making sure we do take care of all different ways you can tamper with a witness," Wheeler said.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

State needs more incentives to keep ag waste out of water, regulator says

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 19, 2023 4:58 PM

PIERRE — The lack of any sign-ups for a multimillion-dollar water quality program is evidence that agricultural operations need more incentives to keep waste out of waterways, according to the leader of the state's environmental regulatory agency.

Hunter Roberts is the secretary of the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. He briefed the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on Tuesday at the state Capitol.

"We have dozens of these facilities that are within a mile of the Big Sioux River or a tributary and they're not managing their waste," Roberts said. "So, if you have 500 head that you're feeding in a feedlot and you're not managing your waste, and they're within a mile of the Big Sioux, the chances that manure ends up loading in the river are pretty high."

Afterward, Roberts said he was referring to smaller feedlots that do not come under state regulation because of factors including their size.

The department hopes to address the problem via a cost-sharing program with the federal National Resources Conservation Service that helps construct waste management systems.

"So, our thought is to partner with NRCS and put a little bit more of a carrot in place," Roberts said.

The issue of agricultural waste in the Big Sioux River has been making headlines. A water conservation nonprofit recently gave the Big Sioux River an "F" grade for unsafe E. coli levels.

The primary cause of the unsafe levels is cattle manure, which runs off from agricultural operations after rainfall and makes its way to public waters.

DANR has been working to address that problem with a riparian buffer strip program.

A buffer strip is a vegetated area along a stream or river that helps filter out waste and soil before it enters the water. Buffer strip root systems prevent soil erosion along the stream and river banks.

"The thought is you have grass that helps 'buffer' the chemicals, soil and other things that degrade water quality from getting into the rivers and streams," Roberts said. "It's certainly valuable."

But the financial incentives have not proven sufficient, according to Roberts. Older property-tax incentives for buffer strips have drawn some sign-ups. But Roberts said nobody has signed up for cash incentives through the state's Riparian Buffer Initiative – which includes a focus on the Big Sioux River Basin – since those incentives were rolled out with more than \$3 million in funding a little over a year ago.

"We did not sign up any landowners as we worked through this," Roberts said. "The feedback that we got back was that we're not paying enough to really move the needle."

And because of that, Roberts wants to increase payouts. The plan includes paying more for standard enrollments, and additional incentives for buffer strip lands also enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

"It puts more dollars on the table to incentivize that change," Roberts said.

DANR materials say that under the current cash-incentive program, a 50-foot, half-mile buffer under a minimum 10-year contract would yield a total payment of about \$5,000 for cropland and \$1,300 for pastureland.

Under a new formula Roberts outlined, the rates for the same examples would increase to about \$13,000 for cropland and \$3,400 for pastureland. Overall funding for the program will remain the same.

"We'll have less ultimately sign up, but we will have some people sign up," Roberts told South Dakota Searchlight.

Roberts said after the hearing the state is hopeful that additional "carrots" in the form of higher incentives will be enough, and that "a stick" is not yet necessary.

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

Ex-candidate's case helps spur election law proposal from attorney general

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 19, 2023 3:17 PM

A nine-year-old case against a former U.S. Senate candidate paved the way for a legislative proposal that would make it a felony to lie about petition circulation.

A jury convicted Dr. Annette Bosworth, a 2014 candidate on the Republican primary ballot for Senate, on a dozen felony counts of election law violations in 2015. Bosworth attested to having collected nominating petition signatures herself, but did not do so. She was out of the country at the time the petitioning took place.

The South Dakota Supreme Court upheld convictions for filing false petitions but tossed six counts of perjury because the law as written didn't apply to petition falsehoods.

Senate Bill 46 aims to change that.

It's part of the legislative package from Attorney General Marty Jackley, who just took office for a second stint as the state's top prosecutor and led the case against Bosworth during his first term in the role.

Under the proposal, knowingly and intentionally violating petition laws would count as felony perjury, punishable by up to two years in prison.

After the bill's first hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday, Jackley told South Dakota Searchlight that he mentioned Bosworth's case because "everybody knows about it," but that other alleged violations have taken place since the Supreme Court ruling hamstrung potential election law prosecutions.

"There have been other things that I have been aware of, and we've decided not to pursue them because of the Bosworth case," Jackley said. "As attorney general, it is more common than I am comfortable with, because it affects the integrity of elections."

Bosworth did not return messages seeking comment on Thursday.

The bill was one of two election integrity measures Jackley presented Thursday.

The second would clear up what Jackley described as an oversight in state law.

In most cases, when a law on the books in South Dakota doesn't carry a penalty, the default penalty for violating it is a class 2 misdemeanor. That's the lowest level of offense in the state, carrying a maximum penalty of 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

Currently, violations of Chapter 12 of South Dakota law – election law – do not carry such a presumption.

Jackley would like to see that changed with Senate Bill 47. It would attach a class 2 penalty to violations of any law in the extensive chapter and allow prosecutors to levy charges – something that's not possible at the moment in most cases.

If someone uses public funds to influence elections or stuffs ballot boxes, Jackley said, "I can't do any-

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thing about it.”

Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, voted against the bill, citing concerns that it covered too broad a swath of behavior related to election operations.

Wheeler recommended “a scalpel” be applied when deciding which election law violations might be worthy of criminal penalty.

“Before I vote to criminalize an entire chapter, I want to know what I’m criminalizing,” Wheeler said.

Passing the bill would not mean a rush of prosecutions across the board, Jackley said. After the hearing, he suggested that the change would be resistant to attempts to politicize prosecutions, because prosecutors would weigh the relative importance of each case before moving forward.

“If you do a selfie in the voting box, I don’t want to prosecute that,” Jackley said.

Rather, he told lawmakers that he aimed to set a floor for penalties and start a conversation about which parts of election law might be worthy of stiffer enforcement measures.

In the case of a person using public funds to influence an election, he said, a rewrite at some point in the future could clarify both the bounds of a criminal violation and enhance the penalty to a felony.

Both bills advanced to the full Senate.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

Members of Congress sign up for TikTok, despite security concerns

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 19, 2023 2:19 PM

WASHINGTON — Just like teens, members of Congress are setting up TikTok accounts — even as the popular app is increasingly barred from government devices and heads of federal intelligence agencies raise concerns about data collection and surveillance obtained by a Chinese-owned company.

At least 32 members of Congress — all Democrats and one independent — as of early January had TikTok accounts, according to a review by States Newsroom. While there are no laws in place banning lawmakers from using the app on their personal devices, cybersecurity experts have raised concerns over data collection for those members who deal with sensitive government topics.

Of those members of Congress, at least half either currently sit or have previously served on committees dealing with foreign affairs, the U.S. military, investigations and national security.

One enthusiastic TikTok user is U.S. Democratic Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, who sits on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Booker has a huge TikTok following of more than 329,000 accounts and has racked up 2.8 million likes.

However, he does not have the application installed on any government devices and his team regularly consults with security experts to “update and implement the necessary precautions to ensure continued account and information security,” Maya Krishna-Rogers, a spokesperson for Booker, said in an email to States Newsroom.

She said Booker joined in early 2022, as a way to connect with constituents.

“Senator Booker has found TikTok to be a creative and engaging space, and thinks it is important to meet people where they are, bringing more messages of kindness, truth, and justice to Americans,” she said.

“He has always been an advocate for continued oversight and necessary regulation to ensure that social media platforms are prioritizing user privacy and safety.”

Concerns about social media

At issue for critics is TikTok’s ownership by ByteDance, which is based in China and owned by that government. The popular app has more than 1 billion downloads, with two-thirds of U.S. downloads coming from teens, according to Pew Research Center.

Several cybersecurity experts raised concerns about not just lawmakers’ use of TikTok, but other social media platforms like Meta – formerly named Facebook Inc. – and Instagram that can easily track a user’s

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location and even obtain access to microphones and cameras for sitting members of Congress.

"It's reckless for them to be using software that has these potential national security vulnerabilities," said Anton Dahbura, a cybersecurity expert. Dahbura added that the problem is that the data collected from the app is sent to China, where that government has "a long track record of using data for nefarious purposes."

Dahbura, who is the executive director at Johns Hopkins University Information Security Institute, said that members of Congress should exercise caution and not use the app "until the authorities give the all clear sign — it's a very bad idea to be using TikTok."

He pointed to public warnings from the FBI last year that raised questions about TikTok. FBI Director Christopher Wray testified that the FBI does have national security concerns with TikTok.

"They include the possibility that the Chinese government could use it to control data collection on millions of users or control the recommendation algorithm, which could be used for influence operations if they so choose, or to control software on millions of devices, which gives it an opportunity to potentially technically compromise personal devices," Wray told lawmakers during a November hearing.

Members on TikTok

Some lawmakers with TikTok accounts deal with national security issues and sensitive investigations. That includes U.S. Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, who previously led the House Homeland Security Committee and was tapped by former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to lead the Jan. 6 investigations into the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

His office did not respond to questions about his account. Thompson has no videos posted and only follows two other accounts, CNN and MSNBC.

Other high-profile Democrats who have accounts include the chair of the U.S. House Congressional Progressive Caucus, Pramila Jayapal of Washington; Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York; and Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. None of their offices responded to requests for comment from States Newsroom.

"I think it's legitimate to wonder if the Chinese government's getting access to this," Jen Golbeck, a professor at the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, said. "But I think it's a real problem when you act like companies like Meta, for example, you don't have to worry about them because they're based in the U.S."

Meta has also become the subject of congressional hearings over its collection of user data.

"So why are we talking just about TikTok and not about any other ones?" she asked. "That makes it feel like this is more kind of anti-China posturing than an actual concern about the very real problem of intrusive data collection."

Bans, restrictions

Several members of Congress have called for a nationwide ban on the app, such as Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and Republican Rep. Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, who introduced legislation to ban not only TikTok, but other social media platforms controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Brooke Oberwetter, a TikTok spokesperson, said the company is disappointed that Congress has moved to ban the app from government devices, calling it "a political gesture that will do nothing to advance national security interests."

Late last year, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri's bill that would ban federal employees from using TikTok on government devices. The bill became law after senators attached it to a massive omnibus bill for funding the government in December of last year.

Federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense and Transportation Security Administration had already banned the app on government devices.

Hawley's bill easily passed the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, where one senator, who also chairs a panel on special investigations, has his own account.

Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia has an impressive following of more than half a million accounts. While aides in his office say he is supportive of legislation to ban the app from government devices, they did not respond to questions about any security measures he has taken. Ossoff also chairs a Senate panel on investigations.

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Who do they follow?

Most lawmakers on the app follow each other and accounts that are aligned with their party platforms, but some lawmakers follow accounts that have nothing to do with politics.

For example, Ossoff does not follow any of his colleagues, but follows several accounts relating to BTS, a global K-pop boy band from South Korea.

Another senator, newly elected Democrat John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, only follows three accounts — that of his Pennsylvania colleague, Democratic Sen. Bob Casey, the Wegmans supermarket chain, which is popular in Pennsylvania, and an account that posts dog videos.

The blunder of mispronouncing “Wegmans” during the 2022 Pennsylvania Senate race by GOP candidate Dr. Mehmet Oz, created its own news cycle, with the Fetterman campaign taking a jab that Oz was not a Pennsylvania resident and then throughout the campaign painting Oz as an out-of-towner. Oz had a long-time residency in New Jersey, but did have a home in Pennsylvania.

Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the independent and former presidential candidate, appears to be the member of Congress with the most TikTok followers at 1.4 million. He has more TikTok followers than people that he represents in his home state of Vermont, which has a population of more than 645,000.

Sanders, who chairs the Senate Budget Committee, did not respond to questions about his TikTok account.

But not all Democrats are on board.

U.S. Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has raised concerns over the app. He recently praised his state of Virginia for moving to ban the app from government devices.

“TikTok has the stamp of approval of the Chinese Communist Party and it poses a serious national security threat due to its data collection practices and its ability to reach and manipulate Americans,” Warner said in a statement.

And it’s not just congressional Republicans who are pushing for a ban. More than a dozen GOP and a handful of Democratic governors have taken steps to ban the app from government devices.

Some of those states with a total ban on TikTok from government devices include Nebraska, Indiana, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, Maryland, New Hamp-

shire, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, Montana, Wyoming, Virginia, North Dakota, Texas, South Carolina, Utah, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Alaska and Alabama.

Democratic governors who have issued executive orders banning TikTok from government devices include Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey and North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper.

States with partial bans on the app for government devices include Florida’s Department of Financial Services, Pennsylvania’s Department of Treasury and Louisiana’s State Department.

In 2020, former President Donald Trump signed an executive order, banning the app. However, it was never enforced.

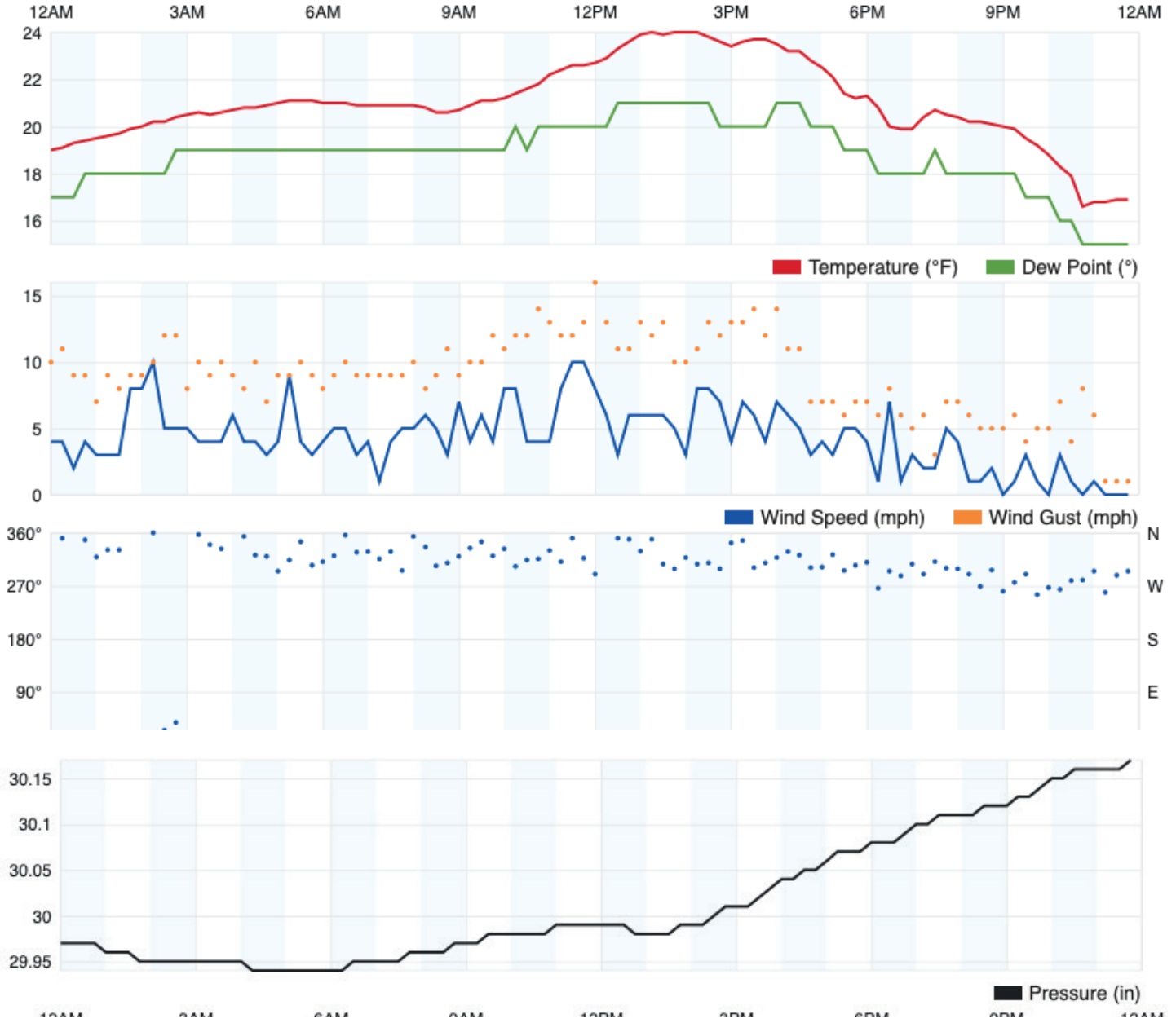
Members of Congress with TikTok accounts as of early January include:

U.S. Rep. Donald Payne Jr. of New Jersey
U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas
U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott of Virginia
U.S. Rep. Vicente Gonzalez of Texas
U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi
U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams of Georgia
U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York
U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota
U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown of Ohio
U.S. Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri
U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan
U.S. Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington
U.S. Rep. Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania
U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan of Wisconsin
U.S. Rep. Tony Cárdenas of California
U.S. Rep. Dean Phillips of Minnesota
U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson of Florida
U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman of New York
U.S. Rep. Steven Horsford of Nevada
U.S. Rep. Sean Casten of Illinois
U.S. Rep. Katie Porter of California
U.S. Rep. Jeff Jackson of North Carolina
U.S. Rep. John Garamendi of California
U.S. Rep. Mark Takano of California
U.S. Rep. Maxwell Frost of Florida
U.S. Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts
U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia
U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont
U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey
U.S. Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania
U.S. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania
U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Patchy Fog then Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 26 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 22 °F	Low: 14 °F	High: 31 °F

Fog This Morning/Today; Slight Chances For Snow On Saturday

Fog, Some Of It Locally Dense, This Morning Across Central South Dakota, With The Potential To Maintain And/OR Expand During The Day



There Could Be Some Light Snow Around By Saturday Morning Mainly Across Central South Dakota; Little Or No Accumulation Expected



Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast 3:53 AM January 20, 2023

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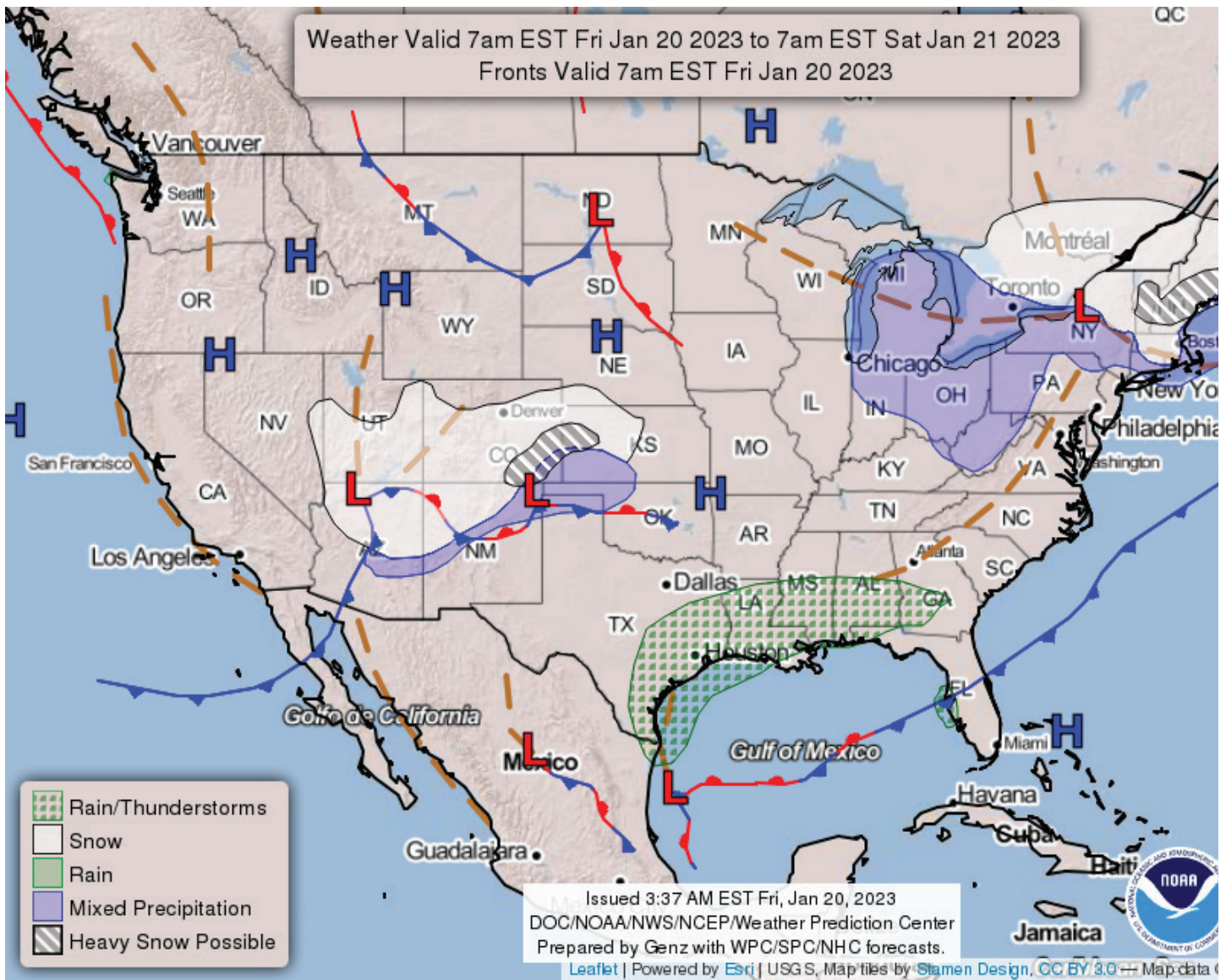
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24 °F at 2:00 PM
Low Temp: 16.6 °F at 10:45 PM
Wind: 16 mph at Noon
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 20 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1944
Record Low: -29 in 1936
Average High: 24°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.38
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.38
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:23:31 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02:30 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 20, 1944: A late January warm-up occurred on this date in weather history in 1944. Temperatures rose into the upper 50s to the mid-60s across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Overnight lows in the 20s and lower 30s were above the normal highs for the year. Record highs were set at Aberdeen, Kennebec, Sisseton, and Watertown. Watertown rose to 56 degrees, Sisseton rose to 58 degrees, Aberdeen rose to 60 degrees, and Kennebec rose to 65 degrees. Also, Mobridge rose to 57 degrees, and Pierre rose to 61 degrees.

1863: The famous "Mud March" begins in the Fredericksburg area of Virginia.

1883: Yuma, Arizona, sets its all-time record low of 22 degrees. The record is tied in 1911 and again in 1937.

1933: Phoenix, Arizona, receives light snow between 7:55 pm and 9:25 pm.

1937: The wettest Inaugural Day of record with 1.77 inches of rain in 24 hours. Temperatures were only in the 30s as Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for his second term.

1943 - Strange vertical antics took place in the Black Hills of South Dakota. While the temperature at Deadwood was a frigid 16 degrees below zero, the town of Lead, just a mile and a half away, but 600 feet higher in elevation, reported a balmy 52 degree reading. (David Ludlum)

1954 - The temperature at Rogers Pass, MT, plunged to 70 degrees below zero to establish a new record for the continental U.S. (David Ludlum)

1978 - A paralyzing "Nor'easter" produced a record 21 inches of snow at Boston, 15 to 20 inches in Rhode Island, and one to two feet of snow in Pennsylvania. Winds along the coast of Connecticut gusted to 70 mph. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds lingered along the northern Atlantic coast in the wake of a holiday weekend storm. High winds along the eastern slopes of the Northern Rockies gusted to 67 mph at Livingston MT, and high winds in southern California gusted to 70 mph near San Bernardino. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the Upper Midwest produced heavy snow and gale force winds. Up to 27.5 inches of snow was reported along the Lake Superior shoreline of Michigan, with 22 inches at Marquette. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The temperature in the Washington D.C. area warmed into the lower 50s for the Presidential Inauguration during the late morning hours, before gusty northwest winds ushered in colder air that afternoon. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - While heavy thunderstorm rains drenched the Central Gulf Coast States, with 4.23 inches reported at Centreville AL in 24 hours, unseasonably warm weather continued across Florida. Five cities in Florida reported record high temperatures for the date. Tampa FL equalled their record high for January of 85 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT TO DO TO AN ENEMY

Solomon went a step further when he wrote: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." He put his words to work by showing the results of love.

What a predicament for those of us who want to get even and seek revenge. Resentments loom large in most of us even though we want to demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ. It is only natural to want to hurt those who hurt us and get even with those who have done us damage. While it may be natural and normal, it does not reflect the new "nature" of a Christian: "Behold, all things are made new!"

A better translation of "enemy" is "the one who hates you." This removes it from any vagueness and forces us to look closely at our relationships with others. While not easy to do, it will have positive results because it follows the teachings of Jesus.

Returning love for hate and kindness for coldness is not the normal way we respond to those who would do us harm. But Solomon seems to suggest that when we return "good for evil" we are bringing shame on those who hate or hurt us.

Certainly this is what Paul would recommend that we who are Christians must do when he wrote: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." It is God who is the one to mete out justice. Whatever we do may be too much, too little, or not enough, but never right!

Prayer: We plead for grace, Lord, to show Your grace to those who hate us or would harm us. May we share Your love, as You did, and in doing so witness grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you. Proverbs 25:21-22



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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2023 Community Events

- 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)
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 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)
- 06/16/2023 – SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 07/04/2023 – Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 – GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 – Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 – GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 – Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 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)
- 12/02/2023 – Tour of Homes & Holiday Party

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.17.23

2 12 18 24 39 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

12 18 24 27 45 1

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,270,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

12 27 35 42 44 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 34 Mins
DRAW: 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

3 22 25 27 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$23,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

4 11 14 54 69 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

6 15 22 42 47 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$473,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 53, Waubay/Summit 30

Brandon Valley 53, Pierre 52

Clark/Willow Lake 66, Aberdeen Roncalli 33

Dell Rapids St. Mary 62, Chester 53

Douglas 66, St. Thomas More 31

Elkton-Lake Benton 54, Colman-Egan 38

Great Plains Lutheran 51, Tri-State, N.D. 48

Groton Area 64, Milbank 36

Hamlin 59, Redfield 21

Highmore-Harrold 67, Hitchcock-Tulare 57

James Valley Christian 74, Wolsey-Wessington 59

Lyman 78, Bennett County 38

Madison 62, Dell Rapids 61

Northwestern 59, Leola/Frederick 56, OT

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 25

Sioux Falls Washington 65, Marshall, Minn. 46

Sioux Valley 100, Deubrook 47

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 70, Mitchell Christian 37

Warner 74, Potter County 44

Wessington Springs 82, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 42

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Akron-Westfield, Iowa vs. Elk Point-Jefferson, ccd.

Santee, Neb. vs. Marty Indian, ppd.

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Bison 59, Faith 48

Brandon Valley 75, Pierre 69

Clark/Willow Lake 40, Aberdeen Roncalli 31

Colman-Egan 50, Elkton-Lake Benton 39

Custer 67, Newell 43

Deuel 41, Tiospa Zina Tribal 39

Faulkton 45, Ipswich 31

Hamlin 56, Redfield 14

Harding County 64, Wakpala 15

Highmore-Harrold 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 22

Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 70, Hitchcock-Tulare 51

Langford 49, Waverly-South Shore 18

Lemmon 81, Tiospaye Topa 29

Leola/Frederick 46, Northwestern 38

Milbank 40, Groton Area 33

Mobridge-Pollock 80, McLaughlin 45

Rapid City Christian 69, Hill City 45

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 42, James Valley Christian 37

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Sioux Falls Jefferson 36, Harrisburg 34
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 53, Sioux Falls Lincoln 39
Sioux Falls Washington 63, Marshall, Minn. 50
Sisseton 59, Webster 25
St. Thomas More 49, Lead-Deadwood 2
Sully Buttes 78, Stanley County 39
Timber Lake 60, McIntosh 14
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 40, Mitchell Christian 30
Wall 68, Philip 30
Warner 53, Potter County 39
Waubay/Summit 46, Aberdeen Christian 17
Wolsey-Wessington 56, Wessington Springs 38
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Akron-Westfield, Iowa vs. Elk Point-Jefferson, ccd.
Santee, Neb. vs. Marty Indian, ppd.

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

Smith's 20 help Denver down South Dakota 75-60

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Tevin Smith scored 20 points as Denver beat South Dakota 75-60 on Thursday night.

Smith was 6 of 10 shooting, including 4 for 5 from distance, and went 4 for 4 from the line for the Pioneers (12-9, 3-5 Summit League). Marko Lukic shot 5 for 6 (2 for 3 from 3-point range) and 3 of 3 from the free throw line to add 15 points. Tommy Bruner recorded 13 points and was 4 of 9 shooting (3 for 5 from distance).

Mason Archambault led the Coyotes (8-11, 3-4) in scoring, finishing with 14 points. South Dakota also got 13 points from A.J. Plitzuweit. In addition, Kruz Perrott-Hunt finished with 10 points and two steals.

NEXT UP

Both teams next play Saturday. Denver visits South Dakota State while South Dakota hosts Omaha.

Mayo scores 31 as South Dakota State beats Omaha 84-61

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — (AP) — Zeke Mayo's 31 points led South Dakota State over Omaha 84-61 on Thursday night.

Mayo also contributed five rebounds and five assists for the Jackrabbits (10-9, 5-2 Summit League). Alex Arians scored 16 points, going 5 of 7 (4 for 5 from distance). William Kyle III shot 5 of 7 from the field and 2 for 5 from the line to finish with 12 points, while adding eight rebounds.

The Mavericks (7-13, 3-5) were led in scoring by Frankie Fidler, who finished with 13 points, eight rebounds and four assists. Marquel Sutton added 12 points, six rebounds and two steals for Omaha. JJ White also had 12 points and four assists.

NEXT UP

Both teams next play Saturday. South Dakota State hosts Denver while Omaha visits South Dakota.

South Dakota State's Stiegelmeier retires, goes out on top

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Longtime South Dakota State coach John Stiegelmeier announced his retirement Thursday, less than two weeks after the school won its first Football Championship Subdivision title.

Defensive coordinator Jimmy Rogers was named Stiegelmeier's successor and will be introduced at a news conference Friday.

Stiegelmeier had been head coach since 1997, when the Jackrabbits were NCAA Division II members,

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and he shepherded the football program's move to Division I beginning in 2004.

He compiled a record of 199-112 over 26 years and led the Jackrabbits to 12 FCS playoff appearances beginning in 2009.

Stiegelmeier wrapped up his career with a 45-21 win over rival North Dakota State in the championship game Jan. 8 in Frisco, Texas.

"Laurie and I, with our family, want to thank South Dakota State University and SDSU Athletics for being blessed to serve as the head football coach," Stiegelmeier said, referring to his wife. "During our 26 years in this role, a lifetime of memories have occurred. The support of so many, including three university presidents, numerous assistant coaches, countless student-athletes, two athletic directors and the Jackrabbit fan base has been so special. Thank you to each and every one who have believed in us."

Stiegelmeier's teams posted winning records in 22 of his 26 seasons. The Jackrabbits began their current streak of 11 FCS playoff appearances in 2012, and advanced to at least the semifinal round in five of the last six seasons. SDSU reached its first title game in the 2020-21 pandemic season, losing to Sam Houston State.

The Jackrabbits have never finished below .500 in league play in 15 seasons in the Missouri Valley Football Conference. They won league titles in 2016, 2020-21 and 2022. They will carry a 14-game win streak into next season.

"Simply put, South Dakota State University is a better place because of John and Laurie Stiegelmeier," athletic director Justin Sell said. "Their impact goes far beyond wins and losses or championships because of the family culture they have fostered throughout their time here, and by building a program based on character, hard work and excellence in all areas."

Stiegelmeier has been associated with Jackrabbits football for more than 35 years, starting as a student assistant under John Gregory in 1979. He was an assistant from 1988-96 under Wayne Haensel and Mike Daly.

Rogers played under Stiegelmeier from 2006-09 and was the longest-tenured assistant on the Jackrabbits' 2022 staff. In his lone season as the team's sole defensive coordinator, the Jackrabbits led the FCS in rushing defense and interceptions and ranked third in scoring defense.

Rogers was a two-time all-conference selection as a linebacker. He led the Great West Football Conference with 110 tackles in 2007. Rogers was a captain on the Jackrabbits' first FCS playoff team in 2009.

South Dakota lawmakers consider \$220M for housing, water

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are considering a pair of infrastructure funding bills that would allocate over \$220 million to housing and water supply projects.

A proposal to allocate \$200 million for workforce housing projects is set for a final vote in the House this week, while the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on Thursday recommended the Legislature's budget appropriations committee consider a proposal to allocate \$22 million to water supply projects.

The funding would come alongside a \$600 million package the Legislature passed last year to send federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to water supply projects.

South Dakota Association of Rural Water Systems executive director Kurt Pfeifle said the infrastructure bill passed in 2022 was essential to hundreds of water projects, such as a drinking water pipeline system that services 28 communities in central South Dakota. The \$22 million funding package discussed Thursday would add two new projects.

"It was an easy shot in the arm," Pfeifle said. "The water infrastructure in South Dakota has been lagging for quite a few years and a lot of things have been sitting on the shelves waiting to be built. There haven't been resources to build until American Rescue Plan Act."

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Google axes 12,000 jobs, layoffs spread across tech sector

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Google is laying off 12,000 workers, or about 6% of its workforce, becoming the latest tech company to trim staff as the economic boom that the industry rode during the COVID-19 pandemic ebbs.

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, the parent company of Google, informed staff Friday at the Silicon Valley giant about the cuts in an email that was also posted on the company's news blog.

It's one of the company's biggest-ever round of layoffs and adds to tens of thousands of other job losses recently announced by Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook parent Meta and other tech companies as they tighten their belts amid a darkening outlook for the industry. Just this month, there have been at least 48,000 job cuts announced by major companies in the sector.

"Over the past two years we've seen periods of dramatic growth," Pichai wrote. "To match and fuel that growth, we hired for a different economic reality than the one we face today."

He said the layoffs reflect a "rigorous review" carried out by Google of its operations.

The jobs being eliminated "cut across Alphabet, product areas, functions, levels and regions," Pichai said. He said he was "deeply sorry" for the layoffs.

Regulatory filings illustrate how Google's workforce swelled during the pandemic, ballooning to nearly 187,000 people by late last year from 119,000 at the end of 2019.

Pichai said that Google, founded nearly a quarter of a century ago, was "bound to go through difficult economic cycles."

"These are important moments to sharpen our focus, reengineer our cost base, and direct our talent and capital to our highest priorities," he wrote.

There will be job cuts in the U.S. and in other unspecified countries, according to Pichai's letter.

The tech industry has been forced to freeze hiring and cut jobs "as the clock has struck midnight on hyper growth and digital advertising headwinds are on the horizon," Wedbush Securities analysts Dan Ives, Taz Koujalgi and John Katsingris wrote Friday.

Just this week, Microsoft announced 10,000 job cuts, or nearly 5% of its workforce. Amazon said this month its cutting 18,000 jobs, although that's a fraction of its 1.5 million strong workforce, while business software maker Salesforce is laying off about 8,000 employees, or 10% of the total. Last fall Facebook parent Meta announced it would shed 11,000 positions, or 13% of its workers. Elon Musk slashed jobs at Twitter after he acquired the social media company last fall.

Those job cuts are hitting smaller players as well. U.K.-based cybersecurity firm Sophos laid off 450 employees, or 10% of its global workforce. Cryptocurrency trading platform Coinbase cut 20% of its workforce, about 950 jobs, in its second round of layoffs in less than a year.

"The stage is being set: tech names across the board are cutting costs to preserve margins and get leaner" in the current economic climate, the Wedbush analysts said.

Employment in the U.S. has been resilient despite signs of a slowing economy, and there were another 223,000 jobs added in December. Yet the tech sector grew exceptionally fast over the last several years due to increased demand as employees began to work remotely.

CEOs of a number of companies have taken blame for growing too fast, yet those same companies, even after the latest round of job cuts, remain much larger than they were before the economic boom from the pandemic began.

As Baldwin faces charges, gun safety on sets 'gets louder'

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Film production and firearms experts say movie sets probably changed permanently when cinematographer Halyna Hutchins was shot and killed on the remote New Mexico set of the Western "Rust" 14 months ago, leading to the announcement from prosecutors Thursday that Alec Baldwin and the film's weapons supervisor will be charged with involuntary manslaughter later this month.

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"The gun safety experience on set has become more vocal, it's a lot louder," said Joey Dillon, an armorer who has overseen the use of firearms on television shows including "Westworld" and movies including "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs." "I make it a lot louder myself."

Baldwin was pointing the gun with a live round inside that killed Hutchins as they set up a shot for an upcoming scene. People at several levels of production are determined to ensure it never happens again.

That has meant the increasing use of digital and other technology that could make gunfire of any kind obsolete. It has also meant more simple things, like shouting when using the same safety protocols long in place to make clear to everyone when a gun is present and what its status is.

Actors and others are more interested when the gun is handed over.

"Now people want to check because people are a little a little gun shy," Dillon said. "I'll stop the whole process just to show them so that they feel comfortable with it."

While checking a gun themselves may be in the best interest of actors, how much responsibility they bear for doing so remains in dispute, and will be a central question for jurors should Baldwin's case go to trial.

His union, and his lawyer, say this onus can't be placed on performers.

"An actor's job is not to be a firearms or weapons expert," the Screen Actors Guild said in a statement Thursday. "Firearms are provided for their use under the guidance of multiple expert professionals directly responsible for the safe and accurate operation of that firearm."

Baldwin's defense attorney Luke Nikas said in a statement that he did his job by relying "on the professionals with whom he worked, who assured him the gun did not have live rounds."

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies disagrees.

"It is incumbent on anybody that holds a gun to make sure that it is either not loaded or to know what it is loaded with," she said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And certainly then to not point it at someone and pull the trigger. That's where his actor liability, we think, comes in."

She also emphasized that while Baldwin is to be charged as the man with the gun in his hand, his role as a producer, and at least partial responsibility for the lax conditions that led to his having a loaded gun, were a consideration in deciding to bring the charges.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who oversaw the film's firearms, will also be charged with involuntary manslaughter, the district attorney said.

Her attorney Jason Bowles said in a statement that they would "bring the full truth to light and that she will be exonerated of wrongdoing by a jury."

Technology may take the safety question out of actors' hands entirely.

Productions were already using digital effects to simulate the flash and bang of gunfire more often, but Hutchins' death has almost certainly sped the change along.

"There are a lot of bad ways that digital takes over, but this is a good way," said Spencer Parsons, an associate professor and head of production at Northwestern University in the School of Communication's department of Radio/Television/Film who has worked as a director and in other roles on any sets. "I'm not saying that there's no good reason to use real pyrotechnics, but in terms of basic safety and speed, this makes sense."

And when it comes to hardware, companies have been making increasingly convincing replicas, essentially enhanced BB guns with moving parts that behave like pistols but don't fire bullets. Muzzle flashes and sounds are added in post-production.

But, Parsons said, "there's not a lot of replicas for some of the antique stuff" used in Westerns and other period movies, which he specializes in.

Other solutions that have been sought for sets may be misguided, and may not help.

In the days immediately after the shooting, much media discussion surrounded the dangers of blank rounds in guns, based on the assumption that one of them killed Hutchins.

"From experience I knew it was more than that," Dillon said. "But the immediate reaction in the industry was to try to cancel the use of blanks altogether."

Dillon said dummy rounds, prop bullets used in scenes where characters are shown loading guns, are

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more likely to result in mistakes like what happened on "Rust," since they look like live ammunition and could be confused with them.

He said he found that "frustrating because that can accidentally impart to the crew that we've been ignorant" and previously kept them in unnecessary danger.

When investigators revealed it was actually a live round, the fear of blanks, which can certainly be very dangerous at very close range, remained.

Parsons said the fact that it was misguided to blame the fact that "Rust" was a small-budget independent production. He said the pace and length of large studio productions can put crews in positions where accidents of all kinds can become more likely.

"In some cases they can put people through even longer hours, and the need for speed is even greater," he said. "That can be very very dangerous. The need for speed on any set incentives behavior that's not always the best for safety."

Gutierrez-Reed's dual role as armorer and assistant props supervisor has also received negative attention.

But Dillon said the overlap of weapons and props is inevitable, and such dual roles happen often. The crew members playing those roles just need to be utterly clear when they're playing which.

"When the guns come out, that's all I'm worried about," he said, "and that's all I'm working on."

Defense leaders meet amid dissent over tanks for Ukraine

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany (AP) — Defense leaders gathered at Ramstein Air Base in Germany heard an impassioned plea for more aid Friday from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as they struggled to resolve ongoing dissent over who will provide battle tanks and other military aid to his embattled country.

"This is a crucial moment. Russia is regrouping, recruiting and trying to re-equip," U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warned as the meeting opened.

Zelenskyy, speaking live via video link, told the gathering that "terror does not allow for discussion." He said "the war started by Russia does not allow delays."

Calling it a decisive moment for Ukraine and a "decisive decade for the world," Austin said the group's presence in Germany signaled their unity and commitment to continue supporting Ukraine.

"We need to keep up our momentum and our resolve. We need to dig even deeper," Austin told the gathering of as many as 50 defense leaders who were attending in person and by video.

A Kremlin spokesman said the deployment of Western tanks would trigger "unambiguously negative" consequences.

"All these tanks will require both maintenance and repairs, and so on, so (sending them) will add to Ukraine's problems, but will not change anything with regard to the Russian side achieving its goals," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said during a media briefing Friday.

Austin and U.S. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were expected to discuss the latest massive package of aid the U.S. is sending, which totals \$2.5 billion and includes Stryker armored vehicles for the first time.

But broader hesitation over sending tanks to Ukraine has roiled the coalition. Germany faces mounting pressure to supply Leopard 2 tanks to Kyiv, or at least clear the way for other countries, such as Poland, to deliver the German-made Leopards from their own stocks.

The U.S. has also declined, at least so far, to provide M1 Abrams tanks, citing the extensive and complex maintenance and logistical challenges with the high-tech vehicle. The U.S. believes it would be more productive to send Leopards since many allies have them and Ukrainian troops would only have to get trained on that one, versus needing far more training on the more difficult Abrams.

The United Kingdom announced last week that it would send Challenger 2 tanks, describing it as a natural progression of military aid to Ukraine.

At a Pentagon briefing Thursday, spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said the Leopard and Challenger aren't comparable to the Abrams tanks because the Abrams is much harder to maintain and wouldn't be a good fit.

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"It's more of a sustainment issue. I mean, this is a tank that requires jet fuel, whereas the Leopard and the Challenger, it's a different engine." The Leopard and Challenger are "a little bit easier to maintain," Singh said. "They can maneuver across large portions of territory before they need to refuel. The maintenance and the high cost that it would take to maintain an Abrams — it just doesn't make sense to provide that to the Ukrainians at this moment."

The latest package of U.S. aid includes eight Avenger air defense systems, 350 Humvees, 53 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, more than 100,000 rounds of artillery ammunition and rockets, and missiles for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. It was announced Thursday by the Pentagon.

Germany's new defense minister, Boris Pistorius, who took office Thursday just an hour before he met with Austin, was among the defense leaders attending the Ramstein meeting. Referring to the tanks, he told ARD television he was "pretty sure we will get a decision on this in the coming days, but I can't yet tell you today how it will look."

Other pledges announced ahead of the Ramstein meeting included S-60 anti-aircraft guns from Poland with 70,000 rounds of ammunition, additional Stinger air-defense systems and two M-17 helicopters from Latvia, and two Russian-made Mi-8 helicopters and dozens of L-70 anti-aircraft guns with ammunition from Lithuania.

Nearly 11 months into the Russian invasion, Zelenskyy has expressed frustration about not obtaining enough weaponry from the Western allies.

Speaking by video link on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday, the Ukrainian leader offered a veiled critique of major supporters such as Germany and the U.S. that have hesitated on sending tanks.

Bemoaning a "lack of specific weaponry," Zelenskyy said, through an interpreter, "There are times where we shouldn't hesitate or we shouldn't compare when someone says, 'I will give tanks if someone else will also share his tanks.'"

German officials have conveyed their hesitancy to allow allies to give Leopards unless the U.S. also sends Ukraine the Abrams, according to a U.S. official who wasn't authorized to comment and spoke on condition of anonymity. But there have been no signs the U.S. is shifting its decision to not send Abrams. The issue is expected to be a key topic at Friday's meeting.

Milley told reporters traveling with him this week that complex new U.S. training of Ukrainian troops, combined with an array of new weapons, artillery, armored vehicles heading to Ukraine, will be key to helping the country's forces take back territory that has been captured by Russia in the nearly 11-month-old war.

The goal, he said, is to deliver needed weapons and equipment to Ukraine so the newly trained forces will be able to use it "sometime before the spring rains show up. That would be ideal."

The influx of new weapons, tanks and armored carriers comes as Ukraine faces intense combat in the country's east around the city of Bakhmut and the nearby salt mining town of Soledar. The battles are expected to intensify in the spring.

Supreme Court leak report findings: Lax security, loose lips

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eight months, 126 formal interviews and a 23-page report later, the Supreme Court said it has failed to discover who leaked a draft of the court's opinion overturning abortion rights.

The report released by the court Thursday is the apparent culmination of an investigation ordered by Chief Justice John Roberts a day after the May leak of the draft to Politico. At the time, Roberts called the leak an "egregious breach of trust."

The leak touched off protests at justices' homes and raised concerns about their security. And it came more than a month before the final opinion by Justice Samuel Alito was released and the court formally announced it was overturning Roe v. Wade.

The report also offers a window into the court's internal processes. It acknowledges that the coronavirus pandemic, which expanded the ability of people to work from home, "as well as gaps in the Court's

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security policies, created an environment where it was too easy to remove sensitive information from the building and the Court's IT networks." The report recommends changes so that it's harder for a leak to happen in the future.

Some questions and answers about the report:

IF THE INVESTIGATION DIDN'T FIND THE LEAKER, WHAT DID IT FIND?

Lax security and loose lips. Too many people have access to certain sensitive information, the report concluded, and the court's policies on information security are outdated. The court can't actively track, for example, who is handling and accessing highly sensitive information.

Beyond that, some people interviewed by federal investigators called in to help with the probe acknowledged they didn't scrupulously follow the court's confidentiality policies. In some cases, employees acknowledged "telling their spouses about the draft opinion or vote count," the report said.

The leak doesn't appear to have been the result of a hack, but the report said investigators could not rule out that the opinion was inadvertently disclosed, "for example, by being left in a public space either inside or outside the building."

HOW THOROUGH WAS THE INVESTIGATION?

Investigators conducted 126 formal interviews of 97 employees. They looked into connections between employees and reporters, including those at Politico. They looked at call logs of personal phones. They looked at printer logs. They even did a fingerprint analysis of "an item relevant to the investigation."

Every person who was interviewed signed a sworn statement that they were not the source of the leak. Lying about that could violate a federal law on false statements.

After all that, former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, himself a onetime federal judge, was asked to assess the investigation. Chertoff described the investigation as "thorough" in a statement issued through the court.

One open question: It was unclear from the report whether the court's nine justices also sat for interviews.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT?

It seems clear the court will tighten its procedures, maybe upgrade equipment and likely do more training of personnel in response to the leak. But what it has done already or will do in the future, the court isn't saying. Investigators made a list of recommendations, but those weren't attached to the public version of the report to guard against "potential bad actors."

WHAT ABOUT SPECULATION OF WHO IT WAS?

After the leak, speculation swirled in Washington about who the source could be. Conservatives pointed fingers at the liberal side of the court, speculating that the leaker was someone upset about the outcome. Liberals suggested it could be someone on the conservative side of the court who wanted to ensure a wavering member of the five-justice majority didn't switch sides.

On social media, there was speculation that various law clerks could be the leaker because of their personal backgrounds, including connections to Politico and past writing. The report acknowledged investigators were watching.

"Investigators also assessed the wide array of public speculation, mostly on social media, about any individual who may have disclosed the document. Several law clerks were named in various posts. In their inquiries, the investigators found nothing to substantiate any of the social media allegations regarding the disclosure," the report said.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The report says investigators aren't quite done, but it suggests that any active investigation is winding down. "Investigators continue to review and process some electronic data that has been collected and a few other inquiries remain pending," they said. "To the extent that additional investigation yields new evidence or leads, the investigators will pursue them."

The final paragraph of the report said, "In time, continued investigation and analysis may produce additional leads that could identify the source of the disclosure."

Murray match highlights how tennis can be an all-night sport

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Andy Murray just wanted to go to the bathroom.

It was 3 a.m., he'd already been playing his Australian Open second-round match against Thanasi Kokkinakis for more than 4 1/2 hours — they would carry on for another set across more than another hour — and Murray was hoping to be allowed to head to the locker room for a quick break.

Rules are rules, though, and Murray already had left the court twice, so chair umpire Eva Asderaki-Moore wouldn't budge, prompting this rebuke from the three-time Grand Slam champion: "It's a joke. And you know it, as well."

Ah, the perils of playing all night, something that occurs occasionally in tennis, more than in other professional sports. It all left the 35-year-old Murray angry and wondering aloud after 4:05 a.m. Friday — when he finally, mercifully, finished off the 4-6, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (5), 6-3, 7-5 victory over Kokkinakis following 5 hours, 45 minutes of clashing skills and wills at Margaret Court Arena — why this sort of "farce," as he termed it, needs to occur at all.

"If my child was a ball kid for a tournament, they're coming home at 5 in the morning — as a parent, I'm snapping at that. It's not beneficial for them. It's not beneficial for the umpires, the officials. I don't think it's amazing for the fans. It's not good for the players," said Murray, a father of four. "So, yeah, we talk about it all the time. It's been spoken about for years. When you start the night matches late, and have conditions like that, these things are going to happen."

Especially at events like the Australian Open and U.S. Open, which hold daily night sessions that usually include two matches on some courts. Which can lead to extreme situations such as Murray vs. Kokkinakis, which came 15 years to the day after the latest finish in Grand Slam history, a match between Lleyton Hewitt and Marcos Baghdatis at the 2008 Australian Open that concluded at 4:34 a.m.

"There's no sport that does that. I don't think it's very good. ... Who really wants to watch a five-, six-hour match? That's long, even for TV," said the tournament's No. 3-seeded woman, Jessica Pegula, whose parents own NFL and NHL teams. "I don't think any of the players think that should be happening at all."

She and others pointed out it's hard to go to bed after a match like that, because of the adrenalin involved, which hurts efforts to recover mentally and physically.

The last women's match on Thursday's schedule, in which Marketa Vondrousova upset No. 2 seed Ons Jabeur 6-1, 5-7, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena, finished at after 1 a.m. Friday.

"It's kind of crazy. For the body, also: I don't think it's healthy to play at 1 a.m.," Vondrousova said. "I just need some sleep."

Murray's brother, Grand Slam doubles champion Jamie, tweeted: "Time for tennis to move to only one match at the night sessions. ... We can't continue to have players compete into the wee hours of the morning. Rubbish for everyone involved — players/fans/event staff. Etc."

Still, do not expect anything to change anytime soon.

"At this point, there is no need to alter the schedule," Craig Tiley, the tournament director and head of Tennis Australia, told local broadcasting partner Channel 9 on Friday.

Murray will be back on court Saturday, facing No. 24 Roberto Bautista Agut for a berth in the fourth round.

Murray, who also played a five-setter in the first round against Matteo Berrettini and has already put in more than 10 1/2 hours on court, was back at Melbourne Park before 1 p.m. on Friday.

"It's no fun for Andy. I saw him today before my match," said Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2021 French Open runner-up who won his third-round match Friday afternoon. "I was thinking to myself, 'What is he doing here? He should be in bed!'"

Tsitsipas thinks folks such as Tiley are not all that disappointed by this sort of 'round-the-clock competition.

"There's a great story behind this match, and it's going to be remembered," Tsitsipas said. "I do remember very vividly, very well, the match that Baghdatis played with Hewitt. It's somewhere back inside my mind somewhere. ... It is definitely a very magical moment — for sure, not for the one who loses, because it's painful."

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At last year's U.S. Open, eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, two bright young stars, engaged in a five-set struggle over 5 hours, 15 minutes, until 2:50 a.m., setting the mark for the latest finish in that tournament's history.

Sinner was on the wrong end of that one. On Friday, his result was better and his schedule more straightforward: His 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-0 win against Marton Fucsovics began at 11 a.m.; his day was done by 2:45 p.m.

"I don't care so much, no? I'm happy to be on court. Doesn't matter what time," Sinner said. "For sure, I prefer (beginning) at 11 than playing in the night, (but) it's all part of our sport now."

AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Protests move into Peru's capital, met by tear gas and smoke

By DANIEL POLITI and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Thousands of protesters demanding the ouster of President Dina Boluarte poured into Peru's capital, clashing with police who fired tear gas. Many came from remote regions, where dozens have died in unrest that has gripped the country since Peru's first leader from a rural Andean background was removed from office last month.

The protests have been marked by Peru's worst political violence in more than two decades and highlighted deep divisions between the country's urban elite, largely concentrated in Lima, and poor rural areas. Former President Pedro Castillo has been in detention and is expected to be tried for rebellion since he was impeached after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress.

Thursday was mostly quiet, but punctuated by scuffles and tear gas. The government called on everyone who could to work from home. After sundown, clashes escalated, and late that night, a major fire broke out at a building near the historic Plaza San Martin, although no connection to the protests was immediately clear.

Anger at Boluarte was the common thread Thursday as protesters chanted calls for her resignation and street sellers hawked T-shirts saying, "Out, Dina Boluarte," "Dina murderer, Peru repudiates you," and "New elections, let them all leave."

Peru's ombudsman said at least 13 civilians and four police officers were injured in the Lima protests Thursday. A total of 22 police officers and 16 civilians were injured Thursday throughout the country, Interior Minister Vicente Romero Fernández said.

Protesters blamed Boluarte for the violence. "Our God says thou shalt not kill your neighbor. Dina Boluarte is killing, she's making brothers fight," Paulina Consac said as she carried a large Bible while marching in downtown Lima with more than 2,000 protesters from Cusco.

Many Lima residents also joined today's protests, with strong presences from students and union members.

"We're at a breaking point between dictatorship and democracy," said Pedro Mamani, a student at the National University of San Marcos, where demonstrators who traveled for the protest were being housed.

The university was surrounded by police officers, who also deployed at key points of Lima's historic downtown district — 11,800 officers in all, according to Victor Zanabria, the head of the Lima police force.

Boluarte was defiant Thursday night in a televised speech alongside key government officials in which she thanked police for controlling the "violent protests" and vowed to prosecute those responsible for violence. Boluarte has said she supports a plan to hold elections for president and Congress in 2024, two years before originally scheduled.

The president also criticized the protesters for "not having any kind of social agenda that the country needs," accused them of "wanting to break the rule of law" and raised questions about their financing.

For much of the day, the protests played out as a cat-and-mouse game, with demonstrators, some of whom threw rocks at law enforcement, trying to get through police lines and officers responding with volleys of tear gas that sent protesters fleeing, using rags dipped in vinegar to alleviate the sting to their

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eyes and skin.

"We're surrounded," said Sofia López, 42, as she sat on a bench outside the country's Supreme Court. "We've tried going through numerous places and we end up going around in circles." Lopez came from Carabayllo, around 35 kilometers (22 miles) north of the capital.

By early afternoon, protests had turned key roads into large pedestrian areas in downtown Lima.

There was visible frustration among the protesters, who had hoped to march to the Miraflores district, an emblematic neighborhood of the economic elite eight kilometers from downtown.

"We're surrounded," said Sofia López, 42, as she sat on a bench outside the country's Supreme Court. "We've tried going through numerous places and we end up going around in circles." Lopez came from Carabayllo, around 35 kilometers (22 miles) north of the capital.

In a Miraflores park, a large police presence separated antigovernment protesters from a small group of demonstrators expressing support for law enforcement. Police fired tear gas there as well to disperse demonstrators.

By bringing the protest to Lima, demonstrators hoped to give fresh weight to the movement that began when Boluarte was sworn into office on Dec. 7 to replace Castillo.

"When there are tragedies, bloodbaths outside the capital it doesn't have the same political relevance in the public agenda than if it took place in the capital," said Alonso Cárdenas, a public policy professor at the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima.

Protests were also held elsewhere and video posted on social media showed demonstrators trying to storm the airport in southern Arequipa, Peru's second city. They were blocked by police and one person was killed in the ensuing clashes, Peru's ombudsman said.

That was one of three airports that suffered attacks from protesters Thursday, Boluarte said, adding it wasn't "a mere coincidence" they were stormed on the same day.

As the sun set, fires smoldered in the streets of downtown Lima as protesters threw rocks at police officers who fired so much tear gas it was difficult to see.

"I'm feeling furious," said Verónica Paucar, 56, coughing from the tear gas. "We're going to return peacefully." Paucar is a resident of Lima whose parents are from Cusco.

Clashes escalated after dark, and late Thursday evening, a raging inferno broke out in an old building near the protests that were taking place in Plaza San Martín in downtown Lima, but its relationship to the demonstrations was not immediately clear. Images showed people rushing to get their belongings out of the building that was close to several government offices.

Activists have dubbed Thursday's demonstration in Lima as the Cuatro Suyos March, a reference to the four cardinal points of the Inca empire. It's also the name given to a massive 2000 mobilization, when thousands of Peruvians took to the streets against the autocratic government of Alberto Fujimori, who resigned months later.

But there are key differences between those demonstrations and this week's protests.

"In 2000, the people protested against a regime that was already consolidated in power," Cárdenas said. "In this case, they're standing up to a government that has only been in power for a month and is incredibly fragile."

The 2000 protests also had a centralized leadership and were led by political parties.

The latest protests have largely been grassroots efforts without a clear leadership, a dynamic that was clear Thursday as protesters often seemed lost and didn't know where to head next as their path was continually blocked by law enforcement.

The protests have grown to such a degree that demonstrators are unlikely to be satisfied with Boluarte's resignation and are now demanding more fundamental structural reform.

Protesters on Thursday said they would not be cowed.

"This isn't ending today, it won't end tomorrow, but only once we achieve our goals," said 61-year-old David Lozada as he looked on at a line of police officers wearing helmets and carrying shields blocking protesters from leaving downtown Lima. "I don't know what they're thinking, do they want to spark a civil war?"

Bills' Hamlin faces long recovery, family spokesman tells AP

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Remarkable as Damar Hamlin's recovery has been, the Buffalo Bills safety still faces a lengthy rehabilitation some three weeks after going into cardiac arrest and needing to be resuscitated on the field during a game in Cincinnati, his marketing representative told The Associated Press on Thursday night.

"Damar still requires oxygen and is having his heart monitored regularly to ensure there are no setbacks or after effects," Jordon Rooney said. "Though he is able to visit the team's facility, Damar is not in position to travel often, and requires additional rest to help his body heal."

Rooney provided the update to emphasize Hamlin still faces hurdles since being discharged from Buffalo General Medical Center on Jan. 11. Hamlin's release came five days after his doctors said the player was breathing on his own, walking, talking and showing no signs of neurological damage.

Rooney's update also gave perspective to comments made by Bills coach Sean McDermott, who on Wednesday said Hamlin has begun making regular visits to the team's facility. McDermott, however, stressed the 24-year-old was taking "a baby step at a time," while adding, Hamlin is "dipping his toe back in here and getting on the road to just getting back to himself."

Hamlin has not yet made a public appearance except for a photograph linebacker Matt Milano posted on his Instagram account of his teammate at the Bills facility on Saturday. And he's not yet spoken publicly except for posting messages on his social media accounts.

Rooney said Hamlin is being watched over by his parents and "remains very upbeat and grateful for the support he's received from his teammates and coaches, Bills Mafia and people from around the world." That outpouring of support has led to Hamlin's charitable foundation, Chasing M's, raising nearly \$9 million in donations.

Without saying from where, he added, Hamlin will be cheering for the Bills on Sunday, when Buffalo hosts Cincinnati in an AFC divisional playoff.

Hamlin live-tweeted while watching Buffalo's 35-23 season-ending win over New England from his hospital bed at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center on Jan. 8. Last weekend, he live-tweeted while watching from home the Bills' 34-31 win over Miami in a wild-card playoff.

The game against Cincinnati carries additional significance. It marks the first meeting between the two teams since their game was canceled on Jan. 2, when Hamlin collapsed after being struck squarely in the chest while making what appeared to be a routine tackle of Bengals receiver Tee Higgins.

Hamlin's family and Bills quarterback Josh Allen have defended Higgins in saying he shouldn't be blamed for what happened.

On Thursday, Higgins said he couldn't be more appreciative of the family's support, while expressing hope Hamlin could attend the game so the two could meet.

"Just be happy to see him," Higgins said. "I haven't really spoken to him. Just letting his family do what he needs to do with all his loved ones."

Also on Thursday, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul extended her support to Hamlin during a phone call with the player. In a message posted on her Twitter account, Hochul referred to Hamlin as "an inspiration," and let him know "the hopes and prayers of 20 million New Yorkers have been with him throughout his recovery."

Hamlin, who is from the Pittsburgh area, replied by writing it was good meeting Hochul and he was "excited to see how our collaborations in the future will help and affect so many."

Bosnian war survivors share endurance hacks with Ukraine

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

GORAZDE, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Residents of eastern Bosnia's city of Gorazde do not need imaginations to understand the suffering of Ukraine's people. Three decades ago, they endured more than three years of extreme hardship as Bosnian Serbs pummeled their city with rockets and artillery from the surrounding hills.

The long siege during Bosnia's 1992-95 interethnic war cut off Gorazde from access to electricity, food, medicine and the outside world. The people there found creative ways to keep lights on and heating working, survival hacks they now are sharing with civilians plunged into darkness and cold by Russia's relentless missile and drone attacks on Ukraine's power grid.

Edin Culov, the Gorazde region's governor, said friends and acquaintances who work for the European Union's mission to Bosnia, in Sarajevo, contacted him late last year seeking information for a humanitarian effort to provide Ukrainians with an alternative source of electricity.

They specifically wanted any "drawings, photographs, video recordings or anything else" about the "miniature power plants" used in Gorazde back in the 1990s. The plants consisted of home-built paddlewheels mounted on wooden platforms with electrical generators. Locals set them up around a bridge in the Drina River, where barrels and ropes kept them afloat.

Each "plant" had a main supply cable running from its generator to the bridge, from where smaller cables carried the power to buildings. Depending on the volume of water under the span, the contraptions produced enough electricity for Gorazde's straining hospital and for residents living close enough to the river to keep one light bulb on, listen to the radio and occasionally watch television.

A small group of mechanical engineers and electricians who honed their skills in the city's prewar manufacturing industry, which produced everything from weapons to textiles, built the first prototype. Their clever, but simple design allowed DIYers to create the mini plants from engines, alternators, condensers and scrap material scavenged from Gorazde's bombed out factories, vehicles and homes.

Paddlewheels quickly bloomed on the river. Siege survivors credit the contraptions with helping the city hold out and become the only enclave in eastern Bosnia never to be captured by Serb forces. After the war ended, the equipment was removed and dismantled.

In response to the EU request all these years later, Culov said the city collected everything it could find and he went on the radio in Bosnia to solicit surviving documents and memories. The information was delivered to the EU mission in Bosnia, which has shared it with Ukraine, he said.

"I guess they will use the material we provided to develop a few test models and then, if it proves feasible, start mass producing (the miniature) power plants" for distribution around the country, Culov explained.

Among those who responded to Culov's appeal for information were two surviving members of the original development team.

Aziz Lepenica, who had taught engineering at the city's technical high school until suffering a stroke a couple of years ago, offered to return to show students how to prepare proper design drawings and technical calculations for Ukraine.

During Bosnia's war, "We made no drawings. We had no time for that," Lepenica said. "We made all calculations and construction plans in our heads."

During his teaching years, Lepenica helped his students construct a replica of the homegrown power plants. It was placed on the riverbank, next to Gorazde's central bridge, in 2016 to serve as a monument to the days when, as Lepenica put it, "life was unbearable, but our morale was high."

"It would mean a lot to us if it turns out we can help the people (of Ukraine) who are being deprived of electricity as we were," Lepenica said.

Murat Heto, another one of the inventors, also helped prepare documentation for Ukraine.

"With everything we have been through, one would need to be made of wood not to empathize with (Ukrainians)," the retired electrician said, recalling how the lights powered by the miniature power plants developed by his team "made the world of difference" in wartime Gorazde.

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Some 7,000 civilians were killed or severely wounded in the city. Residents often went out only at night to avoid unrelenting sniper and artillery attacks. An influx of refugees from surrounding areas nearly doubled the population to 70,000.

While the refusal of Serb forces to allow U.N. aid convoys into Gorazde kept food and medicine in short supply, the power plants were a "symbol of our resolve to resist, to not give in," Heto said.

"I wish to God it had not happened to us nor to Ukraine, but when people are pushed into a corner and faced with a threat of extermination, everything becomes possible," he said.

A year after Kazakhstan's deadly riots, questions persist

By JOANNA KOZLOWSKA Associated Press

Wisps of fog hung over central Almaty, Kazakhstan, last month as President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev somberly unveiled a monument to those killed a year ago in the worst unrest in the Central Asian nation's three decades of independence.

Words on the stark concrete "Reverence" memorial speak of the need for unity and harmony in the energy-rich country of 19 million.

But a year after calm was restored and a state of emergency lifted on Jan. 20, 2022, both appear elusive. And an official fog still shrouds many of the events surrounding the days known as "Bloody January."

Despite government promises of accountability as well as promises of economic and political reforms in the former Soviet nation, many Kazakhs say they have not seen meaningful changes or even clarity about what happened to those who were killed and detained in the rioting.

"So many questions remain about what happened," said Dimash Alzhanov, a Kazakh political analyst and co-founder of the civic movement known as Oyan, Qazaqstan, or "Wake up, Kazakhstan."

Government video of the memorial's Dec. 23 unveiling in Republic Square, attended by about two dozen officials, showed a subdued ceremony. The scene was starkly different 11 months earlier, when protesters stormed two palatial state buildings on Jan. 5 and set them ablaze.

The Prosecutor General's office said 238 people were killed; human rights groups say over 10,000 were detained.

The demonstrations began Jan. 2 in western Kazakhstan's oil-producing region over an increase in state-controlled gas prices as 2022 dawned. Those protests spread and morphed into broad criticisms of corruption, economic inequality and a continuing grip on power and the country's energy wealth by its long-serving first leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and his family. Marchers referred to him by shouting "Old man out!"

Over the course of a week, the initially peaceful gatherings grew violent. Participants in the marches told The Associated Press at the time that armed men, their faces covered and riding with cars without license plates, appeared in Almaty, the former capital, and urged them to storm government buildings, promising guns.

The government, led by Nazarbayev's hand-picked successor Tokayev, responded with "shoot-to-kill" orders, blaming foreign-trained and funded "terrorists."

At Tokayev's request, 2,000 mostly Russian peacekeeping troops were sent in by the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a military alliance of six former Soviet states. This raised fears of an intervention by Moscow — weeks before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine. Those fears never materialized, with the CSTO pulling out in late January.

Human rights activists allege that Kazakh security troops used excessive force, arbitrary detentions and widespread torture on thousands of detained protesters. They criticized government-published lists of victims for not clarifying the circumstances of their deaths.

Tokayev's administration rejected calls for an international investigation.

It did, however, push through reforms that included strengthening parliament, reducing presidential powers and limiting the presidency to a single seven-year term. Tokayev, who succeeded Nazarbayev in 2019, won a snap presidential election in November with a reported 81% of the vote, ensuring he will stay

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in office until 2029.

The reforms also stripped Nazarbayev, 82, of his remaining powers over domestic and foreign policy. In September, the capital of the country reverted to the name of Astana, after being renamed Nur-Sultan in his honor in 2019.

Despite those reforms, human rights campaigners and analysts say they see troubling familiar patterns. "We continue to live in a Soviet-style authoritarian regime, and it hasn't changed very much since the January events," Yevgeniy Zhovtis, head of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, told AP. "In fact, the January events have led to new issues, linked to torture and civilian deaths and related investigations being closed."

Kazakh human rights lawyer Tatiana Chernobil, working with the Coalition Against Torture nongovernmental organization, said that while her group received 190 complaints of torture and ill-treatment in 2022, the real number could be much higher.

She said 104 of those cases brought by her organization were dismissed for lack of evidence. The Kazakh ombudswoman, Elvira Azimova, gave a similar figure in November, with state media quoting her as saying about 80% were dismissed before going to court.

In February, the press service of the president said criminal investigations were launched into 170 instances of torture and abuse of power from the unrest. In October, Deputy Prosecutor General Aset Chindaliyev said 17 police officers and 12 security operatives were implicated in criminal cases into the alleged torture of detained protesters.

Chernobil said authorities don't do enough to verify the allegations, noting many people claim they can identify their torturers and have medical records of injuries. Investigators "often stop at questioning the suspects, who claim that they didn't commit any wrongdoing — and that's it," and then conclude the account can't be verified, she said.

According to the United Nations, the burden of proof in torture cases lies with the state. As long as complainants can provide evidence of bodily harm or being held in custody, it is up to authorities to prove torture did not occur.

"In Kazakhstan, we see a lack of compliance with international standards. We see a kind of victim-blaming, laying the burden of proof on those bringing the allegations," Chernobil said.

Rachel Gasowski, a Central Asia researcher at the International Partnership for Human Rights, said torture allegations in Kazakhstan predate 2022. Cases cited after protests in the oil-producing city of Zhanaozen in 2011 led to neither investigation nor redress for victims, despite recommendations from U.N.-linked rights bodies. A joint report by Kazakh and international groups on torture is to be published this month.

Gasowski said her group was "dismayed" that most cases from the 2022 protests have been closed. Chernobil expressed cautious optimism about a government decision to transfer jurisdiction in torture cases from the police and state anti-corruption agency to the Prosecutor General's Office but is unsure if it will bring real change. Her group has stopped demanding an independent investigative body, she said, "because it's a major question to what extent you can really be independent in Kazakhstan."

Zhovtis, the activist, said an international probe is needed because most criminal investigations of civilian deaths have been dismissed due to authorities frequently withholding key evidence such as CCTV video, citing national security.

The government list of those killed often omits whether they were accidental deaths, such as from excessive force, or if they were "genuinely terrorists," Zhovtis said, referencing the government line of foreigners being behind the unrest. The administration has yet to provide any such evidence.

An official in the Prosecutor General's Office told *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* in February that authorities were investigating the deaths of at least six people in custody as the result of "prohibited interrogation methods."

Some high-ranking officials were accused of involvement in the unrest. Former anti-terrorism chief Karim Masimov, described as a Nazarbayev ally, was detained in January 2022, along with other key security figures and charged with high treason in an ongoing closed trial.

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Tokayev speaks often of a “new Kazakhstan” that breaks with the Nazarbayev era, one with accountability and democratization. But Zhovtis sees limits to these promises.

Human rights defenders and independent journalists still face pressure, from online harassment to detentions and physical attacks.

On Saturday, journalist Dinara Yegeubayeva, who plans to run in March 19 parliamentary elections, posted photos of her burned-out car in Almaty.

“Tokayev! Explain! Is this your new Kazakhstan?” she said. Media reports say Yegeubayeva received bomb threats last year, although emergency responders found no evidence of one in her car. A criminal investigation has been opened.

Zhovtis linked the attack to what he called an official unwillingness to allow true political opposition.

Alzhanov, the analyst, said candidates have difficulty registering and gathering signatures from supporters.

He accuses Tokayev’s administration of “imitation reforms” for the benefit of the West. He cited the case of opposition figure Zhanbolat Mamai, who has been charged with organizing mass riots and spreading false information in the 2022 protests. He faces up to 10 years in prison on allegations he calls politically motivated.

Despite the challenges, Zhovtis remained optimistic.

“Society is different now. The January events and their coverage in social media networks have played their part, and society has become more open — there is more information and more criticism of the authorities,” he told AP.

He also hopes some opposition and independent candidates could be elected. Authorities allow 30% of parliament seats to be allocated from outside party lists.

“Something is happening. Very slowly, and the regime stays very much the same, but change is happening,” he said.

ShotSpotter document reveals key human role in gunshot tech

By GARANCE BURKE and MICHAEL TARM Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — In more than 140 cities across the United States, ShotSpotter’s artificial intelligence algorithm and intricate network of microphones evaluate hundreds of thousands of sounds a year to determine if they are gunfire, generating data now being used in criminal cases nationwide.

But a confidential ShotSpotter document obtained by The Associated Press outlines something the company doesn’t always tout about its “precision policing system” — that human employees can quickly overrule and reverse the algorithm’s determinations, and are given broad discretion to decide if a sound is a gunshot, fireworks, thunder or something else.

Such reversals happen 10% of the time by a 2021 company account, which experts say could bring subjectivity into increasingly consequential decisions and conflict with one of the reasons AI is used in law-enforcement tools in the first place -- to lessen the role of all-too-fallible humans.

“I’ve listened to a lot of gunshot recordings — and it is not easy to do,” said Robert Maher, a leading national authority on gunshot detection at Montana State University who reviewed the ShotSpotter document. “Sometimes it is obviously a gunshot. Sometimes it is just a ping, ping, ping. ... and you can convince yourself it is a gunshot.”

Marked “WARNING: CONFIDENTIAL,” the 19-page operations document spells out how employees in ShotSpotter’s review centers should listen to recordings and assess the algorithm’s finding of likely gunfire based upon a series of factors that may require judgment calls, including whether the sound has the cadence of gunfire, whether the audio pattern looks like “a sideways Christmas tree” and if there is “100% certainty of gunfire in reviewer’s mind.”

ShotSpotter said in a statement to the AP that the human role is a positive check on the algorithm and the “plain-language” document reflects the high standards of accuracy its reviewers must meet.

“Our data, based on the review of millions of incidents, proves that human review adds value, accuracy and consistency to a review process that our customers—and many gunshot victims—depend on,” said

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Tom Chittum, the company's vice president of analytics and forensic services.

Chittum added that the company's expert witnesses have testified in 250 court cases in 22 states, and that its "97% aggregate accuracy rate for real-time detections across all customers" has been verified by an analytics firm the company commissioned.

Another part of the document underscores ShotSpotter's longstanding emphasis on speed and decisiveness, and its commitment to classify sounds in less than a minute and alert local police and 911 dispatchers so they can send officers to the scene.

Titled "Adopting a New York State of Mind," it refers to New York Police Department's request of ShotSpotter to avoid posting alerts of sounds as "probable gunfire" — only definitive classifications as gunfire or non-gunfire.

"End result: It trains the reviewer to be decisive and accurate in their classification and attempts to remove a doubtful publication," the document reads.

Experts say such guidance under tight time pressure could encourage ShotSpotter reviewers to err in favor of categorizing a sound as a gunshot, even if some evidence for it falls short, potentially boosting the numbers of false positives.

"You're not giving your humans much time," said Geoffrey Morrison, a voice-recognition scientist based in Britain who specializes in forensics processes. "And when humans are under great pressure, the possibility of mistakes is higher."

ShotSpotter says it published 291,726 gunfire alerts to clients in 2021. That same year, in comments to AP appended to a previous story, ShotSpotter said more than 90% of the time its human reviewers agreed with the machine classification but the company invested in its team of reviewers "for the 10% of the time where they disagree with the machine." ShotSpotter did not respond to questions on whether that ratio still holds true.

ShotSpotter's operations document, which the company argued in court for more than a year was a trade secret, was recently released from a protective order in a Chicago court case in which police and prosecutors used ShotSpotter data as evidence in charging a Chicago grandfather with murder in 2020 for allegedly shooting a man inside his car. Michael Williams spent nearly a year in jail before a judge dismissed the case because of insufficient evidence.

Evidence in Williams' pretrial hearings showed ShotSpotter's algorithm initially classified a noise picked up by microphones as a firecracker, making that determination with 98% confidence. But a ShotSpotter reviewer who assessed the sound quickly relabeled it as a gunshot.

The Cook County Public Defender's Office says the operations document was the only paperwork ShotSpotter sent in response to multiple subpoenas for any guidelines, manuals or other scientific protocols. The publicly traded company has long resisted calls to open its operations to independent scientific scrutiny.

Fremont, California-based ShotSpotter acknowledged to AP it has other "comprehensive training and operational materials" but deems them "confidential and trade secret."

ShotSpotter installed its first sensors in Redwood City, California, in 1996, and for years relied solely on local 911 dispatchers and police to review each potential gunshot until adding its own human reviewers in 2011.

Paul Greene, a ShotSpotter employee who testifies frequently about the system, explained in a 2013 evidentiary hearing that staff reviewers addressed issues with a system that "has been known from time to time to give false positives" because "it doesn't have an ear to listen."

"Classification is the hardest element of the process," Greene said in the hearing. "Simply because we do not have ... control over the environment in which the shots are fired."

Greene added that the company likes to hire ex-military and former police officers familiar with firearms, as well as musicians because they "tend to have a more developed ear." Their training includes listening to hundreds of audio samples of gunfire and even visits to rifle ranges to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of gun blasts.

As cities have weighed the system's promise against its price tag -- which can reach \$95,000 per square mile per year -- company employees have explained in detail how its acoustic sensors on utility poles

and light posts pick up loud pops, booms or bangs and then filter the sounds through an algorithm that automatically classifies whether they're gunfire or something else.

But until now, little has been known about the next step: how ShotSpotter's human reviewers in Washington, D.C., and the San Francisco Bay area decide what is a gunshot versus any other noise, 24 hours a day.

"Listening to the audio downloads are important," according to the document written by David Valdez, a former police officer and now-retired supervisor of one of ShotSpotter's review centers. "Sometimes the audio is compelling for gunfire that they may override all other characteristics."

One part of the decision-making that has changed since the document was written in 2021 is whether reviewers can consider if the algorithm had a "high confidence" the sound was a gunshot. ShotSpotter said the company stopped showing the algorithm's confidence rating to reviewers in June 2022 "to prioritize other elements that are more highly correlated to accurate human-trained assessment."

ShotSpotter CEO Ralph Clark has said that the system's machine classifications are improved by its "real-world feedback loops from humans."

However, a recent study found humans tend to overestimate their abilities to identify sounds.

The 2022 study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Forensic Science International* looked at how well human listeners identified voices compared to voice-recognition tools. It found all the human listeners performed worse than the voice system alone, saying the findings should lead to the elimination of human listeners in court cases whenever possible.

"Would that be the case with ShotSpotter? Would the ShotSpotter system plus the reviewer outperform the system alone?" asked Morrison, who was one of seven researchers who conducted the study.

"I don't know. But ShotSpotter should do validation to demonstrate that."

Florida judge fines Trump, lawyer for 'frivolous' lawsuit

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Florida Judge sanctioned former President Donald Trump and one of his attorneys Thursday, ordering them to pay nearly \$1 million for filing what he said was a bogus lawsuit against Trump's 2016 rival Hillary Clinton and others.

In a blistering filing, U.S. District Judge Donald M. Middlebrooks accused Trump of a "pattern of abuse of the courts" for filing frivolous lawsuits for political purposes, which he said "undermines the rule of law" and "amounts to obstruction of justice."

"Here, we are confronted with a lawsuit that should never have been filed, which was completely frivolous, both factually and legally, and which was brought in bad faith for an improper purpose," he wrote.

Citing Trump's recent legal action against the Pulitzer Prize board, New York Attorney General Letitia James, big tech companies and CNN, he described Trump as "a prolific and sophisticated litigant" who uses the courts "to seek revenge on political adversaries."

"He is the mastermind of strategic abuse of the judicial process," he wrote.

The ruling required Trump and his attorney, Alina Habba, to pay nearly \$938,000 to the defendants in the case.

A spokesman for Trump and Habba did not immediately respond to requests for comment late Thursday.

Middlebrooks in September dismissed the suit Trump had filed against Clinton, former top FBI officials and the Democratic Party, rejecting the former president's claims that they and others conspired to sink his winning presidential campaign by alleging ties to Russia.

The lawsuit had named as defendants Clinton and some of her top advisers, as well as former FBI Director James Comey and other FBI officials involved in the investigation into whether Trump's 2016 presidential campaign had coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the election.

He said then the suit contained "glaring structural deficiencies" and that many of the "characterizations of events are implausible."

March for Life returns to DC with new post-Roe v. Wade focus

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One year ago, the annual March for Life protest against legal abortion took place in Washington amid a mood of undisguised triumph. With a fresh conservative majority on the Supreme Court, thousands of marchers braved bitterly cold weather to celebrate the seemingly inevitable fall of Roe v. Wade.

Now, with the constitutional right to abortion no longer the rule of the land, the March for Life returns Friday with a new focus. Instead of concentrating their attention on the Supreme Court, the marchers plan to target the building directly across the street: the U.S. Capitol.

Movement leaders say they plan to warn Congress against making any attempt to curtail the multiple anti-abortion laws imposed last year in a dozen different states.

"This year will be a somber reminder of the millions of lives lost to abortion in the past 50 years, but also a celebration of how far we have come and where we as a movement need to focus our effort as we enter this new era in our quest to protect life," Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life Education and Defense Fund, said in a statement.

Some movement leaders also hope to plant seeds in Congress for a potential federal abortion restriction down the line. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA Pro-Life America, said she envisions an eventual "federal minimum standard" cut-off line such as 13 weeks of pregnancy after which abortion would not be permitted in any state. Dannenfelser's scenario would still leave individual states free to impose their own, stricter measures, including a total ban.

That last ambition is an admitted longshot since even if it passes the newly Republican-controlled House of Representatives, it would most likely fail in the Democratic-held Senate.

"We know it's not going to happen this session, but this is the beginning," Dannenfelser said. "It's (Congress') responsibility to listen to the will of the people."

In permit applications to the National Park Service, protest organizers estimated 50,000 participants this year, about the same size as previous marches.

In the absence of Roe v. Wade's federal protections, abortion rights have become a state-by-state patchwork.

Since June, near-total bans on abortion have been implemented in Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia. Legal challenges are pending against several of those bans.

Elective abortions also are unavailable in Wisconsin, due to legal uncertainties faced by abortion clinics, and in North Dakota, where the lone clinic relocated to Minnesota.

Bans passed by lawmakers in Ohio, Indiana and Wyoming have been blocked by state courts while legal challenges are pending. And in South Carolina, the state Supreme Court on Jan. 5 struck down a ban on abortion after six weeks, ruling the restriction violates a state constitutional right to privacy.

But other states have witnessed unexpected pushback on the issue. Voters in Kansas and Kentucky rejected constitutional amendments that would have declared there is no right to abortion; Michigan voters approved an amendment enshrining the right to abortion in the state constitution.

President Joe Biden's administration has limited options in the wake of the Supreme Court decision. Vice President Kamala Harris is scheduled to give a speech in Florida on Sunday, the 50th anniversary of the original Roe v. Wade ruling, to emphasize that abortion rights remain a core focus for the administration.

"The vice president will make very clear: The fight to secure women's fundamental right to reproductive health care is far from over," said a statement from Kirsten Allen, a Harris spokesperson. "She will lay out the consequences of extremist attacks on reproductive freedom in states across our country and underscore the need for Congress to codify Roe."

According to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in July, 53% of U.S. adults said they disapproved of the Supreme Court's repeal of Roe, while 30% approved.

Dannenfelser disputes those numbers and says that while blanket abortion bans are a divisive issue

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among voters, limited restrictions such as a ban after the first trimester of pregnancy are “wildly popular” in both red and blue states.

Anti-abortion activists also have their eye on the upcoming 2024 presidential elections and are essentially vetting prospective candidates over their views on the issue. Dannenfelser said she met recently with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a potential leading Republican candidate, and came away “incredibly impressed,” but said it was still too early for her organization to endorse anyone.

She predicted that there will be some “fault lines” among Republican presidential contenders over abortion rights and protections, but warned that any candidate perceived as being soft on the issue will have “disqualified him or herself as a presidential candidate in our eyes, and having done so has very little chance of winning the nomination.”

Sen. Tim Kaine to address media amid reelection speculation

By SARAH RANKIN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Democratic U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine is holding a media availability Friday morning in Virginia’s capital city amid speculation that he plans to announce whether he will seek a third term.

Questions about Kaine’s next steps have swirled since he told the Richmond Times-Dispatch earlier this month that he had not made a final decision about whether he would compete in 2024. He said he planned to make a decision by the end of January.

A Kaine retirement would be a blow to Democrats, both politically and practically in a swing state that is prized by both parties. Kaine is best known nationally as Hillary Clinton’s running mate in the 2016 presidential election, a race they lost in one of the most stunning upsets in U.S. history.

Virginia is a must-hold seat for Democrats facing a tough election landscape in 2024, alongside the presidential contest. Kaine would have been a strong favorite, even after the state elected a slate of Republican statewide candidates in 2021, including Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

Kaine was expected to meet with the media Friday after hosting what his office described as an economic development roundtable with young Richmond leaders at a coffee shop in Richmond’s East End. He will discuss “how Congress can build on the progress made to create jobs and lower costs for Virginians,” according to an advisory.

Kaine’s press office declined to comment about Friday’s events beyond what was publicly advised.

Kaine is a fixture of Virginia politics who got his start in elected office on the Richmond City Council after working as an attorney and making a name for himself for his fair-housing advocacy.

He went on to serve as lieutenant governor and governor, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2012 and was tapped to be Clinton’s running mate in 2016.

Kaine is seen as a passionate yet pragmatic senator and is known as a serious policymaker and eager partner on legislation.

After his high-profile turn as the party’s vice presidential nominee — and a contest that marked his first ever electoral defeat — he returned to work in the Senate, often showing up in dark jeans during the pandemic when an air of informality swept through the Capitol.

His own bout with the coronavirus led to what he has described as “mild long COVID symptoms,” as he pushes for funding toward research and care for those with the disease.

T-Mobile says data on 37 million customers stolen

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The U.S. wireless carrier T-Mobile said Thursday that an unidentified malicious intruder breached its network in late November and stole data on 37 million customers, including addresses, phone numbers and dates of birth.

T-Mobile said in a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that the breach was discovered Jan. 5. It said the data exposed to theft — based on its investigation to date — did not include passwords

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or PINs, bank account or credit card information, Social Security numbers or other government IDs.

"Our investigation is still ongoing, but the malicious activity appears to be fully contained at this time," T-Mobile said, with no evidence the intruder was able to breach the company's network. It said the data was first accessed on or around Nov. 25.

T-Mobile said it has notified law enforcement and federal agencies, which it did not name. It did not immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment.

The company has been hacked multiple times in recent years. In its filing, T-Mobile said it did not expect the latest breach to have material impact on its operations. But a senior analyst for Moody's Investors Service, Neil Mack, said in a statement that the breach raises questions about management's cyber governance and could alienate customers and attract scrutiny by the Federal Communications Commission and other regulators.

"While these cybersecurity breaches may not be systemic in nature, their frequency of occurrence at T-Mobile is an alarming outlier relative to telecom peers," Mack said.

In July, T-Mobile agreed to pay \$350 million to customers who filed a class action lawsuit after the company disclosed in August 2021 that personal data including Social Security numbers and driver's license info had been stolen. Nearly 80 million U.S. residents were affected.

It also said at the time that it would spend \$150 million through 2023 to fortify its data security and other technologies.

Prior to the August 2021 intrusion, the company disclosed breaches in January 2021, November 2019 and August 2018 in which customer information was accessed.

T-Mobile, based in Bellevue, Washington, became one of the country's largest cellphone service carriers in 2020 after buying rival Sprint. It reported having more than 102 million customers after the merger.

Polar bear emerged unseen from snowstorm to kill mom, son

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Summer Myomick bundled her baby against the freezing winds whipping off the Bering Sea and stepped outside into a blur of blowing snow. It was a short walk from the school where she had visited relatives to the health clinic about 150 yards (137 meters) away, but the young mother could hardly have seen where she was going — or the terror that was approaching.

Myomick, 24, and her son, 1-year-old Clyde Ongtowasuk, made it just beyond the front of the Kingikmiut School in Wales, Alaska, just below the Arctic Circle, when a polar bear emerged from the impenetrable snow squall and mauled them Tuesday. It was the first fatal polar bear attack in 30 years in Alaska, the only U.S. state that is home to the animals.

As the attack unfolded, the principal ordered a lockdown and closed the blinds so the children couldn't see what was happening outside the entrance. Several employees and community members left the safety of the building and tried to scare away the bear with shovels.

The mauling stopped temporarily, but only when the animal turned on them, and they rushed back inside. Principal Dawn Hendrickson slammed the door in the face of the charging bear, possibly saving lives, according to Susan Nedza, chief administrator of the Bering Strait School District.

"The polar bear was chasing them and tried to get in as well," said Nedza, who received frantic calls about the attack in Unalakleet, about 250 miles (400 kilometers) away. "Just horrific. ... Something you never think you would ever experience."

There is no law enforcement in Wales, so with the bear still outside, a call went out to community members for help. A person who has not been identified showed up with a gun and killed the bear as it continued to maul Myomick and her son.

It appears the mother and toddler had no idea what was coming because of low visibility, Alaska State Troopers spokesperson Austin McDaniel told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The immediate family was living at the school temporarily while they were fixing electrical issues in their home, according to a post on a GoFundMe fundraising site established to help the family "in the face of

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unfathomable tragedy and heartbreak.”

“We ask that you respect their privacy in this period of immense grief,” the post read.

Wales, a whaling community, is the westernmost point on the North American mainland — just 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Russia across the Bering Strait — and is home to about 150 people, almost all of them Inupiat. It’s accessible by plane and boat, including barges that deliver household goods. Winter trails provide snowmobile access to other communities and subsistence hunting grounds.

Kingikmiut School, like other schools in many rural Alaska Native communities, doubles as a community center. The view from its front, where the attack occurred, is an endless expanse of frozen snow and ice to the horizon.

Nedza, the school district chief administrator, said she received a call from a distraught Hendrickson just after 2 p.m. Tuesday. She said the students were locked down and safe.

The snowstorm that camouflaged the bear, along with a lack of runway lights at Wales’ gravel air strip, prevented Alaska State Troopers from flying in an officer and a state wildlife official from Nome to investigate until Wednesday.

It’s not known what prompted the attack. However, polar bears see humans as prey, said Geoff York, the senior director of conservation at Polar Bear International.

Samples from the bear were taken for the state veterinarian, and the bodies of Myomick and her son were flown to Nome for eventual transport to the State Medical Examiner’s Office in Anchorage.

School was cancelled Wednesday so students could be with their families, and the school district flew counselors to Wales. The school planned soft openings Thursday and Friday with no classes but opportunities for students to meet with counselors, get a meal or play a game, Nedza said.

Alaska scientists at the U.S. Geological Survey in 2019 found changes in sea ice habitat had coincided with evidence that polar bears’ use of land was increasing and that the chances of a polar bear encounter had risen.

Polar bears are the largest bear species, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Males typically weigh 600 to 1,200 pounds (270 to 540 kilograms) but can reach more than 1,700 pounds (770 kilograms) and as many as 10 feet (3 meters) in length. Females weigh 400 to 700 pounds (180 to 320 kilograms). Polar bears generally feed on seals, but also walrus and beluga whales.

They were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2008 and are also protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Both laws prohibit harming the animals without authorization, unless necessary for human safety.

Biden on classified docs discovery: ‘There’s no there there’

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

APTOS, Calif. (AP) — A frustrated President Joe Biden said Thursday there is “no there there” when he was persistently questioned about the discovery of classified documents and official records at his home and former office.

“We found a handful of documents were filed in the wrong place,” Biden said to reporters who questioned him during a tour of the damage from storms in California. “We immediately turned them over to the Archives and the Justice Department.”

Biden said he was “fully cooperating and looking forward to getting this resolved quickly.”

“I think you’re going to find there’s nothing there,” he said. “There’s no there there.”

The White House has disclosed that Biden attorneys found classified documents and official records on four occasions in recent months — on Nov. 2 at the offices of the Penn Biden Center in Washington, and then in follow up searches on Dec. 20 in the garage of the president’s home in Wilmington, Delaware, and on Jan. 11 and 12 in the president’s home library.

The discovery complicates a federal probe into former President Donald Trump, who the Justice Department says took hundreds of records marked classified with him upon leaving the White House in early 2021 and resisted months of requests to return them to the government.

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The two cases are different — Biden for example, willingly turned over the documents once found. But the issue is wearing on the president and his aides, who have repeatedly said they acted swiftly and appropriately when the documents were discovered, and are working to be as transparent as possible though key questions remain unanswered.

Attorney General Merrick Garland last week appointed Robert Hur, a former Maryland U.S. attorney, to serve as special counsel to oversee the Justice Department's inquiry into the documents. Garland said the extraordinary circumstances warranted a special counsel, and he also made the decision in part to show the Justice Department's "commitment to both independence and accountability in particularly sensitive matters."

Hur is taking over for federal prosecutor John Lausch, who was initially asked to review the documents and whose team has already been interviewing former Biden aides responsible for packing up boxes during his time as vice president. Those interviews include Kathy Chung, who served as an administrative assistant during that time, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

Biden expressed frustration that the documents matter was coming up as he surveyed coastal storm damage, telling reporters that it "bugs me" that he was being asked about the handling of the classified material even as "we have a serious problem here" in California.

"Why you don't ask me questions about that?" he pressed.

Biden's team has faced criticism for its fragmented disclosures — the public wasn't notified of the documents until early January and after that the additional findings dripped out slowly. It has occasionally led to heated exchanges between reporters and White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre in the White House briefing room. She ran into trouble when she suggested last Friday that all documents had been recovered, only to have an additional discovery disclosed over the weekend.

Biden said Thursday he has "no regrets" over how and when the public learned about the documents. "I'm following what the lawyers have told me they want me to do," he said.

New Zealand's Ardern has many possibilities for a second act

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — When Jacinda Ardern announced this week she was stepping down as New Zealand's prime minister, speculation began almost immediately about what she might do for a second act.

When she leaves, she will have accumulated 15 years experience as a lawmaker and five-and-a-half years as leader. She will also be just 42 years old. Observers say she has all sorts of career possibilities open to her.

Ardern said she was leaving the job because she no longer has "enough in the tank to do it justice" and has no immediate plans for her own future other than to spend more time with her fiancé and 4-year-old daughter.

"I'll have to admit I slept well for the first time in a long time last night," Ardern told reporters Friday, adding that she felt both sadness and relief.

Stephen Hoadley, an assistant professor of politics and international relations at the University of Auckland, said he couldn't imagine Ardern would remain at home over the long term, given her energy and skills.

"She has the potential, she has the ability, she has the profile, she has the acceptability to do a whole lot of things," Hoadley said. "Give her a few weeks to rest up, and to refill the tank, to use her phrase. But I would imagine by the end of this year, she'll be off and running on a whole new career line."

Hoadley pointed to the career path of Helen Clark, another former New Zealand prime minister who went on to become a top administrator at the U.N., leading the development program.

"Jacinda could be tapped by any number of United Nations, or charitable, or philanthropical, or other kinds of organizations," Hoadley said.

"There are many, many possibilities, and her profile is so high that I think she would have her pick."

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Climate Change Minister James Shaw, who first met Ardern in about 2007 and has remained friends, said he was in shock but also not wholly surprised when Ardern told him of her plans to resign.

"It's been a really intense five years," Shaw said.

On top of a busy legislative program, Shaw said, Ardern had needed to steer the country through a series of crises, including a mass-shooting at two Christchurch mosques that left 51 people dead, a volcanic eruption that killed 22, and the coronavirus pandemic.

On top of that, Ardern also bore the brunt of a growing number of threats, Shaw said, and a toxic, misogynistic online culture that had grown worse in recent years.

"What I hope is that she can get some time at the beach with her family, uninterrupted, for a while," Shaw said.

He said he believes Ardern when she says she doesn't yet have firm plans for the future.

"I think she could do pretty much whatever she wants from this point," Shaw said.

"Jacinda is one of the most selfless, determined, publicly-minded people I have ever met," Shaw added. "So I would imagine that whatever it is, it will be in the public interest."

AP Top 25 Movies, ranking 2022's best: What made the cut?

By SALLY HO, ANGELIKI KASTANIS and LINDSEY BAHR Associated Press

With hundreds of new movies released each year, many of us depend on the expertise of film critics to help curate our own watching — a thoroughly communal yet deeply personal experience.

To honor the supporting role that entertainment journalism can play in this beloved pastime, The Associated Press on Thursday unveiled its inaugural AP Top 25 Movies list.

The AP Top 25 Movies ranking is a distinctive honor roll of films released in 2022, as determined by a truly representative panel of 26 of the U.S.' smartest movie experts working for AP-affiliated news outlets.

Here, we explain what it is and how it works:

THE HISTORY

The AP Top 25 Movies ranking is a new initiative adapted from a rich legacy. The global not-for-profit news cooperative's AP Top 25 college football poll has been the authority in the sport since the all-media survey began in 1936.

The sports poll has since expanded, including men's college basketball in 1949 and women's college basketball in 1977. The AP Top 25 Movies ranking now joins this storied tradition.

The sports polls are a weekly tally tracking the evolving dynamic throughout each sport's season of play. In contrast, the AP Top 25 Movies ranking is a single definitive list reflecting the entire 2022 calendar year.

"I've been mimicking the AP College Football poll since I was 6 years old and ranking my favorite movies every year," said Shawn Edwards, film critic at WDAF-TV in Kansas City. "I'm thrilled that AP wanted a diverse group of individuals from various parts of the country to share their perspectives and viewpoints."

THE VOTERS

For the AP Top 25 Movies ranking, the AP researched the nation's best film writers, reporters and critics, seeking a diverse panel of journalists from all formats who cover films as a significant part of their role at their news outlet. To be eligible, their news outlets must be AP members or customers.

Among the 26 selected to vote in the inaugural ranking are a mix of platforms and audiences — from National Public Radio, Univision and IndieWire, to The Chicago Tribune, San Diego's KPBS-FM radio station and KSNV-TV in Las Vegas.

The demographic makeup of the voters — 54% white and 65% male — stands out as more inclusive when compared to the overall industry: Research from USC in 2018 found the film critics industry to be 83% white and 78.7% male.

The AP Top 25 Movies panelists also ranged in age from 29 to 68, and are based across the country — from Detroit to Memphis, Tennessee, and Houston to Philadelphia — though there is heavy representation in the film industry hubs of New York and Los Angeles.

THE METHODOLOGY

Each voter submitted their own list ranking 25 movies that premiered to the public during the 2022

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calendar year. The AP encouraged each panelist to exercise their own interpretation of “best films,” which did not need to align with predictions for awards or even movies’ Oscars eligibility.

The 26 lists that ensued yielded a collective of 176 different movies. The individual rankings were then combined to produce the national ranking using a Borda count, in which a first-place vote was worth 25 points, a second-place vote was worth 24 points, and so on. Ties were allowed and occurred at No. 16, in which both “Avatar: The Way of Water” and “The Whale” each received 130 points in the AP’s cumulative weighted system.

Each panelist’s identity and full ballot are public.

THE TRENDS

In a cinematic landscape where it seems only franchise films have a shot at traditional box office success, the top five films on the AP Top 25 Movies ranking were all original — and most found robust audiences in theaters, despite the fact that moviegoing has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Fiercely original films, female-focused stories and theatrical-first releases had the clear edge.

The fight for the top movie of the year was extremely close, separated in the ranking by a mere 8 points. While “The Banshees of Inisherin” won the title with 392 points, it’s the Michelle Yeoh-fronted “Everything Everywhere All at Once” that earned the most first-place votes. The indie sci-fi hit — currently enjoying a Cinderella run during awards season — came in second in the AP rankings with 384 points but was the first choice on six different ballots. Meanwhile, the Irish dark comedy was ranked the top movie of the year on just two different ballots.

And while the final list of 25 movies reflected the year’s critical darlings, individual panelists’ ballots took a distinct turn toward, shall we say, approachability in the bottom half. Movies toward the end of the full list of 176 movies ranged from “Lightyear” and “The Bob’s Burgers Movie” to “Jackass Forever” and “Love, Lizzo.” There were 76 movies that each were only endorsed on one ballot.

THE FULL LIST

1. “The Banshees of Inisherin,” 392 points
2. “Everything Everywhere All at Once,” 384 points
3. “Tár,” 346 points
4. “Nope,” 304 points
5. “The Woman King,” 267 points
6. “RRR,” 263 points
7. “Top Gun: Maverick,” 252 points
8. “The Fabelmans,” 238 points
9. “Women Talking,” 222 points
10. “Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery,” 209 points
11. “Aftersun,” 201 points
12. “Decision to Leave,” 200 points
13. “Guillermo del Toro’s Pinocchio,” 147 points
14. “Elvis,” 145 points
15. “All the Beauty and the Bloodshed,” 141 points
16. “Avatar: The Way of Water,” 130 points
16. “The Whale,” 130 points
18. “Babylon,” 129 points
19. “She Said,” 125 points
20. “Marcel the Shell with Shoes On,” 122 points
21. “Triangle of Sadness,” 121 points
22. “Till,” 116 points
23. “EO,” 98 points
24. “Turning Red,” 95 points
25. “No Bears,” 89 points

Peru police use tear gas to block protesters from marching

By DANIEL POLITI and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Police fired tear gas to try to subdue thousands of protesters who poured into the Peruvian capital Thursday, many from remote Andean regions, calling for the ouster of President Dina Boluarte and the return to power of her predecessor, whose removal last month launched deadly unrest and cast the nation into political chaos.

The demonstrators gathered in Lima's historic downtown scuffled with security forces who barred them from reaching key government buildings, including Congress, as well as business and residential districts of the capital.

Besides Boluarte's resignation, the supporters of former President Pedro Castillo were demanding the dissolution of Congress and immediate elections. Castillo, Peru's first leader from a rural Andean background, was impeached after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress.

For much of the day, the protests played out as a cat-and-mouse game, with demonstrators, some of whom threw rocks at law enforcement, trying to get through police lines and officers responding with volleys of tear gas that sent protesters fleeing, using rags dipped in vinegar to alleviate the sting to their eyes and skin.

"We're surrounded," said Sofia López, 42, as she sat on a bench outside the country's Supreme Court. "We've tried going through numerous places and we end up going around in circles."

Late Thursday evening, firefighters were working to put out a raging inferno that broke out in an old building near the protests that were taking place in Plaza San Martín in downtown Lima but its relationship to the demonstrations was not immediately clear. Images showed people rushing to get their belongings out of the building that was close to several government offices.

As the sun set, fires smoldered in the streets of downtown Lima as protesters threw rocks at police officers who fired so much tear gas it was difficult to see.

"I'm feeling furious," said Verónica Paucar, 56, coughing from the tear gas. "We're going to return peacefully."

There was visible frustration among protesters who had hoped to march into the Miraflores district, an emblematic neighborhood of the economic elite.

In a Miraflores park, a large police presence separated the antigovernment protesters from a small group of demonstrators expressing support for law enforcement. Police fired tear gas there as well to disperse demonstrators.

Boluarte was defiant Thursday night in a televised speech alongside key government officials in which she thanked police for controlling the "violent protests" and vowed to prosecute those responsible for violence.

The president also criticized the protests for "not having any kind of social agenda that the country needs," accused them of "wanting to break the rule of law" and raised questions about their financing.

A total of 22 police officers and 16 civilians were injured Thursday throughout the country, Interior Minister Vicente Romero Fernández said.

Peru's ombudsman said at least 13 civilians and four police officers were injured in the Lima protests Thursday.

Until recently, the protests had been mainly in Peru's southern Andes, with a total of 55 people killed in the unrest, mostly in clashes with security forces.

Anger at Boluarte was the common thread Thursday as protesters chanted calls for her resignation and street sellers hawked T-shirts saying, "Out, Dina Boluarte," "Dina murderer, Peru repudiates you" and "New elections, let them all leave."

"Our God says thou shalt not kill your neighbor. Dina Boluarte is killing, she's making brothers fight," Paulina Consac said as she carried a large Bible while marching in downtown Lima with more than 2,000 protesters from Cusco.

By early afternoon, protesters had turned key roads into large pedestrian areas in downtown Lima.

"We're at a breaking point between dictatorship and democracy," said Pedro Mamani, a student at the

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National University of San Marcos, where demonstrators who traveled for the protest were being housed.

The university was surrounded by police officers, who also deployed at key points of Lima's historic downtown district — 11,800 officers in all, according to Victor Zanabria, the head of the Lima police force.

Protests were also held elsewhere and video posted on social media showed demonstrators trying to storm the airport in southern Arequipa, Peru's second city. They were blocked by police and one person was killed in the ensuing clashes, Peru's ombudsman said.

That was one of three airports that suffered attacks from protesters Thursday, Boluarte said, adding it wasn't "a mere coincidence" they were stormed on the same day.

The protests, which erupted last month, have marked the worst political violence in more than two decades and highlighted the deep divisions between the urban elite largely concentrated in Lima and the poor rural areas.

By bringing the protest to Lima, demonstrators hoped to give fresh weight to the movement that began when Boluarte was sworn into office on Dec. 7 to replace Castillo.

"When there are tragedies, bloodbaths outside the capital it doesn't have the same political relevance in the public agenda than if it took place in the capital," said Alonso Cárdenas, a public policy professor at the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima.

The concentration of protesters in Lima also reflects how the capital has started to see more antigovernment demonstrations in recent days.

Boluarte has said she supports a plan to hold elections for president and Congress in 2024, two years before originally scheduled.

Activists have dubbed Thursday's demonstration in Lima as the Cuatro Suyos March, a reference to the four cardinal points of the Inca empire. It's also the name given to a massive 2000 mobilization, when thousands of Peruvians took to the streets against the autocratic government of Alberto Fujimori, who resigned months later.

But there are key differences between those demonstrations and this week's protests.

"In 2000, the people protested against a regime that was already consolidated in power," Cardenas said. "In this case, they're standing up to a government that has only been in power for a month and is incredibly fragile."

The 2000 protests also had a centralized leadership and were led by political parties.

The latest protests have largely been grassroots efforts without a clear leadership, a dynamic that was clear Thursday as protesters often seemed lost and didn't know where to head next as their path was continually blocked by law enforcement.

The protests have grown to such a degree that demonstrators are unlikely to be satisfied with Boluarte's resignation and are now demanding more fundamental structural reform.

Protesters on Thursday said they would not be cowed.

"This isn't ending today, it won't end tomorrow, but only once we achieve our goals," said 61-year-old David Lozada as he looked on at a line of police officers wearing helmets and carrying shields blocking protesters from leaving downtown Lima. "I don't know what they're thinking, do they want to spark a civil war?"

Sundance celebrates the 'magic' of being back in-person

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — The Sundance Film Festival met the moment by going virtual for the past two years because of the coronavirus pandemic. But on Thursday, there was a palpable sense of relief from the festival's leadership team at being in-person again.

Sundance Institute CEO Joana Vicente, director of programming Kim Yutani, senior programmer John Nein and incoming Sundance Film Festival director Eugene Hernandez gathered Thursday afternoon in Park City, Utah, to discuss what's to come. Just outside, on a snowy Main Street, finishing touches were being put on storefronts and restaurants that sponsors have taken over for the week.

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"It feels so good to be back in person," Vicente said. "There's nothing like the magic of being together in Park City."

Yutani also announced the last-minute addition of "Justice," a documentary from filmmaker Doug Liman about allegations against Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, that will debut Friday.

"It was a powerful documentary that we felt was important to add," Yutani said. "We saw it, like, yesterday."

Eleven films have their world premieres Thursday night, including the documentary "Little Richard: I Am Everything" and the Frankenstein-inspired psychological horror "birth/rebirth," about a morgue technician who reanimates a little girl. Also on Thursday, "Shayda," about an Iranian mother and her 6-year-old daughter who go to a women's shelter in Australia, "The Longest Goodbye," a documentary about a NASA psychologist preparing Mars-bound astronauts for social isolation, the Daisy Ridley film "Sometimes I Think About Dying" and "Kim's Video," a documentary about a hunt for a lost video collection of 55,000 movies.

Programmers watched 16,000 films to determine this year's slate of 111 films and say that there is something for everyone. Biographical documentaries, films about world issues and diasporic filmmaking are especially popular this year.

Nein said that he expects audiences to be buzzing about the performances of both known stars like Jonathan Majors, in "Magazine Dreams," Cynthia Erivo, in "Drift," and Eugenio Derbez in "Radical" and newcomers like Lío Mehiel in "Mutt" and Priya Kansara in "Polite Society."

The Sundance Institute is also hosting a dinner Thursday night honoring filmmaker Luca Guadagnino, Ryan Coogler, Nikyatu Jusu and W. Kamau Bell. There will also be a fundraising component to support the Institute's work. Vicente said that it has been a challenging few years for the Institute, financially.

Sundance is not just a festival, after all. The non-profit institute, founded by Robert Redford in 1981, provides year-round support to emerging filmmakers with labs, fellowships and mentorship.

"The festival is this amazing platform to celebrate and share with audiences," Vicente said. "But really, as Robert Redford says, the engine, the most important work we do happens year-round."

Filmmaker Sophie Barthes, whose film "The Pod Generation" is among the opening night selections, attributes her career to the Sundance Institute. Her first short film debuted at the festival almost 20 years ago, marking the beginning of a relationship that continues to this day. Over the years, she participated in the director's lab, the composers' lab and the writers' lab. It's also where she debuted her first feature, "Cold Souls," with Paul Giamatti, in 2009.

"I wouldn't be here without Sundance," Barthes said in a recent interview. "They helped my career so much. I had like 50 advisers, the best of the best in the industry. It was like a film school on steroids. For filmmakers it's the best thing that can happen to you because once you enter the family, they help and support you."

Her film "The Pod Generation" is a futuristic satire about a New York couple (played by Emilia Clarke and Chiwetel Ejiofor) who use an "artificial womb" to get pregnant. She wanted to explore not-so-far-off advancements like artificial gestation and AI therapy and poke at ideas like detachment parenting.

"It's a satire about the fact that we've lost so many of our instincts because of this modern life, we're trying to reinvent the wheel and it becomes very comical," Barthes said. "I think it's very funny to explore the psychology of parents, especially in New York."

She hopes the film raises a debate about our relationship to technology. It will also be part of the "beyond film" conversations taking place in Park City outside of the cinemas throughout the week. Subjects range from how to cross-over from television to film, with "Flight Attendant" director Susanna Fogel whose "Cat Person" is premiering at the festival, to representation, with Randall Park and Marlee Matlin. There will be conversations about making your first feature and even burnout, with Majors, food writer Ruth Reichl and graphic novelist Adrian Tomine. Many of the sponsors, from Acura to Adobe, are also hosting timely conversations as well about climate change in movies, reclaiming trans narratives, building inclusive productions and even getting into Sundance.

The festival has continued to evolve over the past few years. Though in-person was the priority, they also

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committed to a hybrid format. This year some 80 films will be available to watch online for ticketholders. The digital package, Vicente said, sold out very quickly.

"The last two years have been successful, but there's nothing that can replace the in-person experience of watching films on the big screen," Yutani said.

The Sundance Film Festival runs through Jan. 29.

New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, an icon to many, to step down

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who became a global icon of the left and exemplified a new style of leadership, said Thursday that she would leave office.

Just 37 when she became leader, Ardern was praised around the world for her handling of the nation's worst-ever mass shooting and the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. But she faced mounting political pressures at home and a level of vitriol from some that hadn't been experienced by previous New Zealand leaders.

Still, her announcement came as a shock throughout the nation of 5 million people.

Fighting back tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that Feb. 7 would be her last day as prime minister after five and a half years in office.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said.

Lawmakers in her Labour Party will vote for a new leader on Sunday.

Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after first winning the top job in 2017. She seemed to herald a new generation of leadership — she was on the verge of being a millennial, had spun some records as a part-time DJ, and wasn't married like most politicians.

In 2018, Ardern became just the second elected world leader to give birth while holding office. Later that year, she brought her infant daughter to the floor of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

She notched up center-left victories while right-wing populism was on the rise globally, pushing through a bill targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, overseeing a ban on assault weapons, and largely keeping the coronavirus out of New Zealand for 18 months.

Her approach to the pandemic earned the ire of U.S. President Donald Trump, and she pushed back against wildly exaggerated claims from Trump about the spread of COVID-19 after he said there was a massive outbreak and "It's over for New Zealand. Everything's gone."

"Was angry the word?" Ardern said about Trump's comments in an interview with The Associated Press at the time.

In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 worshippers during Friday prayers. Ardern was widely praised for her empathy toward survivors and New Zealand's wider Muslim community in the aftermath.

After the mosque shootings, Ardern moved within weeks to pass new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. A subsequent buyback scheme run by police saw more than 50,000 guns, including many AR-15-style rifles, destroyed.

Less than nine months after the shooting, she faced another tragedy when 22 tourists and guides were killed when the White Island volcano erupted.

Ardern was lauded globally for her country's initial handling of the pandemic after New Zealand managed to stop the virus at its borders for months. But she was forced to abandon that zero-tolerance strategy as more contagious variants spread and vaccines became widely available.

She faced growing anger at home from those who opposed coronavirus mandates and rules. A protest against vaccine mandates that began on Parliament's grounds last year lasted for more than three weeks and ended with protesters hurling rocks at police and setting fires to tents and mattresses as they were forced to leave. This year, Ardern canceled an annual barbecue she hosts due to security fears.

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Ardern last month announced that a wide-ranging Royal Commission of Inquiry would look into whether the government made the right decisions in battling COVID-19 and how it could better prepare for future pandemics. Its report is due next year.

Many observers said sexism played a role in the anger directed at Ardern.

"Her treatment, the pile on, in the last few months has been disgraceful and embarrassing," wrote actor Sam Neill on Twitter. "All the bullies, the misogynists, the aggrieved. She deserved so much better. A great leader."

But Ardern and her government also faced criticism that it had been big on ideas but lacking on execution. Supporters worried it hadn't made promised gains on increasing housing supply and reducing child poverty, while opponents said it was not focusing enough on crime and the struggling economy.

Ardern described climate change as the great challenge for her generation. But her policies faced skepticism and opposition, including from farmers who protested plans to tax cow burps and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Ardern had been facing tough prospects at the ballot box. Her center-left Labour Party won reelection in 2020 with a landslide of historic proportions, but recent polls have put her party behind its conservative rivals.

She said the role required having a reserve to face the unexpected.

"But I am not leaving because it was hard. Had that been the case I probably would have departed two months into the job," Ardern said. "I am leaving because with such a privileged role comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead, and also, when you are not."

She said her time in office had been challenging but fulfilling.

"I am entering now my sixth year in office, and for each of those years, I have given my absolute all," she said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Ardern "has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength."

"She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese tweeted. "Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me."

In tweets, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris called Ardern a "forward-looking, global leader who has inspired millions," and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thanked Ardern for her friendship and "empathic, compassionate, strong, and steady leadership" over the years.

Ardern charted an independent course for New Zealand. She tried to take a more diplomatic approach to China than neighboring Australia, which had ended up feuding with Beijing. In an interview with the AP last month, she said that building relationships with small Pacific nations shouldn't become a game of one-upmanship with China.

New Zealand Opposition Leader Christopher Luxon said Ardern had been a strong ambassador for the country on the world stage. He said that for his party "nothing changes" and it remains intent on winning this year's general elections to "deliver a government that can get things done for the New Zealand people."

Ardern announced that a vote will be held on Oct. 14 and that she will remain a lawmaker through April. Because she will leave Parliament within six months of an election, no special election for her seat is needed.

Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson announced that he won't contest the leadership of the Labour Party, throwing open for the competition for who will take over as prime minister from February until the election. Among the frontrunners is Education Minister Chris Hipkins.

If no candidate gets at least two-thirds support from the caucus when Labour lawmakers vote on Sunday, then the leadership contest will go to the wider party membership. Ardern has recommended the party choose her replacement by the time she steps down.

Ardern said she hadn't had too much time to reflect on her tenure in the role, although she noted that it had been marked with crises.

"It's one thing to lead your country in peace times, it's another to lead them through crisis. There's a greater weight of responsibility, a greater vulnerability amongst the people, and so in many ways, I think

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that will be what sticks with me," she said. "I had the privilege of being alongside New Zealand during crisis, and they placed their faith in me."

Aya Al-Umari, whose brother Hussein was killed in the Christchurch mosque attacks, tweeted her "deepest gratitude" to Ardern, saying her compassion and leadership during that grim day "shone a light in our grief journey."

"I have a mixture of feelings, shocked, sad but really happy for her," Al-Umari wrote.

Ardern said she didn't have any immediate plans after leaving office, other than family commitments with her daughter, Neve, and her fiancé, Clarke Gayford, after an outbreak of the virus thwarted their earlier wedding plans.

"And so to Neve, Mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year," Ardern said. "And to Clarke, let's finally get married."

Reports: David Crosby, rock star and CSNY co-founder, dies

By ROBERT JABLON Associated Press

David Crosby, the brash rock musician who evolved from a baby-faced harmony singer with the Byrds to a mustachioed hippie superstar and an ongoing troubadour in Crosby, Stills, Nash & (sometimes) Young, has died at 81, several media outlets reported Thursday.

The New York Times reported, based on a text message from Crosby's sister in law, that the musician died Wednesday night. Several media outlets reported Crosby's death citing anonymous sources; The Associated Press was unable to reach Crosby's representatives and his widow.

Crosby underwent a liver transplant in 1994 after decades of drug use and survived diabetes, hepatitis C and heart surgery in his 70s.

While he only wrote a handful of widely known songs, the witty and ever opinionated Crosby was on the front lines of the cultural revolution of the '60s and '70s — whether triumphing with Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young on stage at Woodstock, testifying on behalf of a hirsute generation in his anthem "Almost Cut My Hair" or mourning the assassination of Robert Kennedy in "Long Time Gone."

He was a founder and focus of the Los Angeles rock music community from which such performers as the Eagles and Jackson Browne later emerged. He was a twinkly-eyed hippie patriarch, the inspiration for Dennis Hopper's long-haired stoner in "Easy Rider." He advocated for peace, but was an unrepentant loudmouth who practiced personal warfare and acknowledged that many of the musicians he worked with no longer spoke to him.

"Crosby was a colorful and unpredictable character, wore a Mandrake the Magician cape, didn't get along with too many people and had a beautiful voice — an architect of harmony," Bob Dylan wrote in his 2004 memoir, "Chronicles: Volume One."

Crosby's drug use left him bloated, broke and alienated. He kicked the addiction in 1985 and 1986 during a year's prison stretch in Texas on drug and weapons charges. The conviction eventually was overturned.

"I've always said that I picked up the guitar as a shortcut to sex and after my first joint I was sure that if everyone smoked dope there'd be an end to war," Crosby said in his 1988 autobiography, "Long Time Gone," co-written with Carl Gottlieb. "I was right about the sex. I was wrong when it came to drugs."

He lived years longer than even he expected and in his 70s enjoyed a creative renaissance, issuing several solo albums while collaborating with others including his son James Raymond, who became a favorite songwriting partner.

"Most guys my age would have done a covers record or duets on old material," he told Rolling Stone in 2013, shortly before "Crozy" was released. "This won't be a huge hit. It'll probably sell nineteen copies. I don't think kids are gonna dig it, but I'm not making it for them. I'm making it for me. I have this stuff that I need to get off my chest."

In 2019, Crosby was featured in the documentary "David Crosby: Remember My Name," produced by Cameron Crowe.

While his solo career thrived, his seemingly lifetime bond with Nash dissolved. Crosby was angered by

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Nash's 2013 memoir "Wild Tales" (whiny and dishonest, he called it) and relations between the two spilled into an ugly public feud, with Nash and Crosby agreeing on one thing: Crosby, Stills and Nash was finished. Donald Trump's election as U.S. president did lead Crosby to suggest that he was open to a Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young protest tour, but his old bandmates declined to respond.

Crosby became a star in the mid-1960s with the seminal folk-rock group The Byrds, known for such hits as "Turn! Turn! Turn!" and "Mr. Tambourine Man." Clean-cut and baby-faced at the time, he contributed harmonies that were a key part of the band's innovative blend of The Beatles and Dylan. Crosby was among the first American stars to become close to The Beatles, and helped introduce George Harrison to Eastern music.

Troubled relations with bandmates pushed Crosby out of The Byrds and into a new group. Crosby, Stills and Nash's first meeting is part of rock folklore: Stills and Crosby were at Joni Mitchell's house in 1968 (Stills would contend they were at Mama Cass'), working on the ballad "You Don't Have to Cry," when Nash suggested they start over again. Nash's high harmony added a magical layer to Stills' rough bottom and Crosby's mellow middle and a supergroup was born.

Their eponymous debut album was an instant success that helped redefine commercial music. The songs were longer and more personal than their individual prior outputs, yet easily relatable for an audience also embracing a more open lifestyle.

Their spirited harmonies and themes of peace and love became emblematic of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their version of the Mitchell song "Woodstock" was the theme for the documentary about the 1969 rock concert during which the group made only its second live appearance together. Crosby had produced Mitchell's first album, "Song to a Seagull," in 1968, and for a time was her boyfriend (as was Nash).

Now wearing the drooping, bushy mustache that would define him ever after, Crosby provided harmony and rhythm guitar, and his songs reflected his own volatile personality. They ranged from the misty-eyed romanticism of "Guinevere," to the spirituality of "Deja Vu," to the operatic paranoia of "Almost Cut My Hair."

Some critics panned the group as soft-headed and self-indulgent.

"If you're into living-room rock, fireplace harmonies and just a taste of good old social consciousness, this is your group," reported Rolling Stone, which nonetheless rarely missed a chance to write about the band.

But CSN, as they would soon be called, won a best new artist Grammy and remained a worldwide touring act and brand name decades later.

The first album was an easy, happy recording, but the mood darkened during the second album, "Deja Vu." The band was joined by Neil Young, who had feuded with Stills while both were in Buffalo Springfield and continued to do so.

Everyone in the band was troubled: Nash and Mitchell were splitting up, and so were Stills and singer Judy Collins. Crosby, meanwhile, was so devastated by the death of girlfriend Christine Hinton in a car accident, that he would lay on the studio floor and sob.

Featuring a rougher, less unified sound, the album released in 1970 and was another commercial smash. Yet within two years, the quartet had broken up, destined to continuously reunite and splinter for the rest of their lives.

They worked in every combination possible — as solo artists, as duos, trios and, occasionally, all four together. They played stadiums and clubs. They showed up at the Berlin Wall in 1989 as the Cold War was ending and turned up in 2011 for the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York.

In recent years, Crosby toured often, and candidly answered questions on Twitter with a blend of affection and exasperation, whether commenting on rock star peers or assessing the quality of a fan's marijuana joint. He loved sailing and his greatest regret, besides hard drugs, was selling his 74-foot boat because of money problems. Among the songs completed on the boat was the classic "Wooden Ships," co-written with Stills and Jefferson Airplane's Paul Kantner.

Crosby was born David Van Cortlandt Crosby on Aug. 14, 1941, in Los Angeles. His father was Oscar-winning cinematographer Floyd Crosby of "High Noon" fame. The family, including his mother, Aliph, and brother, Floyd Jr., later moved to Santa Barbara.

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Crosby was exposed early to classical, folk and jazz music. In his autobiography, Crosby said that as a child he used to harmonize as his mother sang, his father played mandolin and his brother played guitar. "When rock 'n' roll came in during that era and the Age of Elvis possessed America, I wasn't into it," he recalled.

His brother taught him to play guitar and, still in his teens, he began performing in Santa Barbara clubs. He moved to Los Angeles to study acting in 1960 but abandoned the idea and became a folk singer, working around the country before joining The Byrds. Like so many folk performers, Crosby was dazzled by the Beatles' 1964 movie "A Hard Day's Night" and decided to become a rock star.

Crosby married longtime girlfriend Jan Dance in 1987. The couple had a son, Django, in 1995. Crosby also had a daughter, Donovan, with Debbie Donovan. Shortly after he underwent the liver transplant, Crosby was reunited with Raymond, who had been placed for adoption in 1961. Raymond, Crosby and Jeff Pevar later performed together in a group called CPR.

"I regretted losing him many times," Crosby told the AP of Raymond in 1998. "I was too immature to parent anybody, and too irresponsible."

In 2000, Melissa Etheridge revealed that Crosby was the father of the two children she shared with then-partner Julie Cypher. Cypher carried the children Crosby fathered by artificial insemination, Etheridge told Rolling Stone. One son, Beckett, died in 2020.

Crosby didn't help raise the children but said, "If, you know, in due time, at a distance, they're proud of who their genetic dad is, that's great."

Alec Baldwin to be charged with manslaughter in set shooting

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Actor Alec Baldwin and a weapons specialist will be charged with involuntary manslaughter in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on a New Mexico movie set, prosecutors announced Thursday, citing a "criminal disregard for safety."

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies issued a statement announcing the charges against Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who supervised weapons on the set of the Western "Rust."

Halyna Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during rehearsals at a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe on Oct. 21, 2021. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when the gun went off, killing her and wounding the director, Joel Souza.

Assistant director David Halls, who handed Baldwin the gun, has signed an agreement to plead guilty to negligent use of a deadly weapon, the district attorney's office said.

The decision to charge Baldwin marked a stunning fall for an A-list actor whose 40-year career included the early blockbuster "The Hunt for Red October" and a starring role in the sitcom "30 Rock," as well as iconic appearances in Martin Scorsese's "The Departed" and a film adaptation of David Mamet's "Glengarry Glen Ross." In recent years, he was known for his impression of former President Donald Trump on "Saturday Night Live."

The district attorney said Baldwin's involvement as a producer and as the actor who fired the gun weighed in the decision to file charges.

"This set was really being run pretty fast and loose, and he knew or he should have known that there had been misfires, that there were safety concerns, that multiple people had brought them up," Carmack-Altwies told The Associated Press in an interview. The fact that Baldwin was "the actor that held the gun, that pointed the gun and that pulled the trigger" also contributed.

Involuntary manslaughter can involve a killing that happens while a defendant is doing something that is lawful but dangerous and is acting negligently or without caution.

The charge is a fourth-degree felony, punishable by up to 18 months in jail and a \$5,000 fine under New Mexico law. The charge also includes a provision that could result in a mandatory five years in prison because the offense was committed with a gun.

The district attorney said charges will be filed by the end of January, and that Baldwin and Gutierrez-

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Reed will be issued a summons to appear in court. She said prosecutors will forgo a grand jury and rely on a judge to determine if there is probable cause to move toward trial.

Andrea Reeb, a special prosecutor on the case, cited a "pattern of criminal disregard for safety" on the set. "If any one of these three people — Alec Baldwin, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed or David Halls — had done their job, Halyna Hutchins would be alive today. It's that simple," Reeb said.

Baldwin's attorney said the charges represented "a terrible miscarriage of justice."

The actor "had no reason to believe there was a live bullet in the gun — or anywhere on the movie set. He relied on the professionals with whom he worked, who assured him the gun did not have live rounds. We will fight these charges, and we will win," Luke Nikas said in a statement.

As the film's armorer, Gutierrez-Reed had the authority to bring rehearsals to a halt if safety standards were not being met, according to the district attorney.

She loaded the gun and "absolutely should have noticed" the difference between a live and a dummy round, Carmack-Altwies said.

An attorney for Gutierrez-Reed said the charges were "the result of a very flawed investigation and an inaccurate understanding of the full facts."

"We intend to bring the full truth to light and believe Hannah will be exonerated of wrongdoing by a jury," Jason Bowles said.

It was unclear when Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed might be required to appear in court in Santa Fe once charges are filed. Defendants can participate remotely in many initial court proceedings or seek to have their first appearance waived.

Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza, who led the initial investigation into Hutchins' death, has described "a degree of neglect" on the film set. But he left decisions about potential criminal charges to prosecutors after delivering the results of a yearlong investigation in October. That report did not specify how live ammunition wound up on the film set.

Baldwin has described the killing as a "tragic accident."

He sought to clear his name by suing people involved in handling and supplying the loaded gun. Baldwin, also a co-producer on "Rust," said he was told the gun was safe.

In his lawsuit, Baldwin said that while working on camera angles with Hutchins, he pointed the gun in her direction and pulled back and released the hammer of the weapon, which discharged.

New Mexico's Office of the Medical Investigator determined the shooting was an accident following the completion of an autopsy and a review of law enforcement reports.

New Mexico's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau levied the maximum fine against Rust Movie Productions based on a string of safety failures, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires of blank ammunition on the set prior to the shooting.

Regulators say production managers on the set failed to follow standard industry protocols for gun safety. Rust Movie Productions continues to challenge the \$137,000 fine.

Investigators initially found 500 rounds of ammunition at the movie set — a mix of blanks, dummy rounds and what appeared to be live rounds. Industry experts have said live rounds should never be on set.

Hutchins' family — widower Matthew Hutchins and son Andros — settled a lawsuit against producers under an agreement that aims to restart filming with Matthew Hutchins serving as executive producer.

In a statement issued by their attorney, relatives thanked authorities for seeking the charges. "It is a comfort to the family that, in New Mexico, no one is above the law," they said.

The Screen Actors Guild said guns are provided to actors by expert professionals who are "directly responsible" for safety.

"The prosecutor's contention that an actor has a duty to ensure the functional and mechanical operation of a firearm on a production set is wrong and uninformed. An actor's job is not to be a firearms or weapons expert," the union said in a statement.

The district attorney said Baldwin "was handed a loaded gun. Whether it's loaded with dummies or live ammunition, it is on him."

Criminal charges have rarely been filed in connection with deaths on film sets.

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A district attorney in North Carolina cited negligence as a factor but decided against charges in the 1993 death of Brandon Lee while filming a scene in the movie "The Crow." The son of martial-arts legend Bruce Lee was hit by a .44-caliber slug from a gun that was supposed to have fired a blank.

More recently, film director Randall Miller pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and criminal trespassing in the death of assistant camera operator Sarah Jones, who was hit by a train in the 2014 filming of "Midnight Rider" in rural Georgia. The production did not have permission to be on the train tracks, and Miller served half of a two-year sentence.

The shooting spurred other filmmakers to minimize risks by using computer-generated imagery of gunfire rather than real weapons with blank ammunition.

Flavored cannabis marketing is criticized for targeting kids

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When New York's first licensed recreational marijuana outlet opened last month, the chief of the state's Office of Cannabis Management, Chris Alexander, proudly hoisted a tin of watermelon-flavored gummies above the crowd.

Outside the Manhattan shop, he displayed another purchase — a jar containing dried flowers of a cannabis strain called Banana Runtz, which some aficionados say has overtones of "fresh, fruity banana and sour candy."

Inside the store run by the nonprofit Housing Works, shelves brimmed with vape cartridges suggesting flavors of pineapple, grapefruit and cereal milk, written in rainbow bubble letter print.

For decades, health advocates have chided the tobacco industry for marketing harmful nicotine products to children, resulting in more cities and states, like New York, outlawing flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Now as cannabis shops proliferate across the country, the same concerns are growing over the packaging and marketing of flavored cannabis that critics say could entice children to partake of products labeled "mad mango," "loud lemon" and "peach dream."

"We should learn from the nicotine space, and I certainly would advocate that we should place similar concern on cannabis products in terms of their appealability to youth," said Katherine Keyes, a professor of epidemiology at Columbia University who has written extensively about the rise in marijuana use among young people.

"If you go through a cannabis dispensary right now," she said, "it's almost absurd how youth-oriented a lot of the packaging and the products are."

Keyes added that public health policymakers — and researchers like her — are trying to catch up with an industry and marketplace that is rapidly expanding and evolving.

New York, which legalized recreational marijuana in March 2021, forbids marketing and advertising that "is designed in any way to appeal to children or other minors."

But New York's state Office of Cannabis Management has yet to officially adopt rules on labeling, packaging and advertising that could ban cartoons and neon colors, as well as prohibit depictions of food, candy, soda, drinks, cookies or cereal on packaging — all of which, the agency suggests, could attract people under 21.

"Consumers need to be aware — parents need to be aware — if they see products that look like other products that are commonly marketed to kids, that's an illicit market product," said Lyla Hunt, OCM's deputy director of public health and campaigns.

Hunt recently saw a cannabis product calling itself "Stony Patch Kids" that she said looked like the popular candy "Sour Patch Kids."

Similar products are being sold by the dozens of illegal pot dispensaries that operate out in the open and that officials worry are selling unsafe products. Once packaging and marketing standards are established, the illicit marketplace will likely not comply, experts say.

State officials hope that products bought at licensed dispensaries will help.

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"We can regulate until we're blue in the face. But the truth is, it's a partnership between a compliant industry, strong regulations that are robust in their protections for youth and then with parents, too," Hunt said.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced Thursday the upcoming opening of the state's second legal dispensary, which will be located in Manhattan's West Village. The new venture — called "Smacked" — will open as a pop-up next week before opening a permanent location.

Under state law, a minor in possession of marijuana would face a civil penalty of not more than \$50. Licensed cannabis retailers who sell to minors face fines and the loss of their licenses, but no jail time.

Science has long established the addictive nature of nicotine and the health maladies associated with smoking tobacco, including cancer and emphysema.

Less settled are the health repercussions from vaping, particularly among children whose bodies and internal organs have yet to fully develop.

While smoking tobacco cigarettes has fallen among teens and young adults, the use of e-cigarettes and vapes has risen.

A handful of states — California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island — have bans on most flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vapes. An increasing number of cities, including New York City, also have similar bans.

But those rules need to be broadened to include marijuana, said Linda Richter with the Partnership to End Addiction, who says the issue has yet to be widely addressed.

"There is more scrutiny on the tobacco industry, and very, very little in terms of rules, regulations, scrutiny, limitations when it comes to the cannabis industry," she said.

Because of the relative infancy of the legalized industry, she added, states have yet to coalesce rules on a single national standard. States often look to the federal government to set those standards, but marijuana remains illegal on the federal level.

"That's a real issue where you don't have the weight of the federal government in terms of standards of packaging and marketing," to set parameters to avoid appealing marketing to young people, Richter said.

Anti-smoking groups, including the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, have long railed against the tobacco industry for its marketing, such as using cartoon characters to help market their products. In more recent years, they've campaigned against flavored nicotine products, including those in vaping form.

But thus far, such groups have not put the marijuana industry in its crosshairs.

A study released earlier this month documented the steep rise in poisonings among young children, especially toddlers, who accidentally ate marijuana-laced treats.

The uptick in cases coincides with the rise in the number of states allowing the use of marijuana for medicine or recreation. Medical use of cannabis is currently allowed in 37 U.S. states, while 21 states allow recreational use.

"When you're talking about strawberry-cheesecake, or mango, or cookies-and-cream flavors, it's very difficult to argue that those are for older adults," said Dr. Pamela Ling, the director for the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California in San Francisco.

"Folks who consider themselves to be more like cannabis aficionados," she said, "would say that smoking a flavored cannabis product is like putting ketchup on your steak."

Oregon's drug decriminalization gets poor marks on audit

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's first-in-the-nation drug decriminalization has had a rocky start, but Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said Thursday in releasing an audit of the program that it's too early to call it a failure.

Decriminalization of personal-use amounts of drugs, approved by voters in 2020 under Ballot Measure 110, was supposed to channel hundreds of millions of dollars of marijuana tax revenues into drug treatment and harm reduction programs. But that hasn't yet translated into an improved care network for a state with

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the second-highest rate of substance use disorder in the nation and ranked 50th for access to treatment.

"When Oregonians passed Measure 110, we expected that our loved ones battling addiction would have access to treatment and a chance for a better life," Fagan told reporters in a Zoom press conference. "We expected there will be fewer of our neighbors struggling on the streets."

Instead, the funding has been slow getting out of the gate and instances of drug abuse and overdose deaths have increased.

Other states that might consider following Oregon's path — which a few countries including Portugal have taken — will likely assess how well, or badly, it has gone. Portugal's approach, though, is more vigorous than Oregon's in getting people to treatment. There, "dissuasion commissions" pressure anyone caught using drugs to seek treatment.

Asked in the news conference what grade he would assign Oregon's program thus far, auditor Ian Green said "maybe a C." Audits Director Kip Memmott gave it a D and Fagan said she'd assign an "incomplete."

The director of the Oregon Health Authority, which helps establish the measure's drug treatment aspects, blamed the funding delays on "ambitious implementation timelines and stretched OHA staffing resources due to the pandemic," along with a shift in decision-making roles that required building new relationships.

"I recognize that Measure 110's success depends on Oregon's ability to solve many larger challenges in the behavioral health system, such as the need to expand treatment capacity and better support counselors and other workers," said OHA Director James Schroeder, who was appointed this month by recently elected Gov. Tina Kotek.

Schroeder said Kotek has made improving Oregon's behavioral health system and Measure 110 implementation a top priority.

Among the audit's recommendations: The health authority should publish a plan by September on integrating Measure 110 into the state's overall behavioral health system; improve data collection so the ballot measure's effectiveness can be tracked by policymakers and the public; and set clear expectations, roles and responsibilities.

Another setback of the measure is the lack of people with substance abuse disorders who are seeking help after being ticketed for drug possession and given a hotline number.

In the first year after the new approach took effect in February 2021, only 1% of people who received citations for possessing controlled substances sought help via the new hotline.

Keith Humphreys, an addiction researcher and professor of psychiatry at Stanford University, said the audit "is commendably candid in acknowledging the bureaucratic failures that produce insufficient and uncoordinated services, and the reforms proposed to fix that situation are sensible."

"In contrast, the report does not deal adequately with that fact that the statewide effort to use tickets/fines for drug possession to incentivize people to enter treatment was a complete failure," Humphreys, a former senior adviser in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, said in an email.

Oregon officials are wrong to assume that increasing access to treatment alone will lead to most addicted individuals seeking drug treatment, he said.

"Without some external pressure, most people will not attempt to reduce their drug use via treatment or other means," Humphreys said.

The Drug Policy Alliance, which spearheaded Oregon's ballot measure, intentionally sought an approach that did not compel people to seek treatment, saying there are more successful outcomes when people voluntarily access services.

Fagan, whose brother and late mother had drug dependency issues, said the old system of criminalizing drug possession, combined with a lack of available treatment, simply did not work.

"I was one of the strong majority of Oregon voters who voted for Measure 110 because the status quo had failed my family and people who I love," Fagan said. She described how she and another brother some four years ago tried to find somewhere to take their sibling after he was ready to get treatment.

"My other brother and I called all over, and we couldn't find an inpatient facility to take him, despite the fact that he had really hit rock bottom," Fagan said, adding that her brother is now successfully undergoing treatment.

"Make no mistake, this is a matter of life and death," Fagan said. "Measure 110 must work because real

people's lives hang in the balance."

Supreme Court has failed to find leaker of abortion opinion

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court said Thursday an eight-month investigation that included more than 120 interviews and revealed shortcomings in how sensitive documents are secured has failed to find who leaked a draft of the court's opinion overturning abortion rights.

Ninety-seven employees, including the justices' law clerks, swore under oath that they did not disclose a draft of Justice Samuel Alito's opinion that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the court said.

It was unclear whether the justices themselves were questioned about the leak, which was the first time an entire opinion made its way to the public before the court was ready to announce it.

Politico published its explosive leak detailing the Alito draft in early May. Chief Justice John Roberts ordered an investigation the next day into what he termed an "egregious breach of trust."

On Thursday, the court said its investigative team "has to date been unable to identify a person responsible by a preponderance of the evidence."

The investigation has not come to an end, the court said. A few inquiries and the analysis of some electronic data remain.

The court said it could not rule out that the opinion was inadvertently disclosed, "for example, by being left in a public space either inside or outside the building."

While not identifying the leaker, the investigation turned up problems in the court's internal practices, some of which were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic and the shift to working from home.

Too many people have access to sensitive information, the court's policies on information security are outdated and, in some cases, employees acknowledged revealing confidential information to their spouses. It was not clear from the report whether investigators talked to the justices' spouses.

Some employees had to acknowledge in their written statements that they "admitted to telling their spouses about the draft opinion or vote count," the report said.

Investigators looked closely at connections between court employees and reporters, and they found nothing to substantiate rampant speculation on social media about the identity of the leaker.

The investigation concluded that it "is unlikely that the Court's information technology (IT) systems were improperly accessed by a person outside the Court," following an examination of the court's computers, networks, printers, and available call and text logs.

The "risk of both deliberate and accidental disclosures of Court-sensitive information" grew with the coronavirus pandemic and shift to working from home, the report said. More people working from home, "as well as gaps in the Court's security policies, created an environment where it was too easy to remove sensitive information from the building and the Court's IT networks," the report said.

Roberts also asked former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, himself a onetime federal judge, to assess the investigation. Chertoff, in a statement issued through the court, described it as thorough.

Politico published the draft decision on May 2. Less than 24 hours later, Roberts confirmed the draft's authenticity and said he had directed the court's marshal, former Army Col. Gail Curley, to lead the investigation.

Since then, there had been silence from the court — until Thursday.

The court had declined to say anything about the status of the investigation or whether an outside law firm or the FBI has been called in or whether it had taken steps to try to prevent a repeat. Speaking in Colorado in September, Justice Neil Gorsuch said he hoped a report was coming "soon" but he did not say whether it would be made public.

Gorsuch joined Roberts in condemning the breach of trust the leak engendered. Justice Clarence Thomas spoke in even starker terms about the leak's effect on the justices.

"When you lose that trust, especially in the institution that I'm in, it changes the institution fundamentally. You begin to look over your shoulder. It's like kind of an infidelity that you can explain it, but you

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can't undo it," Thomas said while speaking at a conference in Dallas less than two weeks after the leak became public.

The leak itself sparked protests and round-the-clock security at justices' homes. Alito said it made the conservative justices who were thought to be in favor of overturning *Roe v. Wade* "targets for assassination" that "gave people a rational reason to think they could prevent that from happening by killing one of us."

In early June, a man carrying a gun, a knife and zip ties was arrested near Justice Brett Kavanaugh's house in Maryland after threatening to kill the justice. The man told police he was upset by the leaked draft.

Responding to protests outside the court, officials ringed the building with hard-to-climb fencing, the same barrier that was in place for months following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

When the final decision was released on June 24, it was remarkably similar to the draft that was leaked. Alito, Thomas, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and Justice Amy Coney Barrett voted to overturn *Roe*.

Speculation has swirled since the draft's release about who might be the source. Only the justices, a small number of staff and the justices' law clerks, young lawyers who spend a year at the court helping the justices with their work, would have had access to the document.

Conservatives pointed fingers at the liberal side of the court, speculating that the leaker was someone upset about the outcome. Liberals suggested it could be someone on the conservative side of the court who wanted to ensure a wavering justice didn't switch sides.

It would have taken just one conservative justice to side with Roberts to alter the decision. Instead of overturning *Roe* entirely, Roberts favored weakening abortion rights.

France: Over 1 million march against raising retirement age

By SYLVIE CORBET and JADE LE DELEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — At least 1.1 million people protested on the streets of Paris and other French cities Thursday amid nationwide strikes against plans to raise the retirement age — but President Emmanuel Macron insisted he would press ahead with the proposed pension reforms.

Emboldened by the mass show of resistance, French unions announced new strikes and protests Jan. 31, vowing to try to get the government to back down on plans to push up the standard retirement age from 62 to 64. Macron says the measure - a central pillar of his second term — is needed to keep the pension system financially viable, but unions say it threatens hard-fought worker rights.

Out of the country for a French-Spanish summit in Barcelona, Macron acknowledged the public discontent but said that "we must do that reform" to "save" French pensions.

"We will do it with respect, in a spirit of dialogue but also determination and responsibility," he added.

As Macron spoke, riot police pushed back against some protesters throwing projectiles on the sidelines of the largely peaceful Paris march. Some other minor incidents briefly flared up, leading officers to use tear gas.

Paris police said that 38 people were detained as a mass of people thronged the streets of the capital despite freezing rain, the crowd so big that it took hours to reach their destination. Retirees and college students joined the diverse crowd, united in their fear and anger over the reform.

In a country with an aging population and growing life expectancy where everyone receives a state pension, Macron's government says the reform is the only way to keep the system solvent.

Unions propose a tax on the wealthy or more payroll contributions from employers to finance the pension system instead.

Polls suggest most French people oppose the reform, and Thursday was the first public reaction to Macron's plan. Strikes severely disrupted transport, schools and other public services, and more than 200 rallies were staged around France.

The Interior Ministry said more than 1.1 million people protested, including 80,000 in Paris. Unions said more than 2 million people took part nationwide, and 400,000 in Paris.

Big crowds also turned out for protests against previous efforts at retirement reform, notably during Macron's first term and under former President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2010. But none of those drew more

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than 1 million people according to government estimates.

Jean Paul Cachina, 56, a worker in human resources, joined the march in the French capital — a first ever for him.

"I am not here for myself," he said. "I am here to defend the youth and workers doing demanding jobs. I work in the construction industry sector and I'm a first-hand witness of the suffering of employees."

Many young people were among the Paris crowd, including high school students.

Nathan Arsac, 19, a student and member of the UNEF union, said: "I'm afraid of what's going to happen next. Losing our social achievements could happen so fast. I'm scared of the future when I'll be older and have to retire."

Sylvie Béchar, a 59-year-old nurse, said that she joined the march because "we, health care workers, are physically exhausted."

"The only thing we have is to demonstrate, and to block the economy of the country," she added.

The economic cost of Thursday's strikes wasn't immediately clear, but protracted walkouts could hobble the economy just as France is struggling against inflation and trying to boost growth.

Police unions opposed to the retirement reform also took part in the protests, while those on duty sought to contain scattered unrest.

Most train services around France were halted, including some international connections, and about 20% of flights out of Paris' Orly Airport were canceled.

The Education Ministry said more than a third of teachers were on strike, and national electricity company EDF announced that power supplies were substantially reduced Thursday amid the strikes.

The Versailles Palace was closed Thursday while the Eiffel Tower warned about potential disruptions and the Louvre Museum closed some exhibition rooms.

Philippe Martinez, secretary general of the hard-left CGT union, urged Macron to "listen to the street."

Laurent Berger, head of the more moderate CFDT union, called the reform "unfair" and said Thursday's show of resistance was a warning sign.

Many French workers expressed mixed feelings about the government's plan and pointed to the complexity of the pension system.

Quentin Coelho, 27, a Red Cross employee, felt he had to work Thursday despite understanding "most of the strikers' demands." Coelho said he fears that the government will keep raising the retirement age, so is already saving money for his pension.

Others worry the reform will hit harder for low-income workers, who live less long than the wealthy.

"It's a social issue. Do you want to retire sick, broken and even some dead? Or do you want to enjoy life?" asked Fabien Villedieu, a 45-year-old railway worker,

French Labor Minister Olivier Dussopt acknowledged "concerns" prompted by the pension plans but said the government rejected other options involving raising taxes — which he said would hurt the economy and cost jobs — or reducing pensions.

The French government is formally presenting the pension bill on Monday and it will head to Parliament next month. Its success will depend in part on the scale and duration of the strikes and protests.

Most opposition parties, including the left and the far-right, are strongly against the plan. Macron's centrist alliance lost its parliamentary majority last year, yet still has the biggest group at the National Assembly, where it hopes to ally with the conservative The Republicans party to approve the pension reforms.

Under the planned changes, workers must have worked for at least 43 years to be entitled to a full pension. For those who do not fulfil that condition, like many women who interrupted their career to raise children or those who studied for a long time and started working late, the retirement age would remain unchanged at 67.

Those who started to work under the age of 20 and workers with major health issues would be allowed early retirement.

Protracted strikes met Macron's last effort to raise the retirement age in 2019. He eventually withdrew it after the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Retirement rules vary widely from country to country, making direct comparisons difficult. The official

retirement age in the U.S. is now 67, and countries across Europe have been raising pension ages as populations grow older and fertility rates drop.

But opponents of Macron's reform note that, under the French system, people are already required to work more years overall than in some neighboring countries to receive a full pension. The plan is also seen by many as endangering the welfare state that's central to French society.

Germany pressed on tanks for Ukraine; Kyiv airs frustration

By GEIR MOULSON and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany faced mounting pressure to supply battle tanks to Kyiv and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aired frustration about not obtaining enough weaponry as Western allies conferred Thursday on how best to support Ukraine nearly 11 months into Russia's invasion.

Since the U.K. announced last week that it will send Challenger 2 tanks, Berlin has faced increasing calls to supply Leopard 2 tanks or at least clear the way for others, such as Poland, to deliver German-made Leopards from their own stock.

Germany's new defense minister, Boris Pistorius, left open whether that will happen and under what conditions after meeting U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on his first day in office.

He told ARD television he was "pretty sure we will get a decision on this in the coming days, but I can't yet tell you today how it will look."

Austin will host a regular coordination meeting of Ukraine's Western allies at the United States' Ramstein Air Base in Germany Friday.

Speaking by video link on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Zelenskyy offered a veiled critique of major supporters such as Germany and the U.S. that have nonetheless hesitated about sending tanks.

He bemoaned a "lack of specific weaponry." Speaking through an interpreter, he said: "There are times where we shouldn't hesitate or we shouldn't compare when someone says, 'I will give tanks if someone else will also share his tanks.'"

Ukraine's foreign and defense ministers said that the promised British tanks, while welcome, are "not sufficient to achieve operational goals."

"We guarantee that we will use these weapons responsibly and exclusively for the purposes of protecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders," Dmytro Kuleba and Oleksii Reznikov said in a statement, appealing to Germany and several other countries that use the Leopard 2 to join an "international tank coalition."

For months, Ukraine has sought heavier vehicles such as the Leopard and U.S. Abrams tanks, but Western leaders have trodden carefully.

Germany has been particularly in focus recently. Critics, some inside Germany's governing coalition, have long complained of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's perceived hesitancy to take the next step when it comes to weapons deliveries.

Scholz has been wary of pressure, insisting that Germany wouldn't go it alone and pointing to a need to ensure that NATO doesn't become a party to the war with Russia, though every time so far Berlin has eventually moved ahead. He portrays his cautious weighing of each step as a virtue.

In Davos Wednesday, Scholz avoided directly answering a question about Leopards, saying Germany will remain one of Ukraine's top weapons suppliers and that "we are never doing something just by ourselves, but together with others — especially the United States."

German officials have conveyed their hesitancy to allow allies to give Leopards unless the U.S. also sends Ukraine the Abrams, according to a U.S. official who wasn't authorized to comment and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Asked whether Germany would only deliver Leopards if Washington supplies the Abrams, Pistorius replied that he isn't "aware of such a package." But he insisted that aid must continue to be "coordinated" and it's important for Germany to proceed "shoulder-to-shoulder with the Americans."

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An upcoming new package of U.S. military aid is expected to include nearly 100 Stryker combat vehicles and at least 50 Bradley armored vehicles — but not the Abrams, which U.S. officials say has complex maintenance needs and may not be the best fit.

“The maintenance and the high cost that it would take to maintain an Abrams — it just doesn’t make sense to provide that to the Ukrainians at this moment,” spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said at a Pentagon briefing Thursday.

Some eastern NATO allies have provided Soviet-era T-72 tanks to Ukrainian forces, but officials acknowledge that supplies of Soviet-era equipment with which Ukrainian forces were already familiar are limited.

Senior officials from Britain, Poland, the Baltic nations and other European countries met in Estonia on Thursday before the Ramstein gathering.

U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said his country would send at least three batteries of AS-90 artillery, armored vehicles, thousands of rounds of ammunition and 600 Brimstone missiles, as well as the squadron of Challenger 2 tanks.

Wallace told The Associated Press that the decision to send battle tanks was a “natural progression” of U.K. military support for Ukraine and was discussed with the U.S.

“If you’re going to donate armored personnel carriers, you need to complement that with tanks,” he said. “We had some tanks that we thought could do that.”

Wallace acknowledged that the Challenger shipment “is not the single magic ingredient” for Ukraine, which has said it needs 300 tanks, among other weapons, to expel Russian forces. But he voiced hope that it will complement Bradley armored vehicles the U.S. is already supplying and help “lead the way” for others to send tanks.

Estonia announced its largest military aid package to date, including howitzers, ammunition, artillery support equipment and grenade launchers.

Elsewhere, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said his country has decided to send up to 50 Swedish-made combat vehicles plus a shoulder-fired anti-tank missile system and the Archer artillery system to Ukraine.

Denmark plans to donate 19 French-made Caesar self-propelled howitzers.

US citizens get chance to play role in resettling refugees

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A government program launched Thursday is giving American citizens the chance to play a role in resettling the thousands of refugees who arrive every year in the United States.

During the first year of the Welcome Corps, the State Department aims to line up 10,000 Americans who can help 5,000 refugees adjust to life in the United States.

“By tapping into the goodwill of American communities, the Welcome Corps will expand our country’s capacity to provide a warm welcome to higher numbers of refugees,” the department said in announcing the effort.

When refugees from around the world arrive in the U.S., they face a dramatically different way of life. To ease that transition, the department traditionally has worked with nonprofit groups that specialize in refugee issues. Under the new program, five or more Americans could form a group and help fill this role, as well.

They would apply to privately sponsor refugees to resettle in the U.S. and would be responsible for raising their own money to help the refugees over the first 90 days. Assistance would include everything from greeting refugees at the airport to finding them place to live and getting kids enrolled in school.

A consortium of nonprofits with expertise in refugee resettlement will help oversee the vetting and certification of people and groups who want to be private sponsors. They also will offer training so private sponsors understand what’s needed to help refugees adjusting to life in America. The consortium will be responsible for monitoring the program.

The program will roll out in two phases. First, private sponsors will be matched with refugees already approved for resettlement under the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program. That will start during the first half

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of 2023.

Later, private sponsors could identify refugees abroad they would like to help and then refer those people to the Refugee Assistance Program and assist them once they arrive in the U.S.

The program is different from a recent initiative that allows 30,000 people into the country a month from Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela. They also need a sponsor but are being admitted to the U.S. under a humanitarian parole designation that lasts two years and offers no path to becoming permanent residents or citizens.

Under the refugee program, people fleeing violence or persecution can come to the U.S. and stay permanently. Since the Refugee Act was passed in 1980 the U.S. has admitted a little over 3 million refugees.

The Welcome Corps program comes on the heels of a similar, smaller scale endeavor under which Americans were able to sponsor Afghans or Ukrainians. That program launched in October 2021 and has helped just over 800 people coming to America through a network of 230 certified sponsor circles that included a total of about 5,000 people.

Sasha Chanoff, founder and chief executive of Boston-based RefugePoint, which supports Afghan refugees, said Canada has long used a similar model to help resettle refugees. Chanoff said the sponsor circle program capitalizes on the huge amount of goodwill among Americans to sponsor refugees, something that crosses political divides.

"This represents perhaps a unique opportunity in our history — certainly in our recent history — to really open up space for Americans to protect lives by sponsoring a family," he said. "We've seen the incredible interest among the American public — Republicans, Democrats, liberals, conservatives, veterans, so many others across the political spectrum."

President Joe Biden pledged in a 2021 executive order to restore the U.S. as the world's haven and he called for private sponsorship of refugees. Under President Donald Trump, the U.S. had largely rolled back the refugee program.

But Thursday's announcement comes as the U.S. is woefully off track if it hopes to meet Biden's goal of 125,000 refugees admitted into the U.S. during the 2023 budget year. According to State Department data, the U.S. has admitted just 6,750 refugees to the country through December — three months into the fiscal year.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service commended the Biden administration's "forward-thinking" program which has "potential to strengthen ties between refugees and the communities they will call home." But Vignarajah also noted the low number of refugee admissions. The group is a national nonprofit that helps refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants.

"The Biden administration must prioritize the streamlining of refugee admissions, which remain regrettably low this fiscal year. Without urgent action to increase efficiency, it risks letting the compassion of individual sponsors and the expertise of professional refugee resettlement organizations go to waste," Vignarajah said in a statement.

Assistant Secretary of State Julieta Valles Noyes told reporters Thursday that the agency responsible for interviewing refugees overseas had conducted over 20,000 interviews during the first quarter of the year and that she was "confident" that the numbers of refugees arriving in the months ahead would increase.

Religious leaders sue to block Missouri's abortion ban

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A group of religious leaders who support abortion rights filed a lawsuit Thursday challenging Missouri's abortion ban, saying lawmakers openly invoked their religious beliefs while drafting the measure and thereby imposed those beliefs on others who don't share them.

The lawsuit filed in St. Louis is the latest of many to challenge restrictive abortion laws enacted by conservative states after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June. That landmark ruling left abortion rights up to each state to decide.

Since then, religious abortion rights supporters have increasingly used religious freedom lawsuits in seek-

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ing to protect abortion access. The religious freedom complaints are among nearly three dozen post-Roe lawsuits that have been filed against 19 states' abortion bans, according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

The Missouri lawsuit brought on behalf of 13 Christian and Jewish leaders seeks a permanent injunction barring the state from enforcing its abortion law and a declaration that provisions of its law violate the Missouri Constitution.

"What the lawsuit says is that when you legislate your religious beliefs into law, you impose your beliefs on everyone else and force all of us to live by your own narrow beliefs," said Michelle Banker of the National Women's Law Center, the lead attorney in the case. "And that hurts us. That denies our basic human rights."

Missouri Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden, a Republican, called the lawsuit "foolish."

"We were acting on the belief that life is precious and should be treated as such. I don't think that's a religious belief," Rowden said.

Within minutes of last year's Supreme Court decision, then-Attorney General Eric Schmitt and Gov. Mike Parson, both Republicans, filed paperwork to immediately enact a 2019 law prohibiting abortions "except in cases of medical emergency." That law contained a provision making it effective only if Roe v. Wade was overturned.

The law makes it a felony punishable by 5 to 15 years in prison to perform or induce an abortion. Medical professionals who do so also could lose their licenses. The law says that women who undergo abortions cannot be prosecuted.

Missouri already had some of the nation's more restrictive abortion laws and had seen a significant decline in the number of abortions performed, with residents instead traveling to clinics just across the state line in Illinois and Kansas.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the faith leaders by Americans United for Separation of Church & State and the National Women's Law Center, said sponsors and supporters of the Missouri measure "repeatedly emphasized their religious intent in enacting the legislation." It quotes the bill's sponsor, Republican state Rep. Nick Schroer, as saying that "as a Catholic I do believe life begins at conception and that is built into our legislative findings." A co-sponsor, Republican state Rep. Barry Hovis, said he was motivated "from the Biblical side of it," according to the lawsuit.

"I'm here today because none of our religious views on abortion or anything else should be enshrined into our laws," Maharat Rori Picker Neiss, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis and one of the plaintiffs, said at a news conference.

Lawsuits in several other states take similar approaches.

In Indiana, lawyers for five anonymous women — who are Jewish, Muslim and spiritual — and advocacy group Hoosier Jews for Choice have argued that state's ban infringes on their beliefs. Their lawsuit specifically highlights the Jewish teaching that a fetus becomes a living person at birth and that Jewish law prioritizes the mother's life and health.

A court ruling siding with the women was appealed by the Indiana attorney general's office, which is asking the state Supreme Court to consider the case.

In Kentucky, three Jewish women sued, claiming the state's ban violates their religious rights under the state's constitution and religious freedom law. They allege that Kentucky's Republican-dominated legislature "imposed sectarian theology" by prohibiting nearly all abortions. The ban remains in effect while the Kentucky Supreme Court considers a separate case challenging the law.

But Banker said Missouri's lawsuit is unique because while plaintiffs in other states claimed harm, "we are saying that the whole law violates separation of church and state and we're seeking to get everything struck down."

Missouri Republican attorney general, Andrew Bailey, said in a statement that he will "defend the right to life with every tool at my disposal."

"I want Missouri to be the safest state in the nation for children and that includes unborn children," Bailey said.

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By the numbers: President Biden at the two-year mark

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden notches two years in office on Friday. That represents 730 days since his inauguration — and a whole lot of other numbers as well.

The story of the first half of Biden's term, at least by the numbers, is a mixed bag. It includes a long-sought \$1 trillion bill to shore up the nation's bridges, roads and other infrastructure, but also the unwelcome milestone of historic inflation. There's been a huge number of COVID-19 vaccinations, but nearly 680,000 people have died of the disease. Biden has visited three dozen states and spent all or part of nearly 200 days in his home state of Delaware.

A look at some revealing data points at the two-year mark for the 46th president:

6.5%: Annual inflation remains stubbornly high, but is slowly falling after reaching a four-decade high of 9.1% in June.

10.46 million: The latest Labor Department figures show more than 10 million job vacancies in the U.S., nearly 1.8 jobs for every unemployed person. Jobless rate at 3.5%, matching a 53-year low. Zero recessions — so far.

\$31.38 trillion: The federal debt stood at \$27.6 trillion when Biden took office.

\$24.2 billion: The amount of U.S. security assistance committed to Ukraine since the Russian invasion nearly 11 months ago.

38: The number of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS, committed to send to Ukraine. A gamechanger, allowing Ukrainian forces to fire at Russian targets from far away, then drive away before artillery can target them.

2.38 million: For the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2022, Customs and Border Protection reported stopping migrants at the U.S. border nearly 2.4 million times, a record surge driven by sharp increases in Venezuelans, Cubans and Nicaraguans. The previous high was 1.66 million in 2021.

97: Confirmation of Biden's picks to the federal bench, including Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, outpacing the president's two immediate predecessors.

89: The president has granted nine pardons and 80 commutations, far more than any of his recent predecessors at this point. Donald Trump had granted 11 by this time, George W. Bush seven. Barack Obama didn't take any clemency action in his first two years.

\$3.36: The average price per gallon that American motorists are paying at the pump has fallen since peaking at \$5.02 per gallon in June. Motorists were paying a \$2.39 per gallon average the week Biden took office.

666 million: The number of COVID-19 vaccines administered to Americans under Biden. Twenty million had received the jab before Biden took office. The vaccine was not approved until late in Trump's presidency.

15.9%: The percentage of Americans 5 and older who have gotten updated bivalent vaccine.

680,000: The recorded death toll from the coronavirus pandemic during Biden's term. The worst pandemic in more than a century had already taken more than 400,000 American lives by Biden's inauguration and has taken 1.1 million total since March 2020.

36: Biden has spread his travel across the country to promote his agenda, but still needs to cross off Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

197: There's no place like home. The president spent all or part of 197 days in his home state of Delaware, traveling most weekends to either his home near Wilmington or his vacation home at Rehoboth Beach, according to an AP tally. Beyond the weekend visits, he's also made quick trips for funerals, policy events and to cast his ballot in a Democratic primary.

6: Biden has spoken with Chinese President Xi Jinping a half-dozen times since the start of his term. All but one of those were phone or video calls. They met in person on the sidelines of a summit in Indonesia in November.

22: The minimum number of times that Biden has publicly lapsed into a nostalgic recollection of an intimate conversation he had with Xi during a visit to China when Biden was vice president. Biden said

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Xi asked him to define America and he responded with one word: Possibilities. Biden even managed to squeeze in the anecdote during a celebration this week for the NBA champion Golden State Warriors.

21: Biden held fewer solo or joint news conferences than his three most recent predecessors at the same point in their presidencies.

\$1 trillion: The amount allocated for roads, bridges, ports and more in Biden's bipartisan infrastructure legislation, arguably the most significant legislative achievement of his first two years in office.

\$40 billion: The amount in the infrastructure bill dedicated to repair and rebuild the nation's bridges, the single largest dedicated investment in bridges since the construction of the Eisenhower-era interstate highway system.

43,000: The number of bridges in the U.S. rated as poor and needing repair, according to the White House.

1: The president's lone state dinner to date honored French President Emmanuel Macron. Biden held back on some of the traditional pomp — and partying — at the White House in the early going of his presidency because of COVID-19 concerns.

0: Not one of Biden's original Cabinet appointees has left the administration.

AI tools can create new images, but who is the real artist?

By MATT O'BRIEN and ARIJETA LAJKA undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Countless artists have taken inspiration from "The Starry Night" since Vincent Van Gogh painted the swirling scene in 1889.

Now artificial intelligence systems are doing the same, training themselves on a vast collection of digitized artworks to produce new images you can conjure in seconds from a smartphone app.

The images generated by tools such as DALL-E, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion can be weird and otherworldly but also increasingly realistic and customizable — ask for a "peacock owl in the style of Van Gogh" and they can churn out something that might look similar to what you imagined.

But while Van Gogh and other long-dead master painters aren't complaining, some living artists and photographers are starting to fight back against the AI software companies creating images derived from their works.

Two new lawsuits — one this week from the Seattle-based photography giant Getty Images — take aim at popular image-generating services for allegedly copying and processing millions of copyright-protected images without a license.

Getty said it has begun legal proceedings in the High Court of Justice in London against Stability AI — the maker of Stable Diffusion — for infringing intellectual property rights to benefit the London-based startup's commercial interests.

Another lawsuit in a U.S. federal court in San Francisco describes AI image-generators as "21st-century collage tools that violate the rights of millions of artists." The lawsuit, filed on Jan. 13 by three working artists on behalf of others like them, also names Stability AI as a defendant, along with San Francisco-based image-generator startup Midjourney, and the online gallery DeviantArt.

The lawsuit alleges that AI-generated images "compete in the marketplace with the original images. Until now, when a purchaser seeks a new image 'in the style' of a given artist, they must pay to commission or license an original image from that artist."

Companies that provide image-generating services typically charge users a fee. After a free trial of Midjourney through the chatting app Discord, for instance, users must buy a subscription that starts at \$10 per month or up to \$600 a year for corporate memberships. The startup OpenAI also charges for use of its DALL-E image generator, and StabilityAI offers a paid service called DreamStudio.

Stability AI said in a statement that "Anyone that believes that this isn't fair use does not understand the technology and misunderstands the law."

In a December interview with The Associated Press, before the lawsuits were filed, Midjourney CEO David Holz described his image-making service as "kind of like a search engine" pulling in a wide swath of images from across the internet. He compared copyright concerns about the technology with how such

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laws have adapted to human creativity.

"Can a person look at somebody else's picture and learn from it and make a similar picture?" Holz said. "Obviously, it's allowed for people and if it wasn't, then it would destroy the whole professional art industry, probably the nonprofessional industry too. To the extent that AIs are learning like people, it's sort of the same thing and if the images come out differently then it seems like it's fine."

The copyright disputes mark the beginning of a backlash against a new generation of impressive tools — some of them introduced just last year — that can generate new visual media, readable text and computer code on command.

They also raise broader concerns about the propensity of AI tools to amplify misinformation or cause other harm. For AI image generators, that includes the creation of nonconsensual sexual imagery.

Some systems produce photorealistic images that can be impossible to trace, making it difficult to tell the difference between what's real and what's AI. And while some have safeguards in place to block offensive or harmful content, experts fear it's only a matter of time until people utilize these tools to spread disinformation and further erode public trust.

"Once we lose this capability of telling what's real and what's fake, everything will suddenly become fake because you lose confidence of anything and everything," said Wael Abd-Almageed, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Southern California.

As a test, the AP submitted a text prompt on Stable Diffusion featuring the keywords "Ukraine war" and "Getty Images." The tool created photo-like images of soldiers in combat with warped faces and hands, pointing and carrying guns. Some of the images also featured the Getty watermark, but with garbled text.

AI can also get things wrong, like feet and fingers or details on ears that can sometimes give away that they're not real, but there's no set pattern to look out for. Those visual clues can also be edited. On Mijourney, users often post on the Discord chat asking for advice on how to fix distorted faces and hands.

With some generated images traveling on social networks and potentially going viral, they can be challenging to debunk since they can't be traced back to a specific tool or data source, according to Chirag Shah, a professor at the Information School at the University of Washington, who uses these tools for research.

"You could make some guesses if you have enough experience working with these tools," Shah said. "But beyond that, there is no easy or scientific way to really do this."

For all the backlash, there are many people who embrace the new AI tools and the creativity they unleash. Some use them as a hobby to create intricate landscapes, portraits and art; others to brainstorm marketing materials, video game scenery or other ideas related to their professions.

There's plenty of room for fear, but "what can else can we do with them?" asked the artist Refik Anadol this week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he displayed an exhibit of climate-themed work created by training AI models on a trove of publicly available images of coral.

At the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Anadol designed "Unsupervised," which draws from artworks in the museum's prestigious collection — including "The Starry Night" — and feeds them into a digital installation generating animations of mesmerizing colors and shapes in the museum lobby.

The installation is "constantly changing, evolving and dreaming 138,000 old artworks at MoMA's archive," Anadol said. "From Van Gogh to Picasso to Kandinsky, incredible, inspiring artists who defined and pioneered different techniques exist in this artwork, in this AI dream world."

Anadol, who builds his own AI models, said in an interview that he prefers to look at the bright side of the technology. But he hopes future commercial applications can be fine-tuned so artists can more easily opt out.

"I totally hear and agree that certain artists or creators are very uncomfortable about their work being used," he said.

For painter Erin Hanson, whose impressionist landscapes are so popular and easy to find online that she has seen their influence in AI-produced visuals, the concern is not about her own prolific output, which makes \$3 million a year.

She does, however, worry about the art community as a whole.

"The original artist needs to be acknowledged in some way or compensated," Hanson said. "That's what

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copyright laws are all about. And if artists aren't acknowledged, then it's going to make it hard for artists to make a living in the future."

Twinkle, twinkle fading stars: Hiding in our brighter skies

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Every year, the night sky grows brighter, and the stars look dimmer.

A new study that analyzes data from more than 50,000 amateur stargazers finds that artificial lighting is making the night sky about 10% brighter each year.

That's a much faster rate of change than scientists had previously estimated looking at satellite data. The research, which includes data from 2011 to 2022, is published Thursday in the journal *Science*.

"We are losing, year by year, the possibility to see the stars," said Fabio Falchi, a physicist at the University of Santiago de Compostela, who was not involved in the study.

"If you can still see the dimmest stars, you are in a very dark place. But if you see only the brightest ones, you are in a very light-polluted place," he said.

As cities expand and put up more lights, "skyglow" or "artificial twilight," as the study authors call it, becomes more intense.

The 10% annual change "is a lot bigger than I expected — something you'll notice clearly within a lifetime," said Christopher Kyba, a study co-author and physicist at the German Research Centre for Geosciences in Potsdam.

Kyba and his colleagues gave this example: A child is born where 250 stars are visible on a clear night. By the time that child turns 18, only 100 stars are still visible.

"This is real pollution, affecting people and wildlife," said Kyba, who said he hoped that policymakers would do more to curb light pollution. Some localities have set limits.

The study data from amateur stargazers in the nonprofit Globe at Night project was collected in a similar fashion. Volunteers look for the constellation Orion — remember the three stars of his belt — and match what they see in the night sky to a series of charts showing an increasing number of surrounding stars.

Prior studies of artificial lighting, which used satellite images of the Earth at night, had estimated the annual increase in sky brightness to be about 2% a year.

But the satellites used aren't able to detect light with wavelengths toward the blue end of the spectrum — including the light emitted by energy-efficient LED bulbs.

More than half of the new outdoor lights installed in the United States in the past decade have been LED lights, according to the researchers.

The satellites are also better at detecting light that scatters upward, like a spotlight, than light that scatters horizontally, like the glow of an illuminated billboard at night, said Kyba.

Skyglow disrupts human circadian rhythms, as well as other forms of life, said Georgetown biologist Emily Williams, who was not part of the study.

"Migratory songbirds normally use starlight to orient where they are in the sky at night," she said. "And when sea turtle babies hatch, they use light to orient toward the ocean — light pollution is a huge deal for them."

Part of what's being lost is a universal human experience, said Falchi, the physicist at University of Santiago de Compostela.

"The night sky has been, for all the generations before ours, a source of inspiration for art, science, literature," he said.

US Treasury buys time for Biden and GOP on debt limit deal

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government bumped up against its debt limit Thursday, prompting the Treasury Department to take "extraordinary" accounting steps to avoid default — as friction between President Joe Biden and House Republicans raised concern about whether the U.S. can sidestep an eco-

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conomic crisis.

The Treasury Department said in a letter to congressional leaders it had started taking "extraordinary measures" as the government had run up against its legal borrowing capacity of \$31.381 trillion. An artificially imposed cap, the debt ceiling has been increased roughly 80 times since the 1960s.

"I respectfully urge Congress to act promptly to protect the full faith and credit of the United States," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrote in the letter.

Markets so far remain relatively calm, given that the government can temporarily rely on accounting tweaks to stay open and any threats to the economy would be several months away. Even many worried analysts assume there will be a deal.

But this particular moment seems more fraught than past brushes with the debt limit because of the broad differences between Biden and new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who presides over a restive Republican caucus.

Those differences increase the risk that the government could default on its obligations for political reasons. That could rattle financial markets and plunge the world's largest economy into a preventable recession.

Biden and McCarthy, R-Calif., have several months to reach agreement as the Treasury Department imposes measures to keep the government operating until at least June. But years of intensifying partisan hostility have led to a conflicting set of demands that jeopardize the ability of the lawmakers to work together on a basic duty.

Biden insists on a "clean" increase to the debt limit so that existing financial commitments can be sustained and is refusing to even start talks with Republicans. McCarthy is calling for negotiations that he believes will lead to spending cuts. It's unclear how much he wants to trim and whether fellow Republicans would support any deal after a testy start to the new Congress that required 15 rounds of voting to elect McCarthy as speaker.

Asked twice on Wednesday if there was evidence that House Republicans can ensure the government will avert a default, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said it's their "constitutional responsibility." She did not say whether the White House saw signs at this stage that a default was out of the question.

"We're just not going to negotiate that," Jean-Pierre said. "They should feel the responsibility."

McCarthy said Biden needs to recognize the political realities that come with a divided government. The speaker equates the debt ceiling to a credit card limit and calls for a level of fiscal restraint that did not occur under President Donald Trump, a Republican who in 2019 signed a bipartisan suspension of the debt ceiling.

"Why create a crisis over this?" McCarthy said this week. "I mean, we've got a Republican House, a Democratic Senate. We've got the president there. I think it's arrogance to say, 'Oh, we're not going to negotiate about pretty much anything' and especially when it comes to funding."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday in Louisville, Kentucky, that he was unconcerned about the situation because debt ceiling increases are "always a rather contentious effort."

"America must never default on its debt," McConnell said. "We'll end up in some kind of negotiation with the administration over what are the circumstances or conditions under which the debts are going to be raised."

But any deal would also need to pass the Democratic-run Senate. Many Democratic lawmakers are skeptical about the ability to work with Republicans aligned with the "Make America Great Again" movement started by Trump. The MAGA movement has claimed that the 2020 election lost by Trump was rigged, a falsehood that contributed to the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

"This is not complicated: If the MAGA GOP stops paying our nation's bills, Americans will be the ones to pay the price," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "Political brinkmanship with the debt limit would be a massive hit to local economies, American families, and would be nothing less than an economic crisis at the hands of the Republicans."

The debt ceiling was originally a fix made during World War I that enabled bonds to be issued without requiring repeated congressional approvals. But in an era of polarization and rising debt loads, the limit

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has been transformed into a political bludgeon. It does not reflect the actual capacity of the federal government to borrow, simply how much it is legally able to do so without congressional signoff.

In order to keep the government open, the Treasury Department on Thursday was making a series of accounting maneuvers that would put a hold on contributions and investment redemptions for government workers' retirement and health care funds, giving the government enough financial space to handle its day-to-day expenses until roughly June.

What happens if these measures are exhausted without a debt limit deal is unknown. A prolonged default could be devastating, with crashing markets and panic-driven layoffs if confidence evaporated in a cornerstone of the global economy, the U.S. Treasury note.

Analysts at Bank of America cautioned in a report last week that "there is a high degree of uncertainty about the speed and magnitude of the damage the U.S. economy would incur."

The underlying challenge is that the government would have to balance its books on a daily basis if it lacks the ability to issue debt. If the government cannot issue debt, it would have to impose cuts equal in size on an annual basis to 5% of the total U.S. economy. Analysts say their baseline case is that the U.S. avoids default.

Still, if past debt ceiling showdowns such as the one that occurred in 2011 are any guide, Washington may be in a nervous state of suspended animation with little progress until the "X-date," the deadline when the Treasury's "extraordinary measures" are depleted.

Unlike the 2011 showdown, the Federal Reserve is actively raising interest rates to lower inflation and is rolling off its own holdings of U.S. debt, meaning that recession fears are already elevated among consumers, businesses and investors.

Biden administration officials have said they will not prioritize payments to bondholders if the country passes the "X-date" without an agreement. Over the years, officials have studied this emergency option, which Treasury officials across administration have said is unworkable because of the government's payments system.

"To some extent, the 'extraordinary measures' are the backup plan, and once those are exhausted the next step is a major question mark," economists at Wells Fargo wrote in a Thursday analysis.

At Lunar New Year, desserts can be customary or 'cute-ified'

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

Every Lunar New Year without fail, Kat Lieu's mother would make her steamed nian gao, which is a sweet rice — or mochi — cake. It was a tasty tradition of having dessert for breakfast.

The Seattle-based author of the "Modern Asian Baking at Home" cookbook and founder of the Subtle Asian Baking online group switches things up for her 9-year-old son. He gets mochi waffles made with bright green pandan the first morning of the new year.

"This year again I'm going to make the waffles," said Lieu, who is half Chinese and half Vietnamese. "I'm also going to make the steamed nian gao and things like that, and try to have him appreciate it more, too."

Unlike Thanksgiving, when pie is a given at many households, desserts and confections at Lunar New Year are as varied as the Asian diasporas around the world that celebrate it.

Families from China to the U.S. to Vietnam will mark the new year on Sunday with the usual customs such as elaborate dinners and red envelopes with money for children. There will be customary sweet snacks like nian gao. But in this age of social media, food savviness and cultural pride, younger generations of Asians also are getting more inspired to have dessert courses that are whimsical and creative — from black sesame financiers to peanut butter miso cookies.

In Beijing, residents have been flocking to the flagship store of Daoxiangcun, one of the city's best-known bakeries, for new year-themed dessert gift boxes in which some of the pastries were shaped like a rabbit, the animal of the upcoming year's Chinese zodiac.

On Saturday, people stood in line outside the store for hours for the chance to buy baked goods, according to a staffer. Even at a less popular branch half a block away, customers still had to wait 40 minutes.

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For Lexi Li, it was about bringing a little something to loved ones even though it meant waiting in the line for seven hours in sub-freezing temperatures.

"I don't really like desserts and pastries, but I just want to bring something home as a gift," said the 30-year-old, who walked out with a stack of eight boxes for friends and family in her hometown Taiyuan, in central China's Shanxi province.

Known for its diverse food culture, China offers a variety of Lunar New Year desserts that are usually rice-based or flour-based. They include tang yuan, which are mochi-esque rice balls with black sesame or peanut paste in soup, as well as sesame balls, almond cookies, candied lotus seeds and fat goh — steamed cakes also known as prosperity cakes.

Nian gao remains one of the most popular options. Its key ingredient is glutinous rice flour, along with other things such as taro, dates, jujube and red bean paste, depending on the variety. Its name is a homonym for "higher year" in Chinese, meaning a more prosperous year ahead and expressing wishes for children to grow taller.

The well-preserved tradition plays a vital role in passing on Chinese culture because it keeps alive a food culture honoring grains and reminding people of how festivals are celebrated going back to the seventh century, according to Siu Yan Ho, a Hong Kong-based expert in Chinese food culture.

"Food is memory, and this memory is connected with festivals," Siu said.

In Vietnam, which is celebrating the Year of the Cat, sweets also differ by region. Vietnamese people eat nian gao, which they call banh to. They also eat che kho gao nep, a pudding made with sticky rice and a mixture of water, ginger and either sugar or molasses. Other delectables include che kho dau xanh — a mung bean pudding made with coconut milk and sugar — and banh tet chuo, a glutinous rice cake with bananas.

"On Lunar New Year, for three days you go visit family, friends and teachers," said Linh Trinh, a Vietnamese food historian who is getting a PhD in the subject at the University of Michigan. "So everybody has to store a lot of snacks in their house for people to come visit and have tea. It becomes like the pride of the household to serve their traditional snacks."

More U.S. companies are finding a sweet spot in incorporating Lunar New Year elements. Cupcake chain Sprinkles, in collaboration with the pan-Asian cultural support nonprofit Gold House, is selling red velvet cupcakes with an almond cookie crust and almond cream cheese frosting. At Disney California Adventure Park, guests can order milk tea cheesecake with taro mousse.

Judging by the 150,000-plus membership of the Subtle Asian Baking Facebook group, a lot of Asians are more about showing off something they made for the holiday rather than bought. The community has come a long way from when Lieu started it in 2020. For the third year, there has been a virtual Lunar New Year bake-off on Facebook and Instagram where members share photos of stunning macarons, chiffon cakes and other pastries.

"You're innovating. You're bringing appreciation to all these amazing ingredients," Lieu said. "And then you're you're making it your own traditions, which is amazing."

Kelson Herman, of San Francisco, crafted a sourdough boule with an illustration of Miffy, a girl bunny from a popular Dutch children's book series, for the Lunar New Year. Already an avid baker, the 44-year-old got inspired by seeing online what other people were doing.

"I see a lot of boundaries being pushed, people trying to not just one-up each other but be more creative," Herman said. "I feel like it always comes down to flavors that bring back kind of familial memories. ... It could be things that just evoke conversation and family."

In Queens, New York, Karen Chin made a two-tier cake frosted in coconut buttercream topped with a white chocolate rabbit. One layer was vanilla with red bean paste. The other was spiced cake with cardamom and mango curd. It's a far cry from the fat goh her grandmother makes.

"I told my grandma that I was going to make a cake. And she's like, 'Don't make it too complicated,'" Chin said, chuckling.

Yet, Chin's creativity yielded some special family moments.

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"I was so touched because last time when she came and she ate something, she's like 'You make good food.' I was like, 'Wow, that's the first time she complimented me,'" Chin said.

Sue Ng, who was born and raised in Canada but now lives in Hong Kong, loves to "cute-ify" pastries for special occasions. During the pandemic, she found a passion for combining baking and her love of Asian pop culture. Past Lunar New Year creations included a rolled cake that looked like a White Rabbit Creamy Candy, a Chinese brand as iconic as the Hershey bar.

Ng said that because her two school-age daughters have grown up in Hong Kong, they've learned the importance of the Lunar New Year, including the food. But she also likes to throw in something different, such as black sesame financiers and salted egg yolk cookies.

"A Lunar New Year dessert to me is something made using Asian elements with reference to traditionally-made goods during this time," Ng said in an email. "Now we can be creative and make something like nian gao-filled cookies and the ideas are limitless! Sweet treats are a must during this time because it symbolizes a sweet life."

Say cheese! Galactic photo shoot captures 3 billion stars

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A galactic photo shoot has captured more than 3 billion stars and galaxies in one of the biggest sky surveys ever.

A dark-energy camera on a telescope in Chile made the observations over two years, focusing on the Southern Hemisphere sky. The National Science Foundation's NOIRLab released the survey results this week.

Shown in remarkable detail, most of these Milky Way objects are stars. The count also includes small, distant galaxies that may have been mistaken as individual stars.

It's like taking a group shot and being able to distinguish not only each individual, but the color of their shirt, said lead researcher Andrew Saydjari, a doctoral candidate in physics at Harvard University.

"Despite many hours of staring at images containing tens of thousands of stars, I am not sure my mind has wrapped around the magnitude of these numbers," Saydjari said in an email.

This latest survey now covers 6.5% of the night sky, according to the researchers. It includes the results of a survey released in 2017 that catalogued 2 billion celestial objects, mostly stars.

With hundreds of billions of stars in the Milky Way, the cosmic catalog is certain to grow. No further updates are planned for this particular survey, Saydjari said, but upcoming telescopes will tackle even larger areas of the sky.

Fashion sneakers propel sustainable rubber in Brazil Amazon

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE, TATIANA POLLASTRI AND ERALDO PERES undefined

XAPURI, Brazil (AP) — Rubber tapper Raimundo Mendes de Barros prepares to leave his home, surrounded by rainforest, for an errand in the Brazilian Amazon city of Xapuri. He slides his long, scarred, 77-year-old feet into a pair of sneakers made by Veja, a French brand.

At first sight, the expensive, white-detailed urban tennis shoes seem at odds with the muddy tropical forest. But the distant worlds have converged to produce soles made from native Amazonian rubber.

Veja works with a local cooperative called Cooperacre, which has reenergized the production of a sustainable forest product and improved the lives of hundreds of rubber tapper families. It's a project that, though modest in scale, provides a real-life example of living sustainably from the forest.

"Veja and Cooperacre are doing an essential job for us who live in the forest. They are making young people come back. They have rekindled the hope of working with rubber," Rogério Barros, Raimundo's 24-year-old son, told The Associated Press as he demonstrated how to tap a rubber tree in the family's grove in the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve. Extractive reserves in Brazil are government-owned lands set aside for people to make a living while they keep the forest standing.

Rubber was once central to the economy of the Amazon. The first boom came at the turn of the 20th

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century. Thousands of people migrated inland from Brazil's impoverished Northeast to work in the forest, often in slave-like conditions.

That boom ended abruptly in the 1910s when rubber plantations started to produce on a large scale in Asia. But during World War II, Japan cut the supply, prompting the United States to finance a restart of rubber production in the Amazon.

After the war, Amazon latex commerce again fell into decline, even as thousands of families continued to work in poor conditions for rubber bosses. In the 1970s, these relatively wealthy individuals began selling land to cattle ranchers from the south, even though, in most cases, they didn't actually own it, but rather just held concessions because they were well-connected with government officers.

These land sales caused the large scale expulsion of rubber tappers from the forest. That loss of livelihood and deforestation to make way for cattle raising is what prompted the famous environmentalist Chico Mendes — together with a cousin of Barros — to found and lead a movement of rubber tappers. Mendes would be murdered for his work in 1988.

After Mendes' assassination, the federal government began to create extractive reserves so that the forest could not be sold to make way for cattle. The Chico Mendes reserve is one of these. But the story did not end with the creation of the reserves. Government attempts to promote the latex, including a state-owned condom factory in Xapuri, failed to create a reliable income.

What sets the Veja operation apart is that rubber tappers are now getting paid far above the commodity price for their rubber. In 2022, the Barros family received US\$ 4.20 per kilo (2.2 pounds) of rubber tapped from their grove. Before, they made one tenth that amount.

This price that shoe company Veja pays the tappers includes bonuses for sustainable harvests plus recognition of the value of preserving the forest, explains Sebastião Pereira, in charge of Veja's Amazonian rubber supply chain. The rubber workers also receive federal and state benefits per kilo.

Veja also pays bonuses to tappers who employ best practices and local cooperatives that buy directly from them. The criteria range from zero deforestation to the proper management of rubber trees. Top producers also receive a pair of shoes as a prize.

Veja's rubber is produced by some 1,200 families from 22 local cooperatives spread across five Amazonian states: Acre, home to the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve, Amazonas, Rondonia, Mato Grosso, and Pará.

All the rubber goes to the Cooperacre plant in Sena Madureira, in Acre state, where raw product is cut, washed, shredded into smaller pieces, heated, weighed, packed and finally shipped to factories that Veja contracts with in industrialized Rio Grande Sul state, thousands of miles to the south, as well as to Ceara state, in Brazil's Northeast.

From there the sneakers are distributed to many parts of the world. Over the last 20 years, Veja has sold more than 8 million pairs in several countries and maintains stores in Paris, New York and Berlin. The amount of Amazon rubber it purchases has soared: from 5,000 kilos (11,023 pounds) in 2005 to 709,500 kilos (1.56 million pounds) in 2021, according to company figures.

However, it has not been a game changer for the forest in the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve, where almost 3,000 families live. The illegal advance of cattle, an old problem, has picked up. Deforestation there has tripled in the past four years, amid the policies of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who was defeated in his reelection bid and left office at the end of last year.

Cattle long ago replaced rubber as Acre's main economic activity. Nearly half of the state's rural workforce is employed in cattle ranching, where only 4% live from forest products, mainly Brazil nuts.

According to an economic study by Minas Gerais Federal University, 57% of Acre's economic output comes from cattle. Rubber makes up less than 1%.

Surrounded by cattle pasture and paved highway — the entry point for deforestation — Chico Mendes has the third highest rate of deforestation of any protected reserve in Brazil.

The growing pressure of cattle on the reserve, which has already lost 9% of its original forest cover, even led Veja to set up its own satellite monitoring system.

"Our platform shows a specific region where deforestation is rampant. So we may go there and talk. But

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we are aware that our role is to offer an alternative and raise awareness," Pereira told the AP in a phone interview. "We are careful not to cross the line, as the public authority should be the one doing the law enforcement."

According to Roberta Graf, who leads Acre's branch of the association of federal environmental officials, the Veja experience is essential as it shows a path for living inside extractive reserves sustainably. But to achieve that, she argues, requires a joint effort that includes government at different levels, nonprofits and grassroots organizations.

"The forest communities still hold rubber tapping dear. They enjoy making a living off the latex," she told the AP in an interview in her home in Rio Branco, Acre's capital. "There are many forest products: copaiba, andiroba (vegetable oils), Brazil nuts, wild cacao, and seeds. The ideal should be to work with all of them according to what each reserve can offer."

Cardinal says book by Benedict XVI's secretary 'unseemly'

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The archbishop of Vienna, a longtime friend and former student of Pope Benedict XVI, has confirmed that it was he who wrote a letter to his former teacher urging him to accept election as pontiff in 2005 if the votes went his way.

Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn issued a statement Wednesday confirming a revelation in a new book by Benedict's personal secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, that was published soon after Benedict died Dec. 31 at age 95.

The book, "Nothing But the Truth: My Life Beside Pope Benedict XVI," already has generated controversy, because it revealed confidential communications and exposed the tensions that simmered during the decade in which Benedict lived as an emeritus pope alongside Pope Francis.

Schoenborn said the publication of the book was an "unseemly indiscretion" and distanced himself from it. The statement on the archdiocesan website quoted him as saying: "I don't think it's right that such confidential things are published, especially by the personal secretary."

But Schoenborn nevertheless confirmed one of the less controversial chapters in the book, surrounding the election of the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as pope in 2005, following the death of St. John Paul II. Soon after he was elected, Benedict told a group of German pilgrims that as the votes started to go his way during the conclave, he felt dizzy and that a "guillotine" was falling on him.

But he said then that he was heartened by a letter he had received from an unnamed cardinal "confrere" in the days before the conclave began, urging him to follow whatever God had in store for him.

In the book, Gaenswein revealed that it was Schoenborn who penned the letter, noting that he was one of the few people who addressed Benedict with the informal "you" — something not even Benedict's closest Vatican collaborators ever did. Schoenborn and Ratzinger had known each other since 1972, when the young Dominican priest took a course Ratzinger gave in Regensburg, Germany, and "remained in the tight circle of his former students," Gaenswein wrote.

In the statement, Schoenborn confirmed "That was the case." But in another indication of his disagreement that such information had been made public, and so soon after Benedict's death, he added: "I have deliberately kept silent about it until now."

Schoenborn, who turns 78 on Sunday, is by many counts eminently "papabile," or having the characteristics of a future pope. Descended from nobility and the son of divorced parents, he shares a strong affinity with Benedict and his conservative allies, but has remained on good terms with Francis. Most significantly, he defended Francis' outreach to divorced and civilly remarried couples as a natural "development" in church doctrine, after Francis came under attack by conservatives.

Fewer Americans file for jobless benefits last week

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of people seeking unemployment benefits in the U.S. reached a four-month low last week, a sign that employers are holding on to their workers despite the Federal Reserve's efforts to slow the economy and tamp down inflation.

U.S. jobless aid applications for the week ending Jan. 14 fell by 15,000 to 190,000, from 205,000 the week before, the Labor Department said Thursday.

The four-week moving average of claims, which can even out the week-to-week volatility, declined by 6,500 to 206,000.

Jobless claims generally serve as a proxy for layoffs, which have been relatively low since the pandemic wiped out millions of jobs in the spring of 2020.

The labor market is closely watched by the Federal Reserve, which raised interest rates seven times last year in a bid to slow job growth and bring down stubbornly high inflation.

Earlier this month, the government reported that U.S. employers added a solid 223,000 jobs in December, evidence that the economy remains healthy even as the Fed is rapidly raising interest rates to try to slow economic growth and the pace of hiring. The unemployment rate fell to 3.5%, matching a 53-year low.

Even though it was a solid report, December's jobs data suggested that the labor market may be cooling in a way that could aid the Fed's fight against high inflation. It was the smallest gain in two years, and it extended a hiring slowdown that began last year. Average hourly pay growth eased to its slowest pace in 16 months. That slowdown could reduce pressure on employers to raise prices to offset their higher labor costs.

In forecasts updated last month, the Fed's policymakers predicted slower growth and higher unemployment for next year and 2024. The unemployment rate is projected to jump to 4.6% by the end of 2023. That would mark a significant increase in joblessness and typically would reflect a recession, which many economists have predicted.

The Fed's rate hikes last year have made it more expensive for consumers to take out mortgage and auto loans, and raised borrowing rates for credit cards.

Mortgage rates are above 6%, essentially double what they were before the Fed began tightening credit. Higher mortgage rates have put the brakes on the housing market, with sales of existing homes declining for 10 straight months.

Though the U.S. labor market remains robust, layoffs have been mounting in the technology sector, which is dealing with falling demand as inflation squeezes both businesses and families.

On Wednesday, Microsoft announced in a regulatory filing that it is cutting 10,000 workers, almost 5% of its workforce, joining other tech companies that have scaled back their pandemic-era expansions.

Earlier this month, Amazon announced that it is laying off 18,000 workers, while the software company Salesforce, owner of Slack, said it was cutting around 8,000 jobs. Facebook parent Meta, Twitter, DoorDash and others have announced cuts in recent months as well.

About 1.65 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Jan. 7, an increase of 17,000 from the week before.

Study: Big gap in carbon removal effort key to climate goals

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Researchers say efforts to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere aren't being scaled up fast enough and can't be relied on to meet crucial climate goals.

A report published Thursday by scientists in Europe and the United States found that new methods of CO2 removal currently account for only 0.1% of the 2 billion metric tons sucked from the atmosphere each year. That compares with roughly 37 billion tons of annual CO2 emissions.

Most current greenhouse gas removal is achieved by planting trees and managing forests and other natural carbon sinks, which themselves are under considerable threat.

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New carbon removal technologies include so-called direct air capture, where CO₂ is sucked from the atmosphere and stored underground. Another method known as biochar involves burning plant matter and then burying the carbon-heavy waste.

Both have been heavily criticized by environmentalists even as they attract considerable funding from governments and companies seeking solutions to the climate crisis. Developing countries argue that their contribution to global carbon removal — mostly in the form of forests and land management — are equally important and deserve greater recognition.

The study concludes that novel carbon removal needs to increase 30-fold by 2030 to achieve the emissions reductions required to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) and ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 F) by the end of the century.

Achieving 'net zero' emissions by mid-century — a goal many countries are aiming for and experts say is necessary to meet the targets agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accord — would require an increase in carbon dioxide removal by a factor of 1,300 and few countries have realistic plans for doing so, the authors said.

"We are really lagging behind significantly when it comes to carbon removal," said study co-author Jan Minx of the Berlin-based Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change.

"If we want a robust strategy to achieve the Paris climate goals then we need to restrict dependence on carbon removal ... through rapid and far-reaching emissions reductions," he said. "But at the same time the expansion and development of carbon removal methods needs to be boosted."

Oliver Geden of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, who also contributed to the report, said natural means of carbon removal, such as reforestation, are currently more cost-effective than artificial methods. But there are limits to how much land can be devoted to forests and rising global temperatures increase the risk that carbon stored that way could be released again, such as through wildfires.

He noted the rapid rise of solar and wind power plants as examples for how new technologies could have a measurable impact on efforts to curb climate change.

The authors of the study say they plan to regularly publish a regular 'State of Carbon Dioxide Removal.'

Today in History: JAN 20, Inauguration Day (every 4 years)

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 20, the 20th day of 2023. There are 345 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first chief executive to be inaugurated on Jan. 20 instead of March 4.

On this date:

In 1801, Secretary of State John Marshall was nominated by President John Adams to be chief justice of the United States.

In 1841, the island of Hong Kong was ceded by China to Great Britain. (It returned to Chinese control in July 1997.)

In 1936, Britain's King George V died after his physician injected the mortally ill monarch with morphine and cocaine to hasten his death; the king was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII, who abdicated the throne 11 months later to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th President of the United States.

In 1964, Capitol Records released the album "Meet the Beatles!"

In 1981, Iran released 52 Americans it had held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan.

In 1986, the United States observed the first federal holiday in honor of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

In 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation's 44th, as well as first African American, president.

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In 2011, federal authorities orchestrated one of the biggest Mafia takedowns in FBI history, charging 127 suspected mobsters and associates in the Northeast with murders, extortion and other crimes spanning decades.

In 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States, pledging emphatically to empower America's "forgotten men and women." Protesters registered their rage against the new president in a chaotic confrontation with police just blocks from the inaugural parade.

In 2020, Chinese government experts confirmed human-to-human transmission of the new coronavirus, saying two people caught the virus from family members and that some health workers had tested positive.

Ten years ago: The San Francisco 49ers rebounded from a 17-0 deficit to beat the Atlanta Falcons 28-24 in the NFC championship game. The Baltimore Ravens earned their first Super Bowl appearance in 12 years with a 28-13 victory over the New England Patriots for the AFC championship.

Five years ago: A dispute in Congress over spending and immigration forced scores of federal government agencies and outposts to close their doors; tourists were turned away from sites including the Statue of Liberty and Philadelphia's Independence Hall. (Congress voted two days later to temporarily pay for resumed operations.)

One year ago: Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned that there would be a "swift, severe" response from the United States and its allies if Russia were to send military forces into Ukraine. As President Joe Biden ended the first year of his presidency, a poll from the Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found a clear majority of Americans for the first time disapproving of his handling of the job amid an unrelenting pandemic and roaring inflation. Meat Loaf, the rock superstar known for his "Bat Out of Hell" album and for such theatrical, dark-hearted anthems as "Paradise By the Dashboard Light" and "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad," died at age 74.

Today's birthdays: Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin is 93. Olympic gold medal figure skater Carol Heiss is 83. Singer Eric Stewart is 78. Movie director David Lynch is 77. Country-rock musician George Grantham (Poco) is 76. Israeli activist Natan Sharansky is 75. Actor Daniel Benzali is 73. Rock musician Paul Stanley (KISS) is 71. Rock musician Ian Hill (Judas Priest) is 71. Comedian Bill Maher (MAR) is 67. Actor Lorenzo Lamas is 65. Actor James Denton is 60. Rock musician Greg K. (The Offspring) is 58. Country singer John Michael Montgomery is 58. Sophie, Countess of Wessex, is 58. Actor Rainn Wilson is 57. Actor Stacey Dash is 56. TV personality Melissa Rivers is 55. Actor Reno Wilson is 54. Singer Edwin McCain is 53. Actor Skeet Ulrich is 53. Rap musician Questlove (The Roots) is 52. Former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley is 51. Rock musician Rob Bourdon (Linkin Park) is 44. Singer-songwriter Bonnie McKee is 39. Country singer Brantley Gilbert is 38. Rock singer Kevin Parker (Tame Impala) is 37. Actor Evan Peters is 36.