

# Groton Daily Independent

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"You have to take  
*risks.*  
We will only  
understand the  
miracle of life fully  
when we allow  
the unexpected  
to happen."  
-Paulo Coelho

Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

## Groton Community Calendar Monday, Jan. 23:

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, Mandarin orange dessert, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes.

School Lunch: Oriental chicken, egg rolls.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck at noon.

Basketball Doubleheader hosting Northwestern: Girls JV at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

Middle School Wrestling Invitational at Ipswich, 6 p.m.

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

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

## Tuesday, Jan. 24

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, glazed carrots, apricots, cookie.

School Breakfast: Sausage and cheese egg cups.

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

School Lunch: Corn dogs, sweet potatoes.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, Jan. 25

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, creamy noodles, California blend, carrot bars, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Grilled cheese, chips.

Emily's Hope Assembly at GHS Arena, 1 p.m., sponsored by Groton Fire & Rescue.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Service Night for Confirmation Students, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

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

**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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## “Not all that forgets is dementia”

Frequently, my patients will come to a visit and bring up a major concern: “Doc, I think I might have dementia; my memory seems to be slipping.” They might give examples of having difficulty finding words, forgetting people’s names, or just feeling like their thinking is slower. Many of them know a family member who had dementia, and they are worried.

My first response is to hear their concerns; of course, if a patient is showing early signs of dementia, we want to assess that and do our best to get to a diagnosis for them. What I have found, however, is that often when these concerns are raised, we find things that are not dementia to explain them.

As we age, some symptoms perceived as memory changes are probably within the spectrum of normal. The occasional forgetting or having a delay finding words is a great example of this. More difficulty recalling names is another. This can be normal at any age but tends to happen more frequently as our brains age.

Sometimes patients are noticing real and concerning issues, but through medical evaluation, we find non-dementia reasons for them. The most common reason would be – you guessed it – medications. While many medications can affect cognition especially in older patients, often we can blame drugs with anti-cholinergic properties (even over-the-counter diphenhydramine found in cold, allergy, and sleep medication) and benzodiazepines (usually prescribed for anxiety or sleep). Patients should review their medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, as an early step in evaluating these concerns.

Other common mimics of cognitive change in older patients are depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders. These disorders can cause the brain to be unfocused and distracted which frequently manifests as forgetfulness. Treating the underlying condition effectively will usually improve one’s cognition, so we should look for signs of those when evaluating memory concerns.

Numerous other medical causes can also impair one’s cognition and memory. These include vitamin deficiencies, abnormal electrolytes, infections, or abnormalities in the brain like bleeding, tumors, or hydrocephalus. Further, there are numerous causes of dementia; Alzheimer’s disease being just one. A thorough history, exam, and sometimes labs or imaging might be warranted if true cognitive impairment is present.

To be clear, if you are experiencing symptoms of change in memory, don’t assume it is dementia. Talk with your medical provider; it may be normal or have any of a long list of other causes. Let’s figure it out together.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB most Thursdays and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



**Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D..**

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**That's Life/Tony Bender**

## **Legislative incivility doesn't represent most of us**

Ah, we meet again, as many of us have since 1991. Remember the 'Sixties warning—don't trust anyone over 30? What would they say about someone who's been 'opinionating' longer than that (and, in the process, inventing words)?

I often have a mental lineup of topics I want to cover. Despite advice from some in the beginning that I should pick a lane—humor or human interest, however, I opted for emotional authenticity. I have to write what I'm feeling every week. I can't fake it.

This week I'm pissed. Disappointed. Embarrassed for the state I love, the state I came home to after years of traipsing about. I'm a child of the prairie. I've got dirt under my fingernails, grain dust in my hair, and something on my boots.

I've kidded before that collectively, our blood pressure rises in North Dakota every two years when the legislature's in session. But it's a fact because there's been a hard turn away from serious problem solving to mean-spirited, holier-than-thou oppression that this year is brutalizing our LGBTQ community. There've been more than a dozen such bills filed, some spiteful, most flat-out ignorant.

Do we really have to police kitty-litter?

LGBTQ—those letters of the alphabet represent friends, children, members of our community from business to government to the pulpit, where they've always been. When it comes to society, can't we live and let live? It's the most American thing ever. It's how most of us were raised. How many times did you hear it—"Mind your own business."

If you're a drag show participant, who cares? Farmers have been doing it for fundraisers for years, and somehow we survived the societal threat.

I may not personally understand homosexuality or gender fluidity, but it's none of my business any more than your religious beliefs. If someone wants to be addressed by the pronoun of their choosing, can't we offer them the same common decency and respect we would anyone else?

In America, are we not allowed to be who we are? A little humanity, please.

We have bills pending that would infringe on free speech, personal freedom, and censor cartoon sex education books and art. Our legislature's becoming the extremist nanny state they've always railed against. It's emotionally-manipulative. And illogical. Exploitive of shallow thinkers, and boy, there are plenty of those. Save the children! Right. You're going to stop them from checking out a book. Meanwhile, there's the internet. Maybe you've heard of it. Everything's out there for any kid with a phone. C'mon. It's up to parents to guide their children just as it's always been.

These divisive nanny-state bills are boiler-plate documents from political organizations that use division as the means to power. Demonize the minority. Pummel the vulnerable. Promote hate. But I don't think that's who most of us are. Based on recent elections, you could argue that 70-percent of North Dakotans vote Republican. Yet, voters approved medical marijuana and shot down extremist abortion legislation.

While 7 out of 10 North Dakota voters may be Republican, in the legislature it's 90%. That in itself is not reflective of their constituency. The malicious, preachy legislation it engenders doesn't reflect who I believe we are. Unless I'm a completely-oblivious Pollyanna.

These bills are primary traps. A moderate Republican's vote against extremism can be used to primary them in the next election. If you're smart enough to see through that, though, they can stand up to the nonsense. Lacking Democrats, we need common-sense moderate Republicans to restore civility and balance into the process.

I'm not blaming Republicans for winning. Democrats in North Dakota have been poor messengers. But "Mind Your Own Business" and "Personal Freedom" are slogans we'd all embrace.

Amidst these distractions, there's a growing urban assault on rural areas. Despite voter rejection of corporate farming, Gov. Doug Burgum hopes to legislatively supersede the voter's will.

He's pushing a CO2 pipeline that deserves more debate.

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His income tax break is a pittance for median incomes—\$400 a year—while the richest of the rich make out like bandits. Like always.

Burgum's fingerprints are all over a plan to consolidate rural superintendents—and of course, eventually force consolidation, effectively punishing rural children for being rural in a rural state. Killing small towns.

So much for local control.

Rural areas still need roads. Rural kids deserve an equal education.

Bismarck's forgotten who we are.

They're too damn busy beating up vulnerable people.

Meanwhile, this discriminatory hick legislation makes national news. We've got 40,000 job openings, but with such negative publicity, who could be persuaded to move here?

Assholes, maybe.

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**Dak XII/NEC Boys Basketball Clash**  
**Groton Area vs. Elk Point-Jefferson**  
**Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023, 2 p.m.**  
**Madison High School**

## Varsity Game

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



\$5 ticket required to watch. Purchased online at [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)



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## Weekly Vikings Recap

### Divisional Round

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Jacksonville Jaguars vs. Kansas City Chiefs

Coming into the weekend, the opening game of the divisional round between the Jaguars and Chiefs was expected by many to be the biggest mismatch of teams. The Chiefs had finished the season with an impressive 14-3 record and cruised to the 1 seed in the AFC, while the Jaguars needed to win their final five games of the regular season just to make the playoffs. However, as we saw last week when the Jaguars came back from a 27-point deficit to beat the Los Angeles Chargers in the wild-card round, the Jaguars seem to always put up a fight no matter the opponent.

The story of the game was the ankle injury of Patrick Mahomes. The injury, which occurred in the first half when a Jaguars' defender rolled up on Mahomes' ankle, forced Mahomes to miss the entire 2nd quarter of the game. However, after halftime, an in-pain Mahomes came back into the game and the Chiefs were able to hold on to beat the Jaguars. Reports on Sunday indicate that Mahomes suffered a high-ankle sprain so that will be something to keep an eye on as the Chiefs head to their fifth straight AFC Championship game.

Chiefs 27 - Jaguars 20

New York Giants vs. Philadelphia Eagles

On the fifth anniversary of the Eagles' victory over the Minnesota Vikings in the NFC Championship game, history somewhat repeated itself Saturday as the Eagles destroyed the Giants with the same score of 38-7. The Eagles destroyed the Giants from start to finish as they finished the game with 41 more rushing yards than the Giants' entire total yards of offense.

The thing that hurt the Giants the most on Saturday was their inability to keep their defense off the field. Outside of their first drive, every possession for the Giants in the first half consisted of either a 3-and-out punt or a turnover only two plays into the drive. With 42 offensive plays and more than 9:50 time of possession than the Giants in the first half, the Giants' defense stood no chance. By halftime, the Eagles led 28-0 and the game was pretty much over from then on.

Eagles 38 - Giants 7

Cincinnati Bengals vs. Buffalo Bills

We will get a repeat of last year's AFC Championship as the Bengals dominated the Bills in a snowy game up in Buffalo. For everyone, this is a surprise as the Bills came into the season as the favorites to win their first-ever Super Bowl. This will be the first time since the 2019 New England Patriots that the Super Bowl favorite coming into the regular season failed to make the conference championship game. With aging stars in Stefon Diggs and Von Miller, and the violent running of Josh Allen, the window for the Bills is starting to get smaller than I think people in Buffalo would like to admit.

As for the Bengals, they were able to hold the Bills to only one sack on their quarterback, Joe Burrow, despite having three starting offensive linemen out heading into the game. If they can protect Burrow next week in Kansas City, I think the Bengals will upset the Chiefs yet again. It is important to note that Patrick Mahomes is 0-3 against the Bengals since they drafted Joe Burrow.

Bengals 27 - Bills 10

Dallas Cowboys vs. San Francisco 49ers

In the finale of the Divisional Round, the two best defenses in the NFL all season faced off in a defensive slugfest. The defenses for the 49ers and Cowboys both lived up to the hype as they held both offenses to a total of six field goals and only one touchdown each. For the Cowboys, all their momentum early in the game went away when running back, Tony Pollard, went out with a high ankle sprain. The Cowboys had to rely solely on Ezekiel Elliott, who finished with an abysmal 26 yards rushing.

The 49ers now head to Philadelphia to face the Eagles in the NFC Championship game. This is the 49ers' third NFC Championship appearance in four years.

49ers 19 - Cowboys 12

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## Double Header with Northwestern Monday, Jan. 23, 2023

JV girls starts at 4 p.m. followed by JV Boys  
**JV games sponsored by Dorene and Gordon Nelson**

### followed by Varsity Games

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



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

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## DAK XII – NEC “CLASH”

Boys Basketball / January 28, 2023  
@ Madison High School

### SCHEDULE

#### AUX GYM

- 11:45 / #11 Seeds / Sisseton (35.700) vs Tri- Valley (39.167)
- 1:15 / #10 Seeds / Webster Area (39.111) vs West Central (39.333)
- 2:45 / #9 Seeds / Redfield (40.000) vs Vermillion (39.700)
- 4:15 / #8 Seeds / Milbank (40.556) vs Canton (40.556)
- 5:45 / #7 Seeds / Tiospa Zina (40.909) vs Madison (42.400)

#### MAIN GYM

- 11:00 / #6 Seeds / Parkston (41.444) vs Tea Area (42.778)
- 12:30 / #5 Seeds / Ab Roncalli (41.900) vs Dell Rapids (43.222)
- 2:00 / #4 Seeds / Groton Area (42.143) vs Elk Point-Jeff (44.364)
- 3:30 / #3 Seeds / Deuel (42.880) vs Lennox (44.667)
- 5:00 / #2 Seeds / Clark-Willow Lk (44.000) vs Dak Valley (46.800)
- 6:30 / #1 Seeds / Hamlin (45.222) vs SF Christian (47.000)

**\*\*\* Game times are NOT rolling \*\*\***

## 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.



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## Groton Area Boys Basketball at Webster Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023

**C Game starts at 4 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity**  
**C Game Sponsor: Darcie and Eric Moody**  
**JV Game Sponsor: Coach Kyle and Tyhe Gerlach**



### Varsity Game Sponsors

Bary Keith at Harr Motors  
Bierman Farm Service  
Blocker Construction  
Dacotah Bank  
Groton Chamber of Commerce  
Groton Ford  
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**#575 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

As of midday today, we're at a seven-day new-case average of 47,328 with a pandemic total of 101,726,588. Hospitalizations are down to 38,099, and the seven-day deaths average is 498 with a pandemic total of 1,111,011.

This pandemic has knocked much of the natural optimism out of me, but I have to say things may be looking up. Our big-3 respiratory viruses—influenza, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), and SARS-CoV-2—are all on the decline and at this point are at their lowest in three months. What's more, it doesn't look like an anomaly in the numbers or a momentary thing; it looks real. Now, I am as aware as anyone that the reported case numbers for Covid-19 in particular do not capture the full picture of real case numbers; but unless we have reason to think the proportion of cases we're capturing has changed radically (and we do not), then a trend is a trend. I don't want to get too excited here because respiratory viruses make up their own rules, and we're still at a very high level of transmission for respiratory viruses overall. Importantly, Covid-19 has still not settled into any kind of a predictable pattern yet. So things could turn around again; but maybe we can take a deep breath right now.

XBB.1.5 now accounts for nearly half (49.1 percent) of the Covid-19 cases in the US, swamping earlier variants. BQ.1.1 and BQ.1 together come in at 37.2 percent; everything else is small potatoes. XBB arose in India, but has evolved since then. It appears XBB.1.5 is something that is a product of the US. It has an additional mutation that makes it far better at binding to host cells, therefore better at infecting people, than the early versions of this subvariant. It began in the Northeast and has been spreading ever since along the entire East Coast. It accounts for about half of cases down through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. It's gaining on BQ.1.1 in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida. Across the country, it is displacing or has displaced BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. We still have no evidence it causes more severe disease than earlier subvariants, but it does not respond as well to any of the monoclonal antibody treatments we have, essentially rendering the last of them ineffective. The bivalent booster appears to be as effective against it as it is against the earlier subvariants. Short version: It's still a good idea to wear a mask in public indoor spaces, get up-to-date on vaccination, and stay home if you're not feeling well.

Hard to believe as we look back: The first Covid-19 case was confirmed in the US three years ago Friday. It was in Snohomish County north of Seattle, Washington, a man in his 30s returning from China. No one seriously thinks this was the first actual case; that probably occurred some weeks earlier, but this is the one we know about for sure. We've gone from there to over 101 million reported cases; and we all know actual numbers are miles worse than that.

As bad as things have been in the US during this pandemic—and they have been very bad indeed—China looks poised to eclipse that. Deaths topped out here at around 4000 per day back in early 2021; with just over four times our population, estimates are that China will reach 36,000 deaths per day during the Lunar New Year holiday that begins this week. It's hard to wrap your head around that; we'd have had to hit something like 17,000 per day to match that.

I've read a report in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly on a survey among 1200 fully-vaccinated people who have not yet received the new bivalent booster. Participants were recruited using an online survey platform, so the sample cannot be considered representative, but it still has promise for designing strategies for increasing booster uptake. At the time of the initial survey only 12.1 percent of adults in the population had received boosters; at the time of the follow-up, that percentage was up to 18.2 percent. Findings were that the most common reasons given for not receiving a booster were as follows: lack of awareness of eligibility (23.2 percent), lack of awareness of vaccine availability (19.3 percent), believing they already had immunity against infection (18.9 percent). Other reasons cited include concern about side effects and being unsure the booster is effective.

The survey also presented information to participants about vaccine eligibility and availability, and after that information was presented, 67.8 percent reported they planned to get the booster dose. Among those

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who reported they were unaware of eligibility or availability, 88.0 percent reported they planned to do so. One month after the survey, respondents were recontacted, and at that point, of those responding (87.4 percent of original respondents), 28.6 percent reported having received the booster; only 4.6 percent of those who indicated they did not plan to receive it did so. Of those who indicated they planned to receive the booster but hadn't done so yet, 82.6 percent said they still intended to get it and 16.4 percent were unsure; reasons given for not having been boosted yet included being too busy, forgetting, and worrying about side effects.

Seems to me we have something to work with here. People still need information, and they may need follow-up and reminding. While much of this should come from health care providers and publicity campaigns, I think there's something here for us too. If you're talking with a friend or family member, you may be able to provide these folks with the kinds of information that will encourage them to get boosted. The more of us who get that booster, the better off we will all be; and that person you love will be more protected against the worst outcomes. Give that some consideration, and think about sticking your oar in to move us all forward.

A paper published Thursday in the Journal of Pathology is kind of scary. The work from a team at the University of Trieste (Italy) and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology in Trieste, examined some of the relatively small number of Covid-19 patients whose PCR test results over months indicate they have recovered, but then, as long as 300 days after apparent recovery, worsen and die. They did post-mortem examination and analysis in 27 such patients, finding that 81 percent of them showed evidence of interstitial pneumonia (involves inflammation of the walls of the alveoli, the tiny air sacs in the lungs and maybe of the pleura, the membranes that surround the lungs as well) accompanied by extensive scarring which causes loss of lung function. This involved pathology similar to acute Covid-19, including thrombosis (abnormal blood clots circulating) in 67 percent of cases, vasculitis (inflammation of blood vessels) in 24 percent of cases, and damaging changes in the lung's lining and structural cells as well as bronchia cartilage (up to 67 percent). While virus was not detectable in the nasopharyngeal swabs or even bronchiolar washings used for the PCR test, it was demonstrated in lung and vascular tissue. So what we have a case of here is undetected infection deeper in the body (often in the lung linings and respiratory cartilage) than the standard (or even beyond-standard) specimen collection is going to show, and this persistent infection is continuing to cause damage until that damage brings about death.

Although this was an extremely small sample, there's something to work with here. The authors noted that this persistent infection does not seem to correlate with severity or duration of disease, which means even those with moderate symptoms may end up with such a persistent infection and remain in danger long after the acute infection has seemed to resolve. There is a possibility this sort of persistent undetected infection is responsible for some proportion of cases of long-Covid. There's more work to be done, but this is worth further study.

It may have occurred to you that the antigen (at-home) tests for Covid-19 may have lost effectiveness as the virus mutates and thwarts the full effect of our immune responses. If so, you should know that has occurred to some other folks too, including the CDC and the FDA, which approves tests. Here's what we know about that. Turns out the mutations have been mostly in the spike (S) protein, the business end of the virus, the one that docks to the ACE2 protein on our cell surfaces so it can infect them, but the antigen tests mostly test for nucleocapsid (N or body of the virus) proteins which have largely not been subject to much mutation. At the moment, there isn't much difference between the current and original N proteins which enclose the viral RNA, so the antigen tests are still good to go. Only one test shows significant reduction in sensitivity (ability to detect the virus); that would be the DxTerity. One other shows some reduction in sensitivity, the Luminostics Clip test, but there isn't much impact with this one. So these tests remain effective; you can rely on them as much as you ever could, which is to say they are not as sensitive as a PCR (lab-run) test, but are still very useful. The primary factor in home test effectiveness is that you follow the instructions exactly; people not trained in lab techniques need to be uber-careful to do them precisely as instructed. Generally speaking, your positive antigen test corresponds pretty well with your infectious period, especially if you have symptoms. If you have symptoms, do not believe the first

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negative test; repeat it in 48 hours. If you do not have symptoms, you want to repeat too. Positive tests can lag the actual infectious period, so your best bet is to repeat a negative test 48 hours later before concluding you're good to go. So if you're testing to establish the safety of getting together with a group of people, test once two days prior and again the day of. This isn't foolproof, but it's pretty good. All of this means nothing has really changed over the course of the time antigen tests have been available—same rules as ever.

There is a new (what we can call next-generation) aerosol (inhaled deep into the lungs) vaccine from researchers at McMaster University currently in testing in Canada. I believe, although I have not confirmed, this is an adenovirus (ChAd68)-vectored trivalent vaccine with spike-1 (S), nucleocapsid  $\square$ , and RNA-dependent RNA-polymerase (RdRp) antigens, which should make it fairly mutation-resistant because it targets three different viral proteins, two of which are not very subject to mutation, which may obviate the need to constantly updating to keep up with viral mutation. An adenovirus vector is simply a harmless virus used to convey the antigen into host cells to induce an immune response. This group has made significant headway on an inhaled vaccine against tuberculosis, so they're a natural for getting this one right. They've just received a boatload of funding from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research that will enable Phase 2 human trials. In Phase 1 trials in volunteers who have already received two doses of an mRNA vaccine, this vaccine candidate has shown itself to be safe, and dose levels have been established. It seems to provide robust protective responses, more effective because it targets the respiratory system where SARS-CoV-2 initially enters your body. This candidate targets parts of the virus that are not so subject to mutation, which means the protection could remain effective as new variants emerge. There's a good possibility this induces durable protection, something current vaccines are struggling with. Phase 2 trials will further evaluate safety and also have a better look at immune responses, including in those who are older or have other health conditions or prior Covid-19 infection.

We have a new antiviral drug, currently called DF-COV-1, on the horizon which might prove to be effective not only against SARS-CoV-2, but also against related viruses which might be responsible for the next pandemic. This comes from scientists at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute whose paper was published last month in the journal Science Advances. The drug contains an ACE2 decoy, that is a chemical that resembles the ACE2 protein on your cells which is the entry point for SARS-CoV-2 as it establishes an infection. Because it is based on your cell proteins which are not very wont to mutate, they're resistant to mutations in the virus, covering territory the monoclonal antibodies keyed on very mutable viral proteins do not cover so well. These decoy ACE2 proteins do not effect viral entry to host cells, so they have high affinity for viral S protein, but do not facilitate viral activity. Natural selection to improve viral ACE2 binding will not evade the antibodies produced in response to this virus because any mutation that evades this drug will make the virus worse at binding host cells. Virus binding by the drug triggers an irreversible change in the viral structure; they snip off the top of the viral S protein, inactivating it so it can no longer bind to host cells. The fact that it changes the virus rather than stimulating an immune response means it is likely to be effective against future coronaviruses which might jump to humans. That's a win. Animal trials have offered proof-of-concept and helped to establish safety for the drug, paving the way for clinical trials in humans. This could be a potent weapon in our arsenal against Covid-19 and future coronaviruses.

As a follow-up to our conversation of a few days ago about questionable stroke risk following administration of the new bivalent Covid-19 vaccine, I have a report from Israel showing there is not evidence to support stroke risk. Salman Zarka, leader of Israel's coronavirus task force, told Reuters, "We have not turned up such a finding, even after we went back and rechecked all our data after the FDA announcement." Since close to 400,000 doses of this booster have been administered in Israel, there is a pretty robust sample available for evaluation. Additionally, the EU's regulatory agency said they have also found no safety signals in their data either. More and more it appears there isn't any risk.

Something else we've talked about is efforts by the CDC to spot new variants in travelers. One part of that effort is to solicit volunteers getting off international flights and agreeing to be swabbed for virus so a genomic analysis can be undertaken; we discussed that just lately. The second part is to evaluate airplane wastewater for variants, a program from the CDC Travelers' Health Branch which is currently targeting 500



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flights per week from 30 countries. Right now, participating airports are JFK in New York City, Newark, San Francisco, Atlanta, Seattle, and LAX in Los Angeles. Samples from any flight with a positive test is sent for genomic testing. This won't help with domestically-generated variants, but should be helpful now and in the future as new pathogens come across our radar screens. I don't think the threat of new viruses is going to diminish anytime soon, so this is a good line of defense for present and future.

Looks like I have another take-out-the-garbage task. I'm going to be honest that I'm not that nuts about taking out the actual garbage, and this figurative way of doing so is wearing exceedingly thin too. Yet, here we are, so this is what I've got for you.

I blew off a few more brain cells—which means I'm going to run out of healthy ones at some point in the future—watching videos from Dr. John Campbell, another one of the misinformationists out there. (You already know I'm not going to link the videos, right?) The first thing we need to establish is that Dr. Campbell is not a medical doctor. While he bills himself as "Dr." on his YouTube channel, he actually has an academic doctorate in nursing. Now there are doctors with academic (not medical) degrees, and I'm one of those, so I'm the last person to be hating on academic doctorates; but when you're purveying medical information, I think it is important to be clear you're your audience about your credentials, something I've been careful to do from my first Update nearly three years ago. I view failure to do so as akin to misrepresenting yourself, and that's not OK with me.

I have not viewed all of this dude's videos because I have a life outside this Covid-19 thing, something some of you may find difficult to believe. I did, however, view the video posted on New Year's Eve, one in which he claims Covid-19 vaccines are very dangerous. He bases these claims on a study with some serious methodological flaws. Here's an overview:

(1) When we evaluate a vaccine, we look at risk-to-benefit ratio, that is, does the risk presented by the vaccine outweigh the risk of the disease it prevents or ameliorates? The authors of this study did a funny thing here: They counted the total number of adverse events following vaccination rather than the number of individuals who experience those events. That means, when counting adverse events, if one individual experienced three related adverse events, they counted three events. On the other hand, when counting bad outcomes from Covid-19 as a basis for comparison, they counted hospitalizations, so if one individual experienced three bad outcomes (say, respiratory distress, abnormal blood clotting, and neurologic damage), they counted one hospitalization. So they counted adverse events on an event level and adverse outcomes from Covid-19 on an individual level. The individual with three adverse vaccine events counted as three, and the individual with three bad outcomes from infection counted as one. That's not apples to oranges; it's oranges to bags of oranges.

(2) They worked from the Brighton Collaboration's priority list of adverse events to assess, but they cherry-picked from that list in their analysis with no explanation for how or why—or even that—they did this. And they did not point this out so folks could realize what was happening.

(3) There are adverse events on that priority list when, while classified as "adverse events of special interest," are not particularly serious or important, things like diarrhea, joint pain, and rash; yet the authors counted all of these fairly minor events as "serious" events on the event level while counting only Covid-19 cases serious enough to require hospitalization on the individual level. Here's where we're looking at bruised apples to bags of poisoned oranges.

(4) They also engaged in one of the statistical original sins called P-hacking. This is a sort of complicated thing, but basically it means you switch different datasets in and out of your statistical analysis until you get a combination that shows statistical significance. What it means in practice is that, when your data do not support statistical significance (the benchmark for declaring there is an effect), you manipulate your data until it "shows" the effect you want it to show, like that a vaccine is dangerous with a too-high risk-to-benefit ratio. Leaving out data that doesn't prove your point so you can make that point anyway is dishonest and misleading. It is generally conceded to be scientific malpractice and should be shunned.

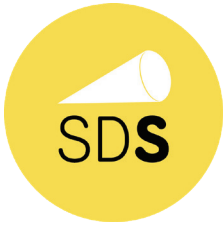
Anyone who draws on a study this weak to make fantastical claims that can harm the public health is not a reliable commentator. Additionally, when there are solid studies, this dude misrepresents them entirely to make his points. That in addition to his misrepresentation of his credentials makes him an unreliable

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source of information. Guys like this one rely on the fact that the general public doesn't really understand research and how to evaluate it. No shame in that: It's a graduate course generally. But that puts us at the mercy of all kinds of charlatans seeking to hurt us to serve their interests. Not OK.

And that's enough for the day. I see better days ahead; do your best to contribute to that trend by keeping yourself and those around you safe. We'll talk again.



### COMMENTARY

## Several early bills show some legislators could use a dose of common sense

**BRAD JOHNSON - SD SEARCHLIGHT**

It puzzles me why some South Dakota legislators, who depend on voters for their jobs, are so afraid of their constituents.

And why isn't common sense a legislative job requirement? Oh, right. Voters establish the job criteria. Maybe that is why some legislators are petrified. If they voted the legislator into office, what might they do next?

Three bills introduced this session speak to these questions.

First up is a bill introduced by Rep. Mary Fitzgerald, R-Spearfish.

Fitzgerald introduced House Bill 1076, which would allow future South Dakota lawyers to skip the bar exam, and instead pass an ethics test, graduate law school and get 1,000 hours of experience under a practicing attorney.

The reason? The bar exam is too hard for some prospective lawyers.

To be fair, we then should eliminate tests for all professions – dentists, nurses, paramedics, plumbers, electricians and, top of the list, real estate appraisers. We have seen how much of a barrier those tests are in that industry.

Why not go a step farther? Eliminate the need for continuing education. Those tests are hard, too. Wait, South Dakota lawyers uniquely already are exempt from continuing education. Probably because they write many of the laws.

Fitzgerald justifies her legislation because rural communities have a hard time attracting lawyers. What? Are we expecting the dumb ones will go practice in the hinterlands?

It is not hard tests that keeps lawyers from small towns. It is the lifestyle. Young lawyers prefer larger communities – Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Aberdeen. Even cities like Watertown, Brookings, Mitchell and other larger cities have a hard time attracting new lawyers.

They also have a hard time getting pastors, doctors, dentists and many other professionals. It will take more than eliminating tests to fill those more remote jobs.

Next up is a bill introduced by Sen. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence.

Deutsch doesn't want voters to have too much freedom. So, he introduced House Joint Resolution 5001. It already died on a 10-2 vote in the House State Affairs Committee. If passed, voters would have had to decide whether to amend the South Dakota constitution to require "an intervening general election occur before an initiated constitutional amendment that is substantially similar to an initiated amendment that was previously voted on and rejected may be submitted to a vote of the electors."

That's legislative gobbledygook for saying voters are not very bright, so let's make them wait two years before revisiting the issue.

Deutsch, in his recent legislative update letter, calls the legislation "the respect the will of the voters bill."

If we truly respect the will of the voters, let them initiate measures as often as possible. It is not easy. To qualify an initiated measure, 16,961 valid signatures are required. To qualify a constitutional amendment question, 33,922 valid signatures are required, according to the Secretary of State's Office.

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All Deutsch needs do to get the same amendment on the ballot is to convince a majority of the 70 representatives and 35 senators to agree. It doesn't seem fair.

But as we often learn, many legislators become smarter than their constituents.

The final proposed bill was introduced by Sen. John Wiik, Big Stone City. His Senate Bill 55 is slightly over 100 words. If only all proposed laws were so brief.

Wiik just was elected South Dakota State Republican Party Chairman and already is working to restrict voter rights.

He wants to prevent the State Board of Elections and a political subdivision from creating a system of ranked choice voting.

Most voters would stare blankly when asked to explain ranked choice voting. It is not the rank choice we sometimes must make between candidates.

Instead, it is an alternative election method not practiced in South Dakota. Each voter ranks the candidates. If there are more than two, and no one wins 50 percent, the losing candidate is eliminated, and their votes are reallocated based on who their supporters ranked as their second favorite.

It's an option that should remain available, especially to municipalities. Let the people decide. They often are smarter than the people they elect.

*Brad Johnson is a Watertown real estate appraiser and journalist whose previous career was as a Colorado newspaper reporter and editor. He has been writing regularly appearing opinion columns for at least 20 years.*

## Pharmacist and technician shortage threatens access to health care

**SDSU pharmacy enrollment down 34%, pharmacies are 'randomly reducing hours and closing'**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 21, 2023 7:00 AM**

When Jessica Strobl's 87-year-old grandmother needed to fill an antibiotic prescription last fall, her regular Black Hills area pharmacy was closed.

She returned the next day to fill the prescription, but it was closed again. During that time, her infection worsened — enough to send her to the emergency room.

While Strobl's grandmother has since recovered, it's a cautionary tale about the consequences of a short-staffed pharmacy and the importance of accessible health care in South Dakota.

It's a concern statewide, as pharmacies are "randomly reducing hours and closing," according to September state Board of Pharmacy meeting minutes. The concern surrounds a pharmacy technician shortage and an impending pharmacist shortage, both of which are ripple effects from the coronavirus pandemic's stress on the health care industry.

An inspector with the Pharmacy Board even noted in a December meeting that several pharmacists are "still slaving away" over the lunch hour, when the pharmacy is closed to patients for a staff break, because the pharmacy was short staffed with too much work to do.

Strobl is the president-elect of the South Dakota Pharmacists Association and vice president of professional services at Lewis Drug Pharmacies.

"In underserved areas of the state, there may only be one pharmacy in the entire county. If that pharmacy can't remain open, then the people who already have minimal health care access have important services that are unavailable," Strobl said.

**Pharmacy technicians are 'invaluable'**

While the regional Lewis Drug chain hasn't seen a mass exodus of pharmacists like other parts of the country, Strobl acknowledges there has been turnover among pharmacy technicians.



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"In the pharmacy world, technicians are literally invaluable," Strobl said. "We can't do our job without them."

Technicians have taken on increased responsibilities, essentially doing the job a pharmacist did years ago including locating, dispensing, packing and labeling prescribed medications for patients — which are then reviewed for accuracy by a pharmacist — and helping pharmacists with administrative tasks.

The workload at the Monument Health compounding pharmacy increases about 5% each year, said Dana Darger, system director of in-patient pharmacy at Monument Health in Rapid City. But Darger hasn't had a full staff in three years to handle that increase.

At least once a week, Darger has to pay a pharmacist to cover a technician shift.

Technician pay starts out around \$15 to \$18 an hour and increases to \$18 to \$22 an hour after a technician is certified. Pharmacists make an average of \$125,214 a year in South Dakota.

And it's not just paying pharmacists for technician work that ends up costing pharmacies more. Darger said he has to pay for expensive, pre-made medications instead of compounding them in-house because he doesn't have the staff to do it.

"Technicians can legally do more today than I could as a licensed pharmacist in 1979, yet we don't pay them like pharmacists," Darger said. "We've got to get the wages up so we have more people interested in technicians."

## **Pharmacist shortage follows national trends: 'errors will happen'**

The pharmacist shortage has already hit pharmacies across the country, and it's looming over South Dakota.

"I think we're headed into the mess nursing is in now," Darger said.

South Dakota's only pharmacy school at South Dakota State University missed its target enrollment goal for the first time ever this year, said Dan Hansen, dean of the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions.

The target enrollment for the fall of 2022 was 65. Only 43 students are enrolled.

COVID-19 is the likely culprit for the drop in enrollment, Hansen said, since this class would have been high school seniors during the first wave of the pandemic.

The pandemic is a factor in the number of early retirements among pharmacists or pharmacists choosing new careers. They're burned out from the stress, said Amanda Bacon, executive director of the state pharmacists association.

"Pharmacists were the frontline of the pandemic too," Bacon said. "In a lot of cases, clinics were closed and hospitals had limited access. But your neighborhood pharmacist was still there and made sure you got your medications in a safe manner."

Those pharmacists are warning students not to enter the profession, Hansen said. One of his first-year pharmacy students was told by seven pharmacists over summer job shadows to stay away. With those pharmacists leaving, employers are looking to hire people who aren't applying.

"There was a larger chain pharmacy in grocery stores in the Midwest where three years ago it would have had a pharmacy opening and would have received 20 applications," Hansen said. "Right now, they have 20 openings and haven't had an application in three months."

The demand is so high in some parts of the county that some stores offered \$75,000 sign-on bonuses for pharmacists.

It scares Hansen to think not only about the number of pharmacists leaving the profession, but the gaps created if the positions aren't filled.

"If a gap is filled with a pharmacist working 60 to 80 hours a week, they're more prone to making an error," Hansen said. "When you're under the gun to get so many prescriptions done and don't have the support to do it, errors will happen. It's just a matter of whether or not it will be caught."

Those errors include getting the wrong medication for the patient. Consequences range from no side effects to death.

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## Changing how pharmacies operate

But Hansen believes the shortage will be remedied in the next five or so years, as entities work on solutions, and said there's "never been a better time" to enter pharmacy. He projects SDSU's pharmacy class size will return to its target in the next few years.

Solutions already in the works include technology improvements, efforts to change the pharmacy model and more lucrative pay for technicians, Strobl said.

"Overall in South Dakota, we've been pretty lucky to avoid some of the issues that pharmacies are seeing nationwide," Strobl said. "But there's definitely still an issue that needs to be addressed and we need to look forward into the future to make sure community pharmacy is sustainable."

One of the most immediate needs is paying technicians more and turning it into a career, Strobl said, by adding responsibilities and making them more involved in patient care.

"These technicians have customer service experience, they're hard workers and they're smart. They're desirable candidates for all types of positions," Strobl said. "We need to reinvent that role to utilize their talents to the fullest and pay them accordingly so they don't search for a job just with higher pay."

The state pharmacists association is working with an online training company to offer certification at "a very reasonable rate," Bacon said. In the last five years, more than 150 people have gone through the program. Fourteen high school students are attending Pharmacy Technician University through a virtual school program in South Dakota.

Hansen believes so-called "central fill" locations will become more widespread as well. Pharmacies like Hy-Vee are using central fill locations, with one in a former north-central Sioux Falls grocery store, to fill prescriptions and send to retail pharmacies. Such centers relieve refill work for technicians and pharmacists.

As the health care industry as a whole changes after the pandemic, the role of the pharmacist is changing as well, Strobl said. Currently, pharmacies are only reimbursed for products sold. That doesn't include other services pharmacists provide, such as counseling patients on drug use, chronic illness maintenance and health plans.

"We consider ourselves to be the drug experts — that's what we're trained on," Strobl said. "Pharmacists could be reimbursed for our expertise that isn't dependent on selling a product."

Increasing transparency in payments for medications from insurance would address the costs to pharmacies as well, Strobl said. The association plans to support a bill tackling the issue at the state Legislature this session. A bill introduced last year failed in the Senate.

"We're fighting for transparent reimbursement on our products," Strobl said. "Pharmacies are only reimbursed on products but that payment is not transparent. We might be told we will get paid \$5 on a product and then they claw back \$3. And then really we're only paid \$2 at the end."

There are 14 separate steps to verify a prescription, according to a presentation from CVS Health to the state Board of Pharmacy in December. The company's solution is to implement technology to reduce workload.

The same is true for hospital pharmacies and regional chains as they search for solutions. However, Darger doesn't want Monument Health to turn to robots, especially because they're expensive.








But pharmacies will have to invest in technology if they can't get enough people in the industry.

"There are a lot of industries in the U.S. that could be taken over by a robot or computer. The next decade or two in pharmacy is going to determine if pharmacists and technicians will continue to be human," Strobl said. "My wish is we find a nice balance of the two, tech supplementing that human touch."

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

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Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
 30%		 20%				
Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow then Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 32 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 29 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 21 °F	Low: 5 °F	High: 31 °F



## Significant Change In Temperature Is Coming

January 23, 2023  
3:39 AM

### Maximum Temperature Forecast

	1/23 Mon			1/24 Tue			1/25 Wed			1/26 Thu			1/27 Fri			1/28 Sat			1/29 Sun			1/30 Mon							
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am				
Aberdeen	33	32	26	16	21	30	26	22	19	19	16	11	14	22	29	31	30	28	22	14	6	5	2	-3	-2	2	-3	-9	-6
Britton	31	30	24	15	21	27	25	22	18	16	13	9	11	18	24	28	28	23	18	8	1	1	-1	-6	-6	-1	-5	-11	-8
Eagle Butte	32	32	24	22	30	36	31	26	22	26	24	22	26	34	35	35	33	34	31	24	15	12	9	5	4	8	5	0	2
Eureka	32	29	23	14	25	31	28	23	17	18	16	13	16	26	29	30	29	26	22	14	5	4	2	-4	-3	2	-3	-9	-6
Gettysburg	33	31	24	12	25	32	28	22	18	20	18	16	18	28	31	32	30	29	26	19	9	7	4	0	-1	5	0	-5	-2
Kennebec	34	34	26	14	25	35	29	24	23	25	22	19	23	31	32	33	33	35	31	25	17	14	11	5	4	9	6	0	3
McIntosh	30	27	21	24	27	31	28	24	18	21	21	18	22	31	33	32	31	29	26	18	10	7	4	0	-1	3	0	-6	-4
Milbank	32	31	25	18	23	28	24	23	22	19	16	11	11	17	22	28	28	26	20	11	4	3	1	-4	-3	0	-4	-7	-4
Miller	32	32	25	13	23	31	27	23	21	21	18	14	17	26	31	32	31	30	26	18	11	8	4	0	0	5	0	-4	-1
Mobridge	34	33	24	17	27	35	31	25	20	23	21	18	21	32	34	34	31	31	28	20	11	10	7	2	1	6	2	-4	-1
Murdo	34	35	26	16	29	37	31	26	25	27	24	22	26	34	34	34	35	37	33	26	19	16	12	6	6	11	7	1	5
Pierre	33	36	29	16	31	39	33	27	25	27	25	22	26	35	35	36	35	37	34	26	19	15	12	7	6	12	9	1	3
Redfield	32	32	26	14	19	29	25	22	20	19	16	12	14	22	29	31	30	28	24	16	8	7	4	-2	-2	3	-1	-6	-5
Sisseton	32	31	25	17	25	29	26	25	21	18	15	11	12	18	25	29	29	24	19	10	3	2	-1	-5	-3	0	-3	-7	-4
Watertown	30	31	25	18	20	26	23	21	21	18	14	10	10	16	22	28	28	26	20	13	4	3	0	-4	-4	-1	-5	-9	-6
Webster	30	30	22	15	21	26	24	22	19	16	13	9	9	16	23	28	28	23	18	11	3	1	-1	-6	-6	-2	-5	-10	-7
Wheaton	32	32	25	16	21	27	24	23	21	18	14	9	10	15	21	26	26	23	18	8	1	1	-1	-6	-5	-1	-5	-9	-7

\*Table values in °F

\*\*Created: 3 am CST Mon 1/23/2023

\*\*\*Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Looking at this 7-day high temperature forecast, in 6 hour chunks, the transition back into arctic cold air is plainly seen.



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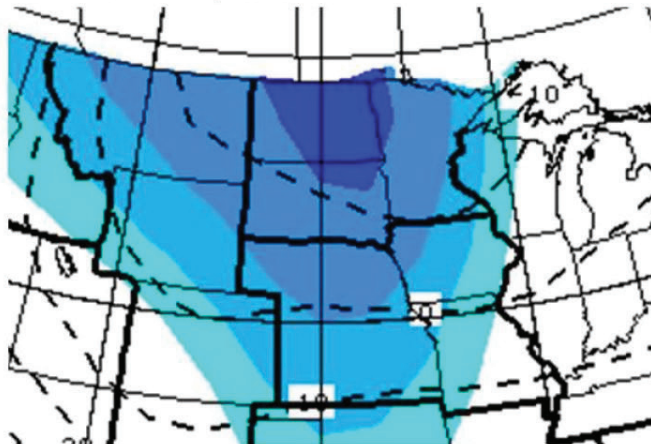
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## Pattern Change Next Weekend

Per the graphics below, there's a 70-80% plus chance for low temperatures of about -10° F, and a more than 90% chance for minimum wind chills of about -30° F during the Day 8-14 timeframe from January 29<sup>th</sup> through February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

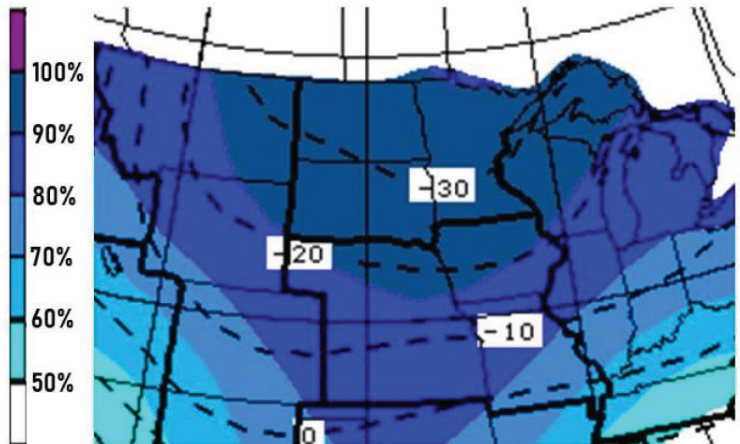


### Minimum Temperature



Dashed lines are the average (1981-2010) threshold for below normal temperature. Shaded lines give the probability that the min temp will be equal to or lower than this threshold

### Wind Chill



Dashed lines are the average (1981-2010) threshold for below normal minimum wind chill (MWC). Shaded lines give the probability that the MWC will be equal to or lower than this threshold

A pattern change will likely lead to an extended period of colder, below normal temperatures beginning next weekend. This graphic displays Climate Prediction Center probabilities for low temperatures and minimum wind chills during the Day 8 to 14 timeframe, from January 29<sup>th</sup> through February 4<sup>th</sup>.



The "Dry" Forecast Is Starting To Fill In With Precipitation Chances

January 23, 2023  
3:39 AM

### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	1/23 Mon		1/24 Tue			1/25 Wed				1/26 Thu				1/27 Fri				1/28 Sat				1/29 Sun			1/30 Mon			
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am			
Aberdeen	25	10	5	5	15	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	10	45	35	10	15	10	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Britton	40	10	10	5	20	10	5	5	15	5	0	0	0	10	55	45	15	15	10	15	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Eagle Butte	10	5	0	10	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	10	20	10	10	15	20	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5
Eureka	10	5	5	15	20	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	40	20	10	15	20	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5
Gettysburg	10	5	5	10	15	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	10	25	15	10	15	20	20	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5
Kennebec	15	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	5	15	10	5	5	15	20	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5
McIntosh	5	5	5	15	5	5	0	0	5	10	5	0	5	20	35	15	20	25	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Milbank	15	10	5	5	5	10	15	20	30	20	10	10	0	5	45	45	20	15	5	10	15	15	10	5	5	5	5	5
Miller	15	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	5	10	5	0	10	40	30	10	15	20	25	20	20	15	15	10	5	5	5
Mobridge	10	5	5	15	15	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	15	30	10	10	15	20	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Murdo	20	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	10	5	0	5	15	15	10	10	15	20	25	20	10	15	10	5	5	5
Pierre	10	5	5	0	10	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	5	15	10	5	10	15	15	20	15	10	10	5	5	5	5
Redfield	20	5	5	5	10	5	5	5	10	0	5	5	0	10	45	35	15	15	15	20	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	5
Sisseton	20	15	10	5	10	5	10	10	25	10	5	0	0	10	50	50	20	15	5	15	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Watertown	15	10	5	5	5	5	10	10	20	10	5	5	0	5	45	35	10	10	10	15	15	15	10	5	5	5	5	5
Webster	30	15	10	5	10	5	10	10	15	5	5	5	0	10	50	40	15	10	10	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	5	5
Wheaton	25	15	10	5	20	15	20	15	25	15	0	0	0	10	40	50	15	15	5	10	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	5

\*Table values in %

\*\*Created: 3 am CST Mon 1/23/2023

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 16 °F at 3:26 PM

Low Temp: -1 °F at 5:08 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 8:27 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 26 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1981

Record Low: -34 in 1897

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.42

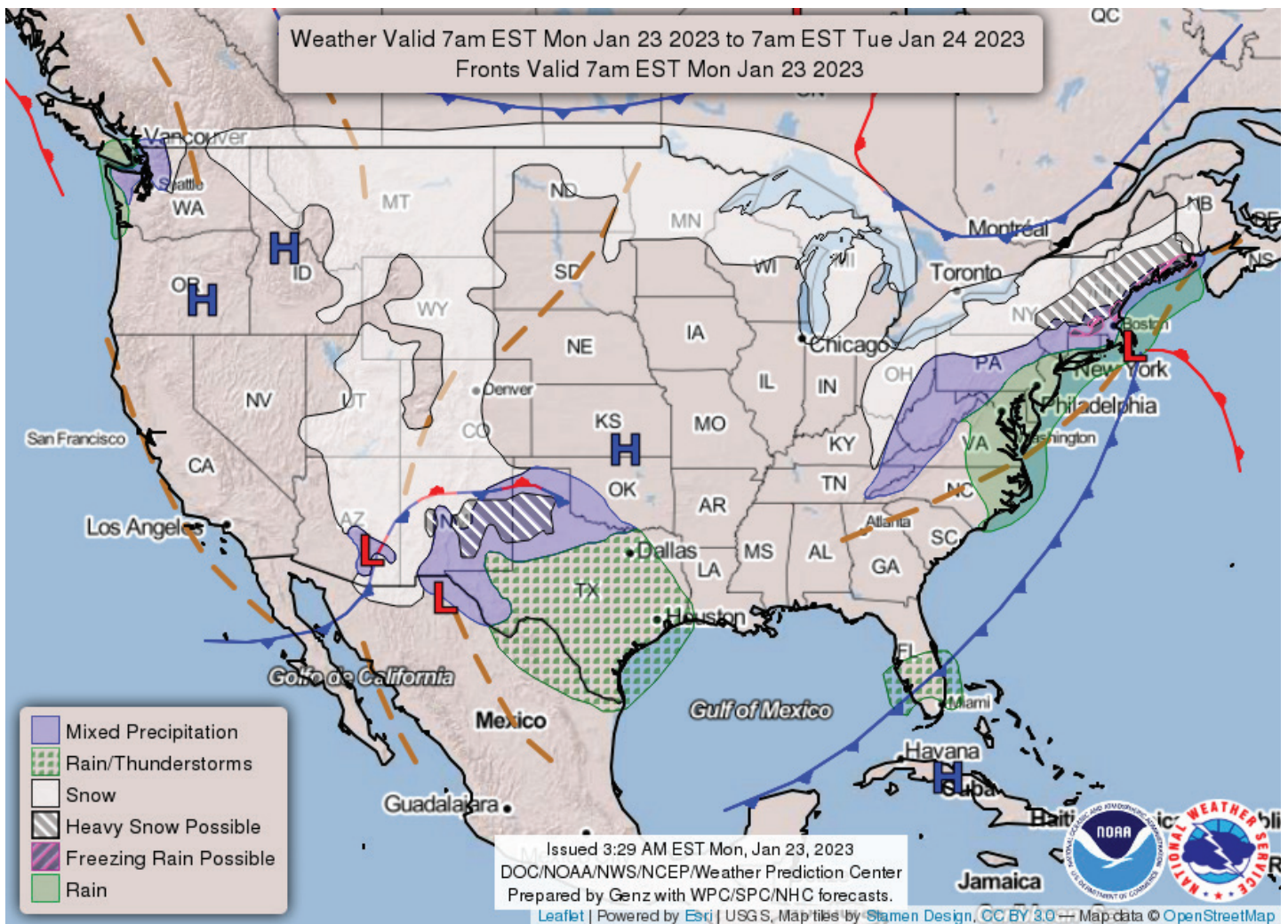
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.42

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:27:38 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:59:55 AM



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## Today in Weather History

January 23, 1969: Intermittent freezing rain on the 20th to the 22nd changed to snow on the 22nd, which continued through the 24th. Snowfall of 2 to 6 inches fell across Minnesota and far northeast South Dakota. Blizzard conditions developed on the 23rd and 24th with 30 to 45 mph winds and temperatures dropping to below zero by the 24th. Most of the traffic was halted, with many roads blocked from snow drifting. Some rural roads had been blocked for 3 to 4 weeks. Stranded motorists were common in the area. Some snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Wilmot and Victor, 3 inches at Milbank and Artichoke Lake, and 4 inches at Clear Lake.

1556: An earthquake in Shaanxi, China, kills an estimated 830,000 people. The estimated 8.0 to 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck in the middle of a densely populated area where many homes were a form of an earth shelter dwelling known as a yaodong. Much is known about this disaster as a scholar named Qin Keda survived the earthquake and recorded the details.

1780 - The coldest day of the coldest month of record in the northeastern U.S. A British Army thermometer in New York City registered a reading of 16 degrees below zero. During that infamous hard winter the harbor was frozen solid for five weeks, and the port was cut off from sea supply. (David Ludlum)

1812: A second major series of earthquakes was felt as part of the New Madrid Shocks of the winter of 1811-1812. Many observers reported that the January 23 shocks were as strong as the main earthquake on December 16th of the preceding year.

1916: Browning, Montana, saw the temperature plummet 100 degrees in 24 hours on January 23-24, from a relatively mild 44 to a bone-chilling 56 degrees below zero.

1969: An F4 tornado cut a 120-mile long path from Jefferson through Copiah, Simpson, Smith, Scott, and Newton Counties in Mississippi, killing 32 and injuring 241 others. Property damage was estimated at \$2 million. An inbound Delta Airlines aircraft reported a hook echo on its scope with this storm.

1971: Alaska, and the US, lowest official temp, -80F (-62.2C), was set at Prospect Creek, a Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline construction camp. Fun fact: the low was initially recorded as -79F but adjusted after thermometer calibration.

1987 - Strong winds ushered bitterly cold air into the north central U.S., and produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region. Snowfall totals in northwest Lower Michigan ranged up to 17 inches in Leelanau County. Wind chill temperatures reached 70 degrees below zero at Sault Ste Marie MI and Hibbing MN. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Northeastern Colorado experienced its most severe windstorm in years. A wind gust to 92 mph was recorded at Boulder CO before the anemometer blew away, and in the mountains, a wind gust to 120 mph was reported at Mines Peak. The high winds blew down a partially constructed viaduct east of Boulder, as nine unanchored concrete girders, each weighing forty-five tons, were blown off their supports. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure brought heavy snow to Wyoming, with 18 inches reported at the Shoshone National Forest, and 17 inches in the Yellowstone Park area. Gunnison CO, with a low of 19 degrees below zero, was the cold spot in the nation for the twelfth day in a row. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A Pacific cold front brought strong and gusty winds to the northwestern U.S. Winds in southeastern Idaho gusted to 62 mph at Burley. Strong winds also prevailed along the eastern slopes of the northern and central Rockies. Winds in Wyoming gusted to 74 mph in Goshen County. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WORDS WORK

Hearing had become a rather serious problem for him as he aged. So, Grandpa decided to purchase a hearing aid. After completing the various tests and adjustments, he began to wear it with much enjoyment. Everyone was delighted that he was more responsive and involved during their conversations. However, no one saw the small, almost invisible device in his ear.

Delighted at how his life had improved, he went back to visit his doctor to thank him for his help. As he was about to leave the office the doctor said, "I'm sure that your family and friends are as happy as you are!"

"Are you kiddin'!" chuckled Grandpa. "They don't know I have it and they sure don't know that I can hear now. I've changed my will three times in two weeks."

How would our words be different if all the world was listening to everything we said? How would our words be different, if when we went to say something about someone, that "one" was there, part of the conversation – listening and participating? Would the conversations ever begin and could we look them in the eye as we spoke?

"May my words...and thoughts...be pleasing, Oh, Lord." A good way to begin each day is to dedicate our mouths to God asking that His love will guide our words.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize that our words are at work, helping or hurting, blessing or breaking, bringing life or death. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.



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:

01.20.23

20 29 31 64 66 17

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 24

DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.21.23

25 27 29 35 50 6

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$34,320,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 24 Mins

DRAW: 50 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.22.23

7 9 13 24 44 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 54 Mins

DRAW: 50 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.21.23

3 11 12 22 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$27,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 24

DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.21.23

1 8 32 37 64 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 23 Mins 50

DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.21.23

5 14 19 46 64 22

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$502,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 23 Mins 50

DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### 'Here again': Abortion activists rally 50 years after Roe

By CLAIRE RUSH and HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — From beach cities to snow-covered streets, abortion supporters rallied by the thousands on Sunday to demand protections for reproductive rights and mark the 50th anniversary of the now-overturned Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision that established federal protections for the procedure.

The reversal of Roe in June unleashed a flurry of legislation in the states, dividing them between those that have restricted or banned abortion and those that have sought to defend access. The Women's March, galvanized during Donald Trump's presidential inauguration in 2017 amid a national reckoning over sexual assaults, said it has refocused on state activism after Roe was tossed.

"This fight is bigger than Roe," Women's March said in a tweet. "They thought that we would stay home and that this would end with Roe — they were wrong."

A dozen Republican-governed states have implemented sweeping bans on abortion, and several others seek to do the same. But those moves have been offset by gains on the other side.

Abortion opponents were defeated in votes on ballot measures in Kansas, Michigan and Kentucky. State courts have blocked several bans from taking effect. Myriad efforts are underway to help patients travel to states that allow abortions or use medication for self-managed abortions. And some Democratic-led states have taken steps to shield patients and providers from lawsuits originating in states where the procedure is banned.

Organizers with the Women's March said their strategy moving forward will focus largely on measures at the state level. But freshly energized anti-abortion activists are increasingly turning their attention to Congress, with the aim of pushing for a potential national abortion restriction down the line.

Sunday's main march was held in Wisconsin, where upcoming elections could determine the state Supreme Court's power balance and future abortion rights. But rallies took place in dozens of cities, including Florida's state capital of Tallahassee, where Vice President Kamala Harris gave a fiery speech before a boisterous crowd.

"Can we truly be free if families cannot make intimate decisions about the course of their own lives?" Harris said. "And can we truly be free if so-called leaders claim to be ... 'on the vanguard of freedom' while they dare to restrict the rights of the American people and attack the very foundations of freedom?"

In Madison, thousands of abortion rights supporters donned coats and gloves to march in below-freezing temperatures through downtown to the state Capitol.

"It's just basic human rights at this point," said Alaina Gato, a Wisconsin resident who joined her mother, Meg Wheeler, on the Capitol steps to protest.

They said they plan to vote in the April Supreme Court election. Wheeler also said she hoped to volunteer as a poll worker and canvass for Democrats, despite identifying as an independent voter.

"This is my daughter. I want to make sure she has the right to choose whether she wants to have a child," Wheeler said.

Buses of protestors streamed into the Wisconsin capital from Chicago and Milwaukee, armed with banners and signs calling for the Legislature to repeal the state's ban.

Eliza Bennett, a Wisconsin OBGYN who said she had to stop offering abortion services to her patients after Roe was overturned, called on lawmakers to put the choice back in the hands of women. "They should be making decisions about what's best for their health, not state legislatures," she said.

Abortions are unavailable in Wisconsin due to legal uncertainties faced by abortion clinics over whether an 1849 law banning the procedure is in effect. The law, which prohibits abortion except to save the patient's life, is being challenged in court.

Some also carried weapons. Lilith K., who declined to provide their last name, stood on the sidewalk

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alongside protestors, holding an assault rifle and wearing a tactical vest with a holstered handgun.

"With everything going on with women and other people losing their rights, and with the recent shootings at Club Q and other LGBTQ night clubs, it's just a message that we're not going to take this sitting down," Lilith said.

The march also drew counter-protestors. Most held signs raising religious objections to abortion rights. "I don't really want to get involved with politics. I'm more interested in what the law of God says," John Goeke, a Wisconsin resident, said.

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. The lone clinic in North Dakota relocated across state lines 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.

Wisconsin's conservative-controlled Supreme Court, which for decades has issued consequential rulings in favor of Republicans, will likely hear the challenge to the 1849 ban filed in June by the state's attorney general, Josh Kaul. Races for the court are officially nonpartisan, but candidates for years have aligned with either conservatives or liberals as the contests have become expensive partisan battles.

Women's rallies were expected to be held in nearly every state on Sunday.

The eldest daughter of Norma McCorvey, whose legal challenge under the pseudonym "Jane Roe" led to the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, was set to attend the rally in Long Beach, California. Melissa Mills said it was her first Women's March.

"It's just unbelievable that we're here again, doing the same thing my mom did," Mills told *The Associated Press*. "We've lost 50 years of hard work."

The Women's March has become a regular event — although interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic — since millions rallied in the United States and around the world the day after Trump's January 2017 inauguration.

Trump made the appointment of conservative judges a mission of his presidency. The three conservative justices he appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court — Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett — all voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

## Lights out in Pakistan as energy-saving move backfires

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Much of Pakistan was left without power for several hours on Monday morning as an energy-saving measure by the government backfired. The outage spread panic and raised questions about the cash-strapped government's handling of the country's economic crisis.

Electricity was turned off across Pakistan during low usage hours overnight to conserve fuel across the country, officials said, leaving technicians unable to boot up the system all at once after daybreak.

The outage was reminiscent of a massive blackout in January 2021, attributed at the time to a technical fault in the country's power generation and distribution system.

Monday's nationwide breakdown left many people without drinking water as pumps are powered by electricity. Schools, hospitals, factories and shops were without power amid the harsh winter weather.

Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir told local media on Monday that engineers were working to restore the power supply across the country, including in the capital of Islamabad, and tried to reassure the nation that power would be fully restored within the next 12 hours.

According to the minister, during winter, electricity usage typically goes down overnight — unlike summer months when Pakistanis turn to air conditioning, seeking a respite from the heat.



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"As an economic measure, we temporarily shut down our power generation systems" on Sunday night, Dastagir said.

When engineers tried to turn the systems back on, a "fluctuation in voltage" was observed, which "forced engineers to shut down the power grid" stations one by one, he added.

He insisted that this was not a major crisis, and that electricity was being restored in phases. In many places and key businesses and institutions, including hospitals, military and government facilities, backup generators kicked in.

Karachi, the country's largest city and economic hub, was also without power Monday, as were other key cities such as Quetta, Peshawar and Lahore.

In Lahore, a closing notice was posted on Orange Line metro stations, with rail workers guarding the sites and trains parked on the rails. It was unknown when the metro system would be up restored.

Imran Rana, a spokesman for Karachi's power supply company, said the government's priority was to "restore power to strategic facilities, including hospitals," airports and other places.

Pakistan gets at least 60% of its electricity from fossil fuels, while nearly 27% of the electricity is generated by hydropower. The contribution of nuclear and solar power to the nation's grid is about 10%.

Pakistan is grappling with one of the country's worst economic crisis in recent years amid dwindling foreign exchange reserves. This has compelled the government earlier this month to order shopping malls and markets closed by 8:30 p.m. for energy conservation purposes.

Talks are underway with the International Monetary Fund to soften some conditions on Pakistan's \$6 billion bailout, which the government thinks will trigger further inflation hikes. The IMF released the last crucial tranche of \$1.1 billion to Islamabad in August.

Since then, talks between the two parties have oscillated due to Pakistan's reluctance to impose new tax measures.

## **Poland pushes for more tanks for Ukraine, asks for German OK**

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland will ask Germany for permission to send some of the Polish army's Leopard tanks to Ukraine, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said Monday, as he pushes Europe to send more military hardware to Kyiv amid complaints that Germany is being too slow in helping to thwart Russia's invasion.

Morawiecki didn't specify when the request will be made. He said that Poland is building a coalition of nations ready to send Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine.

Poland needs the consent of Germany, which builds the tanks, to send them to a non-NATO country.

But even if there is no permission from Germany, Warsaw will make its own decisions, Morawiecki said.

Poland has become a leading advocate in the European Union for giving Ukraine the military aid that could help it prevail over the Kremlin's invading forces 11 months after the war started. The Ukrainian government says that tanks, and especially the Leopards, are vital to Kyiv's war effort.

Previously, Polish officials have indicated that Finland and Denmark were ready to join Warsaw in sending Leopards to Ukraine. The United Kingdom has pledged to send some of its Challenger tanks.

"We will ask (Germany) for permission, but this is a secondary theme," Morawiecki said. "Even if, eventually, we do not get this permission, we — within this small coalition — even if Germany is not in this coalition, we will hand over our tanks, together with the others, to Ukraine."

Berlin, though it has provided substantial aid, has been criticized for dragging its feet on providing military hardware.

Morawiecki said talks have also been held "with our partners in Brussels" on the subject, referring to the 27-nation EU bloc.

"Naturally, these are not easy talks, but we will be taking efforts to break this barrier of unwillingness in various countries," he said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told French television channel LCI on Sunday that Poland

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hasn't formally asked for Berlin's approval to share some of its German-made Leopards, but added "if we were asked, we would not stand in the way."

Regarding Baerbock's comments, Morawiecki said that "exerting pressure makes sense" and that her words are a "spark of hope" that Germany may even take part in the coalition.

Baerbock "sent a different message that offers a spark of hope that not only Germany will no longer block, but maybe finally will offer heavy, modern equipment in support of Ukraine," Morawiecki said.

"We are constantly exerting pressure on the government in Berlin to make its Leopards available," Morawiecki told a news conference in the western city of Poznan.

According to Morawiecki, Germany has "more than 350 active Leopards and about 200 in storage."

Poland wants to send a company of Leopard tanks, which means 14 of them, but they would barely make an impression in a war that involves thousands of tanks. If other countries contribute, Warsaw reckons, the tank detachment could grow to a much bigger brigade size.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the latest developments on sending Western Europe tanks to Ukraine "signaled increasing nervousness among members of the alliance."

"All countries that directly or indirectly take part in supplying weapons to Ukraine or increasing its technological level will carry responsibility for that," Peskov said.

Baerbock made positive comments about the possibility of sending tanks to Ukraine. German officials "know how important these tanks are" and "this is why we are discussing this now with our partners," Baerbock said in interview clips posted by LCI.

Ukraine's supporters pledged billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine during a meeting at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Friday.

International defense leaders discussed Ukraine's urgent request for the Leopard 2 tanks, and the failure to work out an agreement overshadowed the new commitments.

Germany is one of the main donors of weapons to Ukraine, and it ordered a review of its Leopard 2 stocks in preparation for a possible green light. Nonetheless, the government in Berlin has shown caution at each step of increasing its military aid to Ukraine, a hesitancy seen as rooted in its history and political culture.

Germany's tentativeness has drawn criticism, particularly from Poland and the Baltic states, countries on NATO's eastern flank that feel especially threatened by Russia's renewed aggression.

Moscow, in response to the pledges of sophisticated Western weapons for Kyiv's military, has stepped up its warnings that escalation risks catastrophe.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Monday reaffirmed Moscow's claim that the Western supplies could lead to "unpredictable" consequences.

"We have said on numerous occasions that escalation is the most dangerous path, and the consequences may be unpredictable," Ryabkov said. "Our signals are not listened to, and Russia's adversaries keep raising the stakes."

With both sides' battlefield positions mostly deadlocked during the winter months, the Kremlin's forces have kept up their bombardments of Ukrainian areas.

Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said Monday that Russian forces shelled several towns and villages in the northeastern region over the previous 24 hours, killing a 67-year-old woman and leaving another resident wounded.

## California shooter kills 10 at dance club; motive unclear

By AMY TAXIN and DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

MONTEREY PARK, Calif. (AP) — Authorities searched for a motive for the gunman who killed 10 people at a Los Angeles-area ballroom dance club during Lunar New Year celebrations, slayings that sent a wave of fear through Asian American communities in the region and cast a shadow over festivities nationwide.

The suspect was found Sunday, dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in a van in which authorities say he fled after people thwarted his attempt at a second shooting Saturday night.

The massacre was the nation's fifth mass killing this month. It was also the deadliest attack since May

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24, when 21 people were killed in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna identified the man as 72-year-old Huu Can Tran and said no other suspects were at large. Luna said the motive remained unclear for the attack, which wounded 10 people, seven of whom were still hospitalized. Speaking at a Sunday evening news conference, the sheriff said he didn't have their exact ages but that all of the people killed appeared to be over 50.

The suspect was carrying what Luna described as a semi-automatic pistol with an extended magazine, and a second handgun was discovered in the van where Tran died.

Monterey Park Police Chief Scott Wiese said Sunday evening that within three minutes of receiving the call, officers arrived at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park. There, they found carnage inside and people trying to flee through all the doors.

"When they came into the parking lot it, was chaos," Wiese said.

About 20 to 30 minutes after the first attack, the gunman entered the Lai Lai Ballroom in the nearby city of Alhambra. But people wrested the weapon away from him and witnesses said he fled in a white van, according to Luna.

The van was found in Torrance, another community home to many Asian Americans, about 22 miles (34.5 kilometers) from that second location.

After surrounding the vehicle for hours, law enforcement officials swarmed and entered it. A person's body appeared to be slumped over the wheel and was later removed. Members of a SWAT team looked through the van's contents before walking away.

The sheriff's department earlier released photos of an Asian man believed to be the suspect, apparently taken from a security camera.

Congresswoman Judy Chu said she still has questions about the attack but hopes residents now feel safe.

"The community was in fear thinking that they should not go to any events because there was an active shooter," Chu said, speaking at Sunday's news conference.

"What was the motive for this shooter?" she said. "Did he have a mental illness? Was he a domestic violence abuser? How did he get these guns and was it through legal means or not?"

Monterey Park is a city of about 60,000 people on the eastern edge of Los Angeles and is composed mostly of Asian immigrants from China or first-generation Asian Americans. The shooting happened in the heart of its downtown where red lanterns decorated the streets for the Lunar New Year festivities. A police car was parked near a large banner that proclaimed "Happy Year of the Rabbit!"

The celebration in Monterey Park is one of California's largest. Two days of festivities, which have been attended by as many as 100,000 people in past years, were planned. But officials canceled Sunday's events following the shooting.

Tony Lai, 35, of Monterey Park was stunned when he came out for his early morning walk to learn that the noises he heard in the night were gunshots.

"I thought maybe it was fireworks. I thought maybe it had something to do with Lunar New Year," he said. "And we don't even get a lot of fireworks here. It's weird to see this. It's really safe here. We're right in the middle of the city, but it's really safe."

An Associated Press/USA Today database on mass killings in the U.S. shows that 2022 was one of the nation's worst years with 42 such attacks — the second-highest number since the creation of the tracker in 2006. The database defines a mass killing as four people killed, not including the perpetrator.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom visited Monterey Park on Sunday, meeting with victims and their families as well as local officials.

President Joe Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland were briefed on the situation, aides said. Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden were thinking of those killed and wounded.

The Star Ballroom Dance Studio's website said it was hosting an event Saturday called "Star Night" from 8 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The studio is a few blocks from city hall on Monterey Park's main thoroughfare of Garvey Avenue, which is dotted with strip malls of small businesses whose signs are in both English and Chinese. Cantonese and Mandarin are both widely spoken, Chinese holidays are celebrated and Chinese

films are screened regularly in the city.

Wynn Liaw, 57, who lives about two blocks from the Monterey Park studio, said she was shocked that such a crime would happen, especially during Lunar New Year's celebrations.

"Chinese people, they consider Chinese New Year very, very special" — a time when "you don't do anything that will bring bad luck the entire year," she said.

## **Yellen in Zambia to discuss debt to China, public health**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is in Zambia on the second leg of her African tour, a stop aimed at promoting American investment and ties while she's in a capital city that is visibly dominated by Chinese dollars.

Visitors to Lusaka arriving at the renovated Kenneth Kaunda International Airport see a facility expanded in 2015 with Chinese financing. A ride into the city passes billboards and newly built firms bearing Chinese signage, more evidence of Beijing's influence and increasing competition with the U.S.

But the growth that the country has experienced has come with a heavier debt burden. Zambia became Africa's first pandemic-era sovereign to default when it failed to make a \$42.5 million bond payment in November 2020. Negotiations over how to deal with the debt load have been ongoing.

How Zambia's debt is renegotiated with the Chinese will provide a test case for how lenient China will be with other overextended nations that face debt distress.

Debt will be a topic of conversation Monday when Yellen meets with Zambia's president and finance minister to push for the Chinese to continue negotiations. She will also tour pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities benefiting from American investment to showcase what she sees as a model of success.

"Many African countries are now plagued by piling, unsustainable debt. And that's undeniably a problem. And much of it is related to Chinese investments in Africa," Yellen said Saturday in an interview with The Associated Press in Senegal, the first leg of her African trip.

Still, Yellen insists her trip is not about competition with China.

"We want to deepen our engagement," she said "We see a rapidly growing young population that needs opportunities and economic growth."

"We have many government programs and international programs that are oriented to help efforts to build infrastructure," she said. "And when we do that, we want to make sure that we don't create the same problems that Chinese investment has sometimes created here."

Yellen said the U.S. wants to invest in companies with contracts that "have transparency, that we have projects that really bring broad-based benefits to the African people and don't leave a legacy of unsustainable debt."

Experts say a prolonged debt crisis could permanently prevent countries like Zambia from recovering, lead to an entire nation sliding deep into poverty and joblessness, and exclude it from credit to rebuild in the future.

To showcase the U.S. effort, the first stop of Yellen's Zambia visit was to be a tour of Mylan Laboratories, a subsidiary of American pharmaceutical manufacturer Viatri. The lab opened in 2010 with a \$10 million investment and manufactures drugs that treat malaria and HIV in the country and region.

She also planned a stop at the Zambia National Public Health Institute, considered a model of its kind.

## **Trump's MAGA forces threaten to upend vote for RNC chair**

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — By week's end, the Republican National Committee is set to resolve a bitter leadership feud that has exposed perilous divisions within the institution charged with electing the next GOP president.

Those inside the fight believe the days ahead of Friday's secret ballot at a luxury seaside resort could get even uglier as rebel forces within former President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement threaten to upend RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel's reelection bid.



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The attacks have been led by McDaniel's chief rival, Harmeet Dhillon, a Trump attorney who has accused the incumbent of religious bigotry, chronic misspending and privately claiming she can control the former president — allegations McDaniel denies. Also in the race is My Pillow CEO Mike Lindell, a pro-Trump conspiracy theorist who secured enough support to qualify for the ballot.

Trump hasn't made a public endorsement, but he and his team are privately advocating for McDaniel, whom he tapped for the position shortly after his 2016 victory. Still, many Trump loyalists blame McDaniel, the niece of Utah Sen. Mitt Romney, for some of the party's recent struggles.

In an interview, Dhillon insisted that the overwhelming majority of Republican voters want a leadership change at the RNC. He warned of serious political consequences for any of the committee's 168 elected members who support McDaniel's reelection.

"For those members of the party who vote not with what the people in their state want but with what their own self-interest is, the next time they're up for election, it's going to be an issue," Dhillon told The Associated Press.

Apprised of Dhillon's statement, McDaniel said, "That sounds like a threat." She condemned the increasingly ugly attacks against her and the divisions plaguing the committee.

"There's nobody who's enjoyed this more than Democrats. I know, because I love it when they're fighting each other," McDaniel said.

Friday's vote for RNC chair serves as the latest high-profile leadership test for a deeply divided Republican Party grappling with questions about its future — and Trump's influence — ahead of the 2024 presidential election. The infighting was on public display earlier this month as House Republicans almost came to blows before uniting behind House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, undermined by the same MAGA forces threatening McDaniel this week.

In both cases, Trump has struggled to control his own loyalists, who seem intent on fighting the status quo — whether McCarthy or McDaniel — no matter the cost.

Seeking to influence the vote, a group of Florida Republicans from the party's MAGA wing moved last Friday to hold a vote of "no confidence" in McDaniel, which Republican groups in a handful of other states have done in recent weeks as well. But the Florida gathering, which drew leading McCarthy detractor Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., fell far short of reaching the quorum needed to hold an official vote.

Still, dozens of anti-McDaniel protesters waved signs outside the event. One read, "RONNA IS THE ENEMY WITHIN."

"The biggest thing is that we want a really strong leader who's in touch with MAGA, and Ronna just doesn't have that," Lake County, Florida, GOP Chair Anthony Sabatini, who led the anti-McDaniel push, said in a phone interview from a shooting range as gunshots rang out. "She's lost the confidence of voters."

Trump has avoided weighing in on the RNC chair fight at McDaniel's request, according to those with direct knowledge of the situation. The former president would endorse her if she asked, but McDaniel's team currently believes she will win without his public backing, allowing her to maintain a sense of neutrality heading into the 2024 presidential primary season.

According to its bylaws, the RNC must remain neutral in the presidential primary. Trump is the only announced GOP candidate so far, but other high-profile contenders are expected in the coming months.

Still, Trump could ultimately endorse McDaniel ahead of Friday's vote if his public support is deemed necessary, according to people familiar with his thinking who, like others interviewed, spoke on condition of anonymity to share internal discussions.

At least three top Trump lieutenants — senior advisers Susie Wiles, Chris LaCivita and Clayton Henson — are planning to attend this week's three-day RNC winter meeting in Southern California, where the vote will play out. While they are not attending specifically on McDaniel's behalf, Trump's team is making clear in private conversations that he backs McDaniel.

McDaniel's unofficial whip team is expected to include former Trump chief counselor Kellyanne Conway, former Trump chief of staff Reince Priebus, former Arizona Senate candidate Blake Masters, Family Research Council President Tony Perkins and conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt, she said. Another high-profile

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Trump loyalist, Maryland RNC member David Bossie, is also backing McDaniel.

Dhillon's guest list is still in flux, but she said over the weekend that her team would likely include former Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, MAGA influencer Charlie Kirk and country singer John Rich.

After three consecutive disappointing national elections, there is a broad sense of dissatisfaction among Republican voters and RNC members alike about the health of their party. Some are increasingly eager to move on from Trump and, by proxy, McDaniel, who is viewed as a close Trump ally — even if many Trump's supporters outside the RNC membership see her as insufficiently committed to their cause.

"She's been Trump's lap dog for four-plus years," said Bill Palatucci, an RNC member from New Jersey and a vocal critic of both Trump and McDaniel. While Palatucci formally endorsed Dhillon late last week, he is skeptical she has the votes to defeat McDaniel.

Dhillon has unleashed a torrent of attacks against McDaniel in recent weeks that have resonated across Trump's MAGA movement. But as the far right cheered, Dhillon may have alienated would-be supporters on the actual Republican National Committee, which is made up of activists and elected officials from all 50 states.

She has seized on several examples of apparent misspending and mismanagement under McDaniel's watch, which McDaniel's team — backed by former Trump officials like Wiles — claim are inaccurate or misleading.

In recent days, the attacks against McDaniel have intensified.

Last week, Dhillon promoted claims that a McDaniel ally raised concerns about Dhillon's faith in at least one private conversation. Dhillon, who is of Indian heritage, identifies as a member of the Sikh religion.

The McDaniel ally has denied the claim, which was outlined in a detailed email to the RNC's entire membership bearing the subject line "Religious Bigotry."

Dhillon also highlighted a Washington Post report that McDaniel has said, in multiple private conversations with RNC members, that only she can dissuade Trump from launching an independent presidential bid — and ultimately destroying the party's chances in the next presidential election — should he fail to win the GOP nomination.

"She said it to many people: Only I can control Trump," Dhillon told the AP, likening such a statement to someone believing they could single-handedly stop an asteroid from crashing into Earth.

McDaniel said such claims are "ridiculous."

"After working with President Trump for six years, I don't think anybody could ever say they control him," McDaniel said.

Meanwhile, McDaniel warned of a "huge risk" if Republicans cannot stop the infighting as the 2024 election season begins. The GOP is well positioned to win the Senate majority and maintain control of the House, although the presidential contest will dominate much of the committee's focus.

"This is really critical as we head into '24 that we stop labeling, attacking, demonizing other Republicans to the point where we can't bring them together post-primary," she said.

For her part, Dhillon said she would "of course" unite behind McDaniel if she ultimately prevails Friday. "Job 1 is winning elections," Dhillon said. "I'm a team player."

## **Biden's next climate hurdle: enticing Americans to buy green**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, HANNAH FINGERHUT and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden persuaded Democrats in Congress to provide hundreds of billions of dollars to fight climate change. Now comes another formidable task: enticing Americans to buy millions of electric cars, heat pumps, solar panels and more efficient appliances.

It's a public relations challenge that could determine whether the country meets Biden's ambitious goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

Relying on tax credits and rebates made the climate legislation — it was approved in August with only Democratic votes — more politically palatable than regulations that force wholesale changes in polluting industries.

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But it also means the administration's battle against global warming will be waged "one household at a time," said Shannon Baker-Branstetter, who works on energy issues at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank closely aligned with the White House.

"It is very incremental," she said. "So it requires a very sophisticated communications strategy."

Biden acknowledged the hurdle during a recent Cabinet meeting as he talked about the incentives that are becoming available this year.

"Folks need to know how to take advantage of these benefits that we passed. That's on all of us around the table here to make sure we get that message out clearly," he said.

The White House says it is piecing together a plan to partner with state governments, contractors, retailers and social media influencers to get the word out. "Lowering utility bills is going to be a key driver," said Josh Peck, a senior policy adviser on clean energy issues.

It's also collaborating with Rewiring America, a nonprofit focused on ways to electrify homes and businesses, and companies like Airbnb, Redfin and Lyft. As part of the effort, Rewiring America created an online calculator that shows what credits or rebates homeowners might be eligible for, depending on their ZIP code and income.

Buying a heat pump or installing solar panels is "a major expense line and a major opportunity for savings," said Ari Matusiak, the group's founder and CEO. "So it's really important to make sure people are aware of the resources they have available and the benefits they can unlock in terms of bringing energy bill savings."

But the White House faces an uphill battle.

Polling shows that while Americans support action to slow climate change, they are broadly unaware of the Inflation Reduction Act, the massive legislation that includes financial incentives to lower emissions, and skeptical of their own role in the climate crisis.

An AP-NORC poll released in September, one month after the law was signed, found that 61% of U.S. adults said they knew little to nothing about the legislation. And despite the multibillion-dollar investment in climate solutions, only a third said it would help climate change; about half said it wouldn't make a difference.

The White House says it's not rattled by the results. The goal is to make sure consumers know the financial benefits of energy efficient products at the moment that they're making key decisions on which products to buy, Peck said.

"One of the challenges here is trying to meet consumers where they are when they make decisions about these purchases," he said.

Majorities of U.S. adults said they are unlikely to install solar panels or buy an electric vehicle in the next three years, according to the AP-NORC poll. Among those, at least half said financial incentives would not make a difference in their decision.

Homeowners typically are reluctant to swap out furnaces or water heaters until they absolutely have to shell out the money for them.

"One day the heat won't turn on and it's negative 10 (degrees) outside and you say, 'Oh crap, I've got to get a furnace,'" said DR Richardson, co-founder of Elephant Energy, a Colorado company that helps homeowners install electric heat pumps and other appliances. "So the biggest challenge from our perspective, and from a climate perspective, is to get people to think ahead of time about how to replace these assets."

Most homeowners don't understand what equipment qualifies for a rebate or a tax credit — and even contractors are not always aware, Richardson said. While some heat pumps qualify for a full rebate, others do not or are only eligible for partial rebates.

"So it's just a nightmare if you're not used to working in building spreadsheets to analyze and understand all this stuff," he said.

Not all of the incentives are ready either. While people can get a tax break on the cost of an electric car, solar panels or heat pump, rebates for low- and middle-income Americans seeking to make their homes more energy efficient are not yet available. The Energy Department is still developing the system

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to distribute that money.

Cecilia Muñoz, director of the White House Domestic Policy Council in the Obama administration, said she learned in her tenure that it's critical for government to invest in the delivery of policies.

"Too often we as advocates and policymakers applaud when policy gets enacted and then stop paying attention," she said. Instead, they need to design ways to target people directly to help them "understand the steps that they can take and the ways that the government is going to make it easy."

The Energy Department has begun releasing information to states about their allotment of \$9 billion to support household energy upgrades, including weatherizing homes and installing heat pumps.

And Biden, a self-described "car guy," has been doing his part to promote electric vehicles, making appearances at the Detroit car show in September and on the TV series "Jay Leno's Garage."

Donnel Baird, founder and CEO of BlocPower, a Brooklyn, N.Y.-based company that partners with utilities, government agencies and building owners to improve energy efficiency, has worked with Lowe's and other retailers to promote green appliances.

The idea, Baird said, is that "the checkout person says, 'You know, you can get a tax credit if you don't get that gas lawn mower and get a green one instead.'" While such engagement may not have immediate results, Baird said he's confident the tax credits and other benefits of the climate law will become better known.

"It took years for the ACA to get going," he said, referring to the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. "I think the same thing could happen with this law."

Dan Pfeiffer, a former top communications adviser to President Barack Obama, sees another lesson in the Affordable Care Act.

"The ACA got more popular the more that Republicans tried to repeal it," he said, suggesting that Biden take advantage of any Republican efforts to roll back to the Inflation Reduction Act to draw more attention to the law's benefits.

"I have no doubt the White House has thought of all of this," Pfeiffer said. But the problem is that none of it is easy."

He added: "The bulk of the work starts now."

## **Sheriff: Suspect in dance club shooting killed self in van**

By ANDREW DALTON and JAE C. HONG Associated Press

MONTEREY PARK, Calif. (AP) — The hunt for a gunman who killed 10 people at a ballroom dance club during Lunar New Year celebrations ended Sunday when authorities found him dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound inside the van in which he fled after a second shooting was thwarted.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna identified the man as 72-year-old Huu Can Tran and said no other suspects were at large. Speaking at an evening news conference, Luna said the motive for the attack remained unclear. Ten people were also wounded, seven of whom were still in the hospital.

Luna did not have the exact ages of the victims but said they all appeared to be over 50.

The sheriff added that the suspect was carrying what he described as a semi-automatic pistol with an extended magazine, and a second handgun was discovered in the van where Tran was found dead.

The shooting late Saturday in the predominantly Asian American community of Monterey Park sent a wave of fear through Asian American communities in the Los Angeles area. The city planned two days of festivities, which have been attended by as many as 100,000 people in past years, but officials canceled Sunday's events following the shooting. Other cities sent extra officers to watch over the celebrations.

Earlier Sunday, law enforcement officials surrounded the van for hours before swarming and entering the vehicle. A person's body appeared to be slumped over the wheel and was later removed from the vehicle.

Luna said the shooting was at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park.

Monterey Park Police Chief Scott Wiese said Sunday evening that officers arrived within three minutes of receiving the call. They found carnage inside the club and people trying to flee through all the doors.

"When they came into the parking lot, it was chaos," Wiese said.



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About 20 to 30 minutes after the first attack, the gunman entered the Lai Lai Ballroom in nearby Alhambra. But people there wrested the weapon away from him and he fled, according to Luna.

He said authorities began looking for a white van after witnesses reported seeing the suspect flee from Alhambra in such a vehicle.

During the search, Luna released images from the second location of an Asian man who was believed to be the suspect, apparently from a surveillance camera.

The van was found in Torrance, another community that is home to many Asian Americans, about 22 miles (34.5 kilometers) from the site of the attempted second shooting.

Also speaking at the news conference, Congresswoman Judy Chu said she still has questions about the attack but hopes residents now feel safe.

"The community was in fear thinking that they should not go to any events because there was an active shooter," Chu said, adding, "You are no longer in danger."

"What was the motive for this shooter?" she said. "Did he have a mental illness? Was he a domestic violence abuser? How did he get these guns and was it through legal means or not?"

The massacre was the nation's fifth mass killing this month. It was also the deadliest attack since May 24, when 21 people were killed in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

An Associated Press/USA Today database on mass killings in the U.S. shows that 2022 was one of the nation's worst years with 42 such attacks — the second-highest number since the creation of the tracker in 2006. The database defines a mass killing as four people killed, not including the perpetrator.

Monterey Park is a city of about 60,000 people on the eastern edge of Los Angeles and is composed mostly of Asian immigrants from China or first-generation Asian Americans. The shooting happened in the heart of its downtown, where red lanterns decorated the streets for the Lunar New Year festivities. A police car was parked near a large banner that proclaimed "Happy Year of the Rabbit!"

The Star Ballroom Dance Studio is a few blocks from city hall on Monterey Park's main thoroughfare, Garvey Avenue, which is dotted with strip malls with signs in both English and Chinese. The business offered dance lessons from tango to rumba to the fox trot, and rented its space for events. On Saturday, its website said, it was hosting an event called "Star Night" from 8 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.

Tony Lai, 35, of Monterey Park was stunned when he came out for his early morning walk to learn that the noises he heard in the night were gunshots.

"I thought maybe it was fireworks. I thought maybe it had something to do with Lunar New Year," he said. "And we don't even get a lot of fireworks here. It's weird to see this. It's really safe here. We're right in the middle of the city, but it's really safe."

Wynn Liaw, 57, who lives about two blocks from the Monterey Park dance studio, said she was especially shocked that such a crime would happen during New Year's celebrations.

"Chinese people, they consider Chinese New Year very, very special" — a time when "you don't do anything that will bring bad luck the entire year," she said.

She took a picture of the activity outside the studio to send to relatives and friends in China "to let them know how crazy the U.S. is becoming with all these mass shootings, even in the New Year."

President Joe Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland were briefed on the situation, aides said. Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden were thinking of those killed and wounded, and he directed federal authorities to support the investigation.

## 49ers beat Cowboys 19-12 to advance to NFC title game

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Brock Purdy rolled to his left and saw his first few options covered. At the last second, George Kittle broke free running deep, Purdy threw across his body and Kittle made a juggling catch that sparked San Francisco's only touchdown drive.

That one big play proved to be enough to send the 49ers to their second straight NFC title game, thanks to a suffocating defensive performance.

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Christian McCaffrey capped that drive with a go-ahead 2-yard run and the defense buckled down from there, sealing a 19-12 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday.

"Man, we're just excited that we won," said Purdy, the 49ers' unbeaten rookie quarterback. "Everyone did their part. It's playoff football, it's never easy, but we're moving on."

The 49ers (15-4) used back-to-back long scoring drives in the second half to wear down the Cowboys (13-6) and win their 12th straight game. San Francisco advanced to play the Eagles in the NFC title game next Sunday in Philadelphia after losing in that round to the Rams a year ago.

The Cowboys lost for the record seventh straight time in the divisional round and have failed to make it to the NFC title game since winning their fifth Super Bowl title following the 1995 season.

Dak Prescott threw two interceptions and Brett Maher missed his fifth extra point of the postseason when his attempt was blocked. He later made two field goals.

"Just disappointment," Prescott said. "Defense gave us an opportunity to win this game. They played hard against a really, really good offense, a really good team. For us to only put up the points that we did, that's unacceptable. It starts with me. I've got to be better. There's no other way to sugarcoat it."

The key play came on the second play of the drive late in the third quarter with the game tied at 9. Purdy ran a bootleg that Dallas covered perfectly.

But he waited long enough for Kittle to improvise and turn upfield. Purdy then delivered a strike.

"We needed something," Purdy said. "We needed a spark to get the ball rolling."

Kittle bobbled the ball a few times before finally corralling it for a 30-yard gain, giving credit to his rookie QB for delivering it.

"I'm not even in the read, so I just kind of saw a space and he hadn't thrown it yet so I was just going up the field," Kittle said. "He gave me a catchable ball and I was just trying to be dramatic. Just for TV."

McCaffrey capped the 91-yard drive with his TD run.

The Cowboys still had a shot late when they took over at their own 18 with 2:59 remaining, trailing 19-12 after Robbie Gould's fourth field goal of the game capped a nearly eight-minute drive.

But Prescott threw two straight incompletions and was sacked on third down. Coach Mike McCarthy opted to punt on fourth-and-10 with all three timeouts left.

Purdy started the next drive with a 16-yard completion to Kittle and San Francisco didn't give the ball back to Dallas until there were 45 seconds left. The Cowboys took over at their 6 and never got close from there.

"I like to be in those positions," Prescott said. "We just weren't able to get anything going."

Purdy, the last pick in the draft last April, improved to 7-0 as a starter since replacing an injured Jimmy Garoppolo early in Week 13.

He went 18 for 28 for 215 yards with no turnovers against the Cowboys, joining Joe Flacco (2008) and Mark Sanchez (2009) as the only rookie QBs to win two playoff starts.

"I'm not shocked anymore," McCaffrey said. "It's just who he is now."

The NFL's top two scoring teams over the past 13 weeks had trouble getting going as the defenses led by All-Pro Nick Bosa of San Francisco and Micah Parsons of Dallas controlled the play.

The Niners picked off Prescott twice in the first half, turned those into field goals by Gould and led 9-6 at the break.

The Cowboys scored the only TD of the first half with Prescott connecting with tight end Dalton Schultz for the third time this postseason. But Maher's low extra-point attempt was blocked by Samson Ebukam.

Maher got some redemption when he made a 25-yard field goal that tied the game at 9 early in the third quarter after Ray-Ray McCloud fumbled a punt return at the San Francisco 21.

"That felt like legit playoff football," Bosa said. "That's a really good team."

JUST FOR KICKS

The Cowboys' decision to stick with Maher after his four missed extra points last week looked questionable when he missed the early extra point. Maher's five missed PATs are the second most by any NFL kicker in the playoffs. Roy Gerela missed six tries in 43 attempts in the 1970s for Houston and Pittsburgh.

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There had been a dustup pregame when Maher was warming up. Trent Williams and other 49ers players tried to interfere with his attempts from San Francisco's side of the field, leading to a brief argument.

## INJURIES

Cowboys: RB Tony Pollard left late in the first half after injuring his left ankle while getting tackled following a reception. He didn't return to the game. ... DT Calvin Watkins (calf) left in the first half.

49ers: DE Charles Omenihu (oblique) left briefly in the first half but returned to the game.

## UP NEXT

The 49ers would reach their second Super Bowl in the past four seasons with a win at Philadelphia.

## NFL playoffs: Bengals win streak hits 10, 49ers also advance

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

The Kansas City Chiefs got good news Sunday, learning they'll host the AFC championship game against the Cincinnati Bengals next weekend instead of playing at a neutral site.

One problem for the Chiefs? They have to play the Bengals.

Cincinnati is on a 10-game winning streak after an impressive 27-10 road victory over the Buffalo Bills on a snow-covered field in Sunday's NFL divisional round. Joe Burrow threw for 242 yards and two touchdowns, while Joe Mixon ran for 105 yards and a TD.

In Sunday's nightcap, San Francisco held on to beat the Dallas Cowboys 19-12. Rookie Brock Purdy continued his improbable run leading the 49ers, throwing for 214 yards, playing mistake-free ball and leaning on the team's stellar defense.

That sets up the two conference championship games on Jan. 29: The Philadelphia Eagles will host the 49ers before the Chiefs host the Bengals. The winners will play in the Super Bowl on Feb. 12.

The Bengals haven't lost since Halloween and are trying to make it back to the Super Bowl for a second straight year. The Chiefs will be playing in their fifth straight AFC championship game.

The AFC title game would have been played in Atlanta next weekend if the Bills had beaten the Bengals, under a rule adjustment approved by NFL owners. The league decided on the first of its kind conference championship neutral site setting because the Bills (13-3) finished the season a half-game behind the Chiefs (14-3) after their game at Cincinnati was canceled on Jan. 2 when Bills safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and had to be resuscitated on the field.

Hamlin has since been making a remarkable recovery and attended Sunday's game in Buffalo, waving to fans from a stadium suite.

In the end, all the Atlanta hypotheticals weren't needed. That's because the Bengals and Burrow are rolling.

"Better send those refunds," Burrow said, referring to the 50,000 or so tickets already sold for a game that will never be played.

In Saturday's games, quarterback Patrick Mahomes — with an assist from backup quarterback Chad Henne — helped the Chiefs beat the Jacksonville Jaguars 27-20. Later in the day, the Eagles cruised past the New York Giants 38-7.

The Chiefs and Eagles didn't have to play during last weekend's wild-card round because the top-seeded team in each conference received a bye to the divisional round.

Neither team looked rusty.

The Chiefs did have some nervous moments against the Jags, particularly after Mahomes limped off the field with a sprained ankle in the second quarter. Henne, a 37-year-old backup, filled in admirably while the former MVP was out and threw a touchdown pass to push the Chiefs ahead 17-7.

Mahomes returned in the second half and did enough to lead the Chiefs to the win. He completed 22 of 30 passes for 195 yard and two touchdowns with no interceptions. His health status will be a closely watched storyline during the upcoming days.

The Eagles had no problem rolling over the Giants, jumping to a 28-0 lead by halftime. Philadelphia had more touchdowns (four) in the first half than New York had first downs (three).

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The relatively drama-free weekend was much different than last week's wild-card round, when no lead was safe.

The Bills blew a 17-point advantage before recovering to beat Miami. That narrow escape came less than 24 hours after the Jaguars overcame a 27-point deficit against the Los Angeles Chargers in one of the most stunning rallies in playoff history.

Multiple games were decided in the final minutes. The Bengals beat the Ravens 24-17 after Sam Hubbard returned Baltimore quarterback Tyler Huntley's fumble 98 yards for a tiebreaking touchdown in the fourth quarter, a surprising turn of events after the Ravens were poised to take the lead.

Here are some other things to know during the postseason:

WHAT'S THE UPCOMING SCHEDULE?

SUNDAY, JAN. 29

San Francisco 49ers at Philadelphia Eagles, 3 p.m. EST, Fox

Cincinnati Bengals at Kansas City Chiefs, 6:30 p.m. EST, CBS

WHAT'S THE FORMAT FOR THE PLAYOFFS?

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

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

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

The NFL re-seeds teams after each playoff round. That means no matter how the bracket started, the lowest-seeded team always travels to the highest-seeded team.

There are four rounds to the playoffs: The wild-card round finished last weekend, the divisional round is this weekend, the conference championship games are Jan. 29 and the Super Bowl is scheduled for Feb. 12 in Glendale, Arizona, at the home stadium of the Arizona Cardinals.

## Clean energy gains a foothold in India, but coal still rules

By SIBI ARASU and MARY KATHERINE WILDEMAN Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — For six years, Pravinbhai Parmar's farm in Gujarat state in western India has been lined with rice, wheat and solar panels.

The 36-year-old is among a handful of farmers in his native Dhundi village who have been using solar power to irrigate crops.

"I was spending nearly 50,000 rupees (\$615) every year to water my crops," said Parmar. "With solar I spend nothing."

Parmar also sells the excess electricity to his state's grid, earning an average of 4,000 rupees (\$50) a month.

"It's a win-win in every way," he said.

Thousands of farmers have been encouraged to take up solar power for irrigation in the agriculture-rich state as India aims to reach 'net zero' by 2070. But livelihoods powered by clean energy are major outliers in the country that's the third-largest emitter of planet-warming gases in the world, and last year announced its biggest-ever auction for coal mines.

Coal's share in producing electricity for Gujarat fell from 85% to 56% in the last six years, according to analysis by London-based energy think tank Ember. The share of renewable energy for the state grew from 9% to 28% in the same period.

But Gujarat is just one of four of India's 28 states that met their renewable energy targets for 2022. Most states have installed less than 50% of their targets and some states such as West Bengal have installed only 10% of their target.



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Nationwide fossil fuels generate more than 70% of India's electricity and have been doing so for decades. Coal is by far the largest share of dirty fuels. Renewable energy currently contributes about 10% of India's electricity needs.

From 2001 to 2021, India installed 168 gigawatts of coal-fired generation, nearly double what it added in solar and wind power combined, according to an analysis of Ember data. India's federal power ministry estimates that its electricity demand will grow up to 6% every year for the next decade.

"The challenge of reducing the share of coal in the electricity generation mix is particularly acute because you are dealing with a sector that is growing rapidly," said Thomas Spencer, energy analyst at the Paris-based International Energy Agency.

Spencer said India's quickly developing economy and growing electricity consumption per capita is causing rising demand.

"Historically, countries that have achieved substantial and rapid transitions away from coal-fired power tend to have had either slowly growing or stagnant or even slightly declining electricity demand," he added.

A report by the Global Energy Monitor ranks India among the top seven countries globally for prospective renewable power. The planned buildout of 76 gigawatts of solar and wind power by 2025 will avoid the use of almost 78 million tons of coal annually and could lead to savings of up to 1.6 trillion rupees (\$19.5 billion) per year.

India missed its target to install 175 gigawatts of renewable energy to its overall power production by 2022. Experts say that to meet its 2030 renewable energy target of installing a total of 450 gigawatts, India needs to build out clean energy at a far greater rate than it is doing now.

The Indian government has repeatedly defended its use of coal and its energy transition strategy, stating that the fuel is necessary for the nation's energy security. Coal India limited, a government-owned company, is the largest state-owned coal producer in the world. It's responsible for about 82% of the total coal produced in India.

In November last year, the Indian government announced its biggest ever auction for coal mines, inviting bids for 141 mines spread across 12 states in the country. The government says the additional mines will contribute to its target of producing 1 billion tons of coal by April 2024.

Analysts say multiple obstacles include acquiring land for clean energy projects in part due to resistance from local communities. Longstanding contracts with coal plants also make it easier for state-run electricity companies to buy coal power instead of clean power.

As of December 2022, Indian state-owned electricity distribution companies owed power generators \$3.32 billion in overdue payments. Their poor financial health has dampened their ability to invest in clean energy projects, analysts say.

Building energy storage, enacting more progressive policies — such as the \$2.6 billion government scheme that encourages making components required to produce solar energy — and ensuring these policies are being implemented is essential to speed up a move toward renewables, analysts say.

"New laws such as the energy conservation bill as well as updated mandates issued by the federal government that make it necessary for electricity companies to purchase renewables provide hope," said Madhura Joshi, an energy analyst at the climate think tank E3G. "At the end of the day what is needed is speeding up the installation of renewables and associated infrastructure."

She added: "It's great that India has a 2070 net zero target, but changes need to happen now for us to achieve this. We must build out our renewables capacity at a great speed."

Experts say that electricity distribution companies need to allow for more rooftop solar installations even if it results in short-term economic losses for them. Investing in modernizing and building new wind energy projects will also speed up the transition, analysts said.

"Ultimately in India, renewable energy is a highly cost-effective technology. The perception that coal is cheap is changing," said Spencer.

The price of renewable energy has plummeted. The cost of solar power has dropped roughly sixfold from 12 rupees (14 cents) per kilowatt-hour in 2011 to 2.5 rupees (0.03 cents) per kilowatt-hour in recent years.

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Aditya Lolla, an energy policy analyst at Ember, is optimistic for India's clean energy future, saying renewables are "at the cusp" of skyrocketing. He believes battery storage for renewables to provide uninterrupted electricity and clean fuels — such as green hydrogen — will grow at a rapid pace.

"Storage technology for clean energy as well as green hydrogen is expected to become affordable in the coming years," Lolla said. "India is betting big on that."

## **Bills' Hamlin attends 1st game since collapse, waves to fans**

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin made his first public appearance since going into cardiac arrest after making a tackle against the Cincinnati Bengals three weeks ago, waving to fans from a stadium suite on Sunday as the teams met again for an AFC divisional playoff game the Bills went on to lose 27-10.

The crowd at Highmark Stadium erupted when an image of the recovering Hamlin filled the massive screens at the end zones near the end of the first half. Fans turned toward the glass-enclosed suite and cheered.

Hamlin, wearing a hooded jacket, stood in front of the windows and raised his arms as if saluting the crowd and encouraging it to get on its feet as the Bengals were facing second-and-goal at their 5. He ended by forming a heart sign with his hands, his signature gesture.

Earlier Sunday, the Bills posted a video to both Instagram and Twitter showing Hamlin arriving at the team's locker room and the message "Welcome home, Damar." The video showed Hamlin arriving in a golf cart about an hour before kickoff, wearing sunglasses and a face covering, the hood of his jacket pulled up. He was accompanied by his 7-year-old brother, Damir, and mother, Nina.

Bills quarterback Josh Allen described his presence as "a warm feeling."

"Obviously, we wanted to play for him ... We just ran into a team that played better than us tonight," Allen said after the loss.

Hamlin was not seen before the game got underway in snowy conditions. The Bills made no announcement about his whereabouts, but word of his attendance had spread by the time he appeared on the screens.

"It was amazing, it really was. I think everybody got so excited," fan Brin Jobson of Buffalo said at half-time. "We heard he might be here, so it was cool to see him."

Hamlin, 24, had not appeared in public since the Bills and Bengals last met on Jan. 2 in a game that came to an abrupt halt and was eventually canceled after Hamlin's collapse on the field in the first quarter.

Bills coach Sean McDermott said Hamlin began making regular visits to the team's facility soon after his release from the hospital in what he described as "dipping his toe back in here and getting on the road to just getting back to himself."

It was "just a great moment" when Hamlin appeared on screen during the game, McDermott said afterward, especially considering that just weeks ago, medical personnel used CPR and an automatic external defibrillator to restart his heart.

For several minutes, the television audience that tuned in for that Monday night game instead absorbed the fear and sadness on players' faces, some streaked with tears.

"Just him being in the locker room (Sunday), his presence was good for the guys," McDermott said.

A family spokesman for Hamlin said this week that he still faces a lengthy rehabilitation. "Damar still requires oxygen and is having his heart monitored regularly to ensure there are no setbacks or aftereffects," Jordon Rooney told The Associated Press.

The Bills have not disclosed the results of tests Hamlin has undergone to determine why his heart stopped after he was struck in the chest while making what appeared to be a routine tackle.

Hamlin, who is originally from the Pittsburgh area, 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 from home while watching the Bills' 34-31 win over Miami in a wild-card playoff.

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"We'll be back," Hamlin tweeted a few hours after the Bills' season-ending loss to the Bengals. "Don't even trip."

## Bengals return to AFC championship with 27-10 rout of Bills

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Joe Burrow and the Cincinnati Bengals threw a big wrench into the highly anticipated travel plans of the Buffalo Bills, their fans and perhaps even the NFL offices.

Burrow threw two touchdown passes and Cincinnati's defense swarmed Josh Allen on a snow-slicked field in a 27-10 win Sunday to send the Bengals to the AFC championship game for the second straight year.

And it'll be in Kansas City again — instead of in Atlanta, the neutral site where the game would've been played if Buffalo had beaten Cincinnati.

"Better send those refunds," Burrow said, referring to the 50,000 or so tickets already sold for a game that will never be played.

"See y'all in Atlanta," one Bengals player was heard yelling sarcastically while the team made its way to the locker room, where cornerback Eli Apple and a couple of teammates conducted interviews smoking cigars.

The Bengals entered the game already feeling disrespected when the NFL began selling tickets for a would-be game at Atlanta, that was dependent on the Bills and Chiefs winning this weekend.

The league decided on the first of its kind conference championship neutral site setting because the Bills (13-3) finished the season a half-game behind the Chiefs (14-3) after their game at Cincinnati was canceled on Jan. 2 when Bills safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and had to be resuscitated on the field.

Hamlin's inspirational presence while watching the game from an end-zone suite was not enough to spark the Bills.

Instead, it was "Joe Cool" showing poise while playing in a persistent snowfall.

Burrow completed his first nine passes for 105 yards as Cincinnati raced to a 14-0 lead after its first two possessions. Ja'Marr Chase opened the scoring with a 28-yard TD catch 3:20 into the game, followed by Burrow's 15-yard TD throw to Hayden Hurst eight minutes later. Joe Mixon scored on a 1-yard run, and Evan McPherson made field goals from 20 and 28 yards in a game the Bengals never trailed.

"The bigger the moment gets, the calmer he gets," Bengals coach Zac Taylor said of Burrow, who improved his playoff record to 5-1. "Our guys believe. They walk on the field ready to attack."

Cincinnati advanced to consecutive AFC championship games for the first time in franchise history and will prepare for a rematch of last year's title game. The Bengals defeated Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs 27-24 to advance to last year's Super Bowl, which they lost to the Los Angeles Rams.

"It's going to be a fun one," said Burrow, who went 23 of 36 for 242 yards Sunday. "Two of the top guys in the league, two of the top teams in the league, great defenses, great overall teams, great coaches."

Cincinnati has won the past three meetings against Kansas City, including a 27-24 victory last month. The Chiefs are making their fifth straight appearance in the AFC championship game following a 27-20 win over Jacksonville on Saturday.

The Bills' playoff run ended in the divisional round for a second straight season, including a 42-36 overtime loss to Kansas City last year.

Bills receiver Stefon Diggs was so upset, he was spotted leaving the locker room with much of his gear on shortly after the game ended before being coaxed by a teammate to return.

"He's a competitive guy. What makes him good is what you saw," coach Sean McDermott said of Diggs. "It hurts. I wouldn't want a guy that doesn't hurt. We put it all on the line out there and tonight it wasn't good enough."

It was a dud of an outing for the Bills, who opened the season with Super Bowl aspirations, and eventually ran out of emotional and physical gas. Aside from the stunning sight of Hamlin's collapse, the Bills had their schedule twice disrupted by severe winter storms.

Injuries also played an issue. The Bills' pass rush, missing Von Miller since he sustained a season-ending

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knee injury in November, generated very little pressure against a Bengals offensive line missing three starters due to injuries.

"We were expecting their best punch and they came out and punched us," said Allen, who finished 25 of 42 for 265 yards, and scored on a 1-yard plunge. "We just didn't have it today."

The Bengals mixed in their running attack to keep the Bills off balance in a first half during which Cincinnati outgained Buffalo in total yards by a margin of 274-135, and 412-325 overall. Mixon's 105 yards rushing alone were 1 short of how many the Bengals combined in their past two games, both against Baltimore.

"Domination from start to finish," Burrow added. "That's what we expected. Job's not finished."

The Bengals held one of the NFL's top offenses to season-low 10 points. And the unit got a chance to celebrate by making snow angels in the end zone after Cam Taylor-Britt intercepted Allen's attempt at the goal line to essentially end the game with 62 seconds remaining.

Hamlin was whisked into the stadium in a security vehicle, and led directly into the Bills' locker room about an hour before kickoff. He was later joined by his mother, Nina, and younger brother, Damir. He watched the game from a suite in one end zone and was pictured on the videoboard at the 2-minute warning in the first half, with Cincinnati facing second-and-goal at Buffalo's 5.

Hamlin raised his arms in his suite to a roar of cheers, before making a heart sign with his hands. The Bills limited the Bengals to a field goal, and trailed 17-7 at the half.

"We'll be back," Hamlin tweeted a few hours after the game. "Don't even trip."

## STREAKS AND STATS

The Bengals extended their franchise-best streak to 10 straight wins. They haven't lost since a 32-13 defeat at Cleveland on Halloween. The Bengals' 30 first downs were a franchise postseason record.

They were the most allowed by the Bills since allowing 30 in last year's playoff loss at Kansas City.

The Bills dropped to 13-2 when hosting an NFL playoff game. And they were 4-0 under McDermott.

## Huge waves bring Hawaii surf contest The Eddie after hiatus

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — One of the world's most prestigious and storied surfing contests — dubbed the "Super Bowl of Surfing" — went forward Sunday in Hawaii for the first time in seven years with towering wave faces and a gigantic swell that was expected to grow throughout the day.

And this year female surfers competed alongside the men for the first time in the 39-year history of The Eddie Aikau Big Wave Invitational.

The event — alternatively known simply as The Eddie — is a one-day contest held in Waimea Bay on Oahu's North Shore only when the surf is consistently large enough during the winter big-wave surfing season from mid-December through mid-March. The wind, the tides and the direction of the swell also have to be just right.

"Large enough" means 20 feet (6 meters) by Hawaii measurements. That's equivalent to about 40 feet (12 meters) when measured by methods used in the rest of the U.S. Before this year, conditions have only aligned for it to be held nine times since the initial competition in 1984.

Organizer Clyde Aikau said at a news conference Friday that he was expecting waves to reach 25 to 30 feet (7.6 to nine meters) by Hawaii measurements or 50 to 60 feet (15 to 18 meters) on the national scale — and the conditions were meeting expectations.

On Sunday, the sets were already big, with the swell expected to grow as the day went on, and an estimated 60,000 people packed the beaches and surrounding area to catch a glimpse of the spectacle. One huge wave swept onto the beach and hit a family, sweeping a baby under a house, but the child was not injured, Hawaii News Now reported.

"We've been looking at 30-foot to 40-foot wave faces for the most part, (and) the biggest waves of the day are going to be in excess of 45 feet. By local scale, they'll call those waves 25 feet — and we've seen a couple sets like that already," Kevin Wallis, director of forecasting at Surfline.com, said by phone Sunday morning.



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"It's amazing, it's really cool to see and it's such a rare and prestigious event, and there's a lot of energy and a lot of buzz around, for sure," he said.

Other places around the world have big wave surfing events: Mavericks in California, Nazare in Portugal and Peahi on Hawaii's Maui Island. But author Stuart Coleman says The Eddie is distinguished by how it honors Eddie Aikau, a legendary Native Hawaiian waterman, for his selflessness, courage and sacrifice.

"What makes this contest the most unique is that it's in memory of a particular individual who really has transcended his time and place when he lived," said Coleman, who wrote "Eddie Would Go," a biography of Aikau.

Edward Ryon Makuahanai Aikau rose to prominence as the first lifeguard hired by Honolulu to work on Oahu's North Shore and was revered for saving over 500 people during his career. He is also famous for surfing towering waves that no one else would dare ride.

Aikau died in 1978 at the age of 31 during an expedition to sail a traditional Polynesian voyaging canoe from Honolulu to Tahiti. Just hours out of port, the giant double-hulled canoe known as the Hokulea took on water and overturned in stormy weather. Aikau volunteered to paddle several miles to nearby Lanai Island on his surfboard to get help for the rest of the crew but was never seen again.

The U.S. Coast Guard rescued the remaining crew a few hours later after being alerted by a commercial plane that spotted the canoe.

Coleman said The Eddie is about the best of big-wave surfing and the best of Hawaiian culture.

"They always say at the opening ceremony, where they gather to launch the holding period, 'This is not just a contest. We're not surfing against each other. We're surfing in the spirit of Eddie,'" Coleman said.

This year organizers have invited 40 competitors and 18 alternates from around the world, including Kelly Slater, who has won a record 11 world surfing titles. John John Florence, who hails from the North Shore and who has won two back-to-back world titles, has also been asked to join.

Keala Kennelly of Kauai, a women's big wave surf champion, is among the female invitees.

Mindy Pennybacker, a surf columnist for the Honolulu Star-Advertiser and author of the upcoming book, "Surfing Sisterhood Hawaii: Wahine Reclaiming the Waves," said there has long been an assumption that Waimea was too dangerous for women and they couldn't surf there.

She said women had to fight to be included and have meanwhile shown that they could handle big waves in spots around the world.

"To see women — not only women surfing Waimea but women and men sharing the same event together, with mutual respect and equality — I'm just really thrilled at the thought," Pennybacker said.

## AP sources: Biden to pick Zients as his next chief of staff

By ZEKE MILLER, MICHAEL BALSAMO and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is expected to name Jeff Zients, who ran the administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the start of Biden's term, as his next chief of staff, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Biden's current top aide, Ron Klain, is preparing to leave the job in the coming weeks.

Since serving as COVID-19 response coordinator, Zients has returned to the White House in a low-profile position to work on staffing matters for the remainder of Biden's first term.

The two people familiar with the matter were not authorized to publicly discuss Biden's plans before an official announcement and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Washington Post first reported on Zients' expected appointment. The White House did not respond to requests for comment.

The change at the highest levels of senior staff comes as Biden passes his two-year mark in office and pivots to a defensive stance against a House Republican majority hungry to investigate his administration's actions and his family. The White House remains mired in controversy over discoveries of classified documents at Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, and at his former institute in Washington, with the latest tranche of found records disclosed Saturday evening.

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Biden, 80, is also preparing to launch his reelection campaign in the coming weeks, bolstered by a string of legislative accomplishments in the first two years of his presidency when Democrats controlled both chambers of Capitol Hill. He is confronting a Republican presidential field that is far from formed but for now is led by former President Donald Trump, whom Biden defeated in 2020.

The president's main sphere of advisers, in addition to Zients, on politics and legislation will continue to include presidential counselor Steve Ricchetti, senior advisers Mike Donilon and Anita Dunn, legislative affairs director Louisa Terrell, and Jen O'Malley Dillon and Bruce Reed, who are deputy chiefs of staff.

Klain will remain in Biden's political orbit, according to a person familiar with his plans — not unlike the role played by Cedric Richmond, who was the president's first director of the White House Office of Public Engagement and now is a senior adviser at the Democratic National Committee.

The outgoing chief of staff was also known to be friendly with the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. But some liberal critics of Zients swiftly went on the attack against the appointment even before it was official, highlighting in particular his private-sector ties.

Jeff Hauser, the founder and director of the Revolving Door Project, a progressive group that advocates for liberal appointees in government, said Sunday that the selection of Zients as the top White House aide did not jibe with Biden's "Scranton Joe" political image.

"Unfortunately, Zients is a veteran of private equity, rapacious health care providers, and Big Tech, which sets up a fundamental question that could determine Biden's political future: Will a Zients-led executive branch pursue the unpopular misconduct of people like Jeffrey Zients?" Hauser said. "It would be against Zients' character to pursue corporate lawbreaking, but it is also the only way Biden can retain the mantle of populist against the likes of (Florida Gov. Ron) DeSantis and Trump."

"Ron Klain has been an open ear and even-handed engager of actors across the Democratic Party," said Adam Green, the co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee. "Whomever the next Chief of Staff is, that will be the continued hope and expectation. There will likely be an early relationship and trust building stage."

Zients, vice chairman of Biden's transition operation after his November 2020 election, brings significant managerial expertise in government and the private sector. He was the director of the National Economic Council during the Obama administration and acting director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The longtime management consultant developed a Mr. Fix It reputation, tapped to lead the Obama administration's effort to repair HealthCare.gov after the bungled initial rollout of the site in fall 2013. Zients served as top executive at the Advisory Board Co., a Washington consulting firm.

Former President Barack Obama also enlisted Zients in 2009 to eliminate the backlog in applicants for the Cash for Clunkers program, which offered rebates to drivers who swapped old cars for fuel-efficient vehicles. Zients later took on a similar challenge to smooth sign-ups for an updated version of the GI Bill.

Another coming perk for White House aides: Zients, who was an initial investor in Call Your Mother, a bagel shop in Washington, had a penchant for hosting "Bagel Wednesdays" for staff. (Zients divested his shares before joining the White House in 2021).

Zients and his deputy on the White House's pandemic response team, Natalie Quillian, left the Biden administration last April before returning quietly in the fall of 2022. As they left, Biden thanked him for "stunning" and "consequential" progress battling the pandemic.

"When Jeff took this job, less than 1% of Americans were fully vaccinated; fewer than half our schools were open; and unlike much of the developed world, America lacked any at-home COVID tests," Biden said when the White House announced Zients' departure last year. "Today, almost 80% of adults are fully vaccinated; over 100 million are boosted; virtually every school is open; and hundreds of millions of at-home tests are distributed every month."

## Military probing whether cancers linked to nuclear silo work

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nine military officers who had worked decades ago at a nuclear missile base in Montana have been diagnosed with blood cancer and there are “indications” the disease may be linked to their service, according to military briefing slides obtained by The Associated Press. One of the officers has died.

All of the officers, known as missileers, were assigned as many as 25 years ago to Malmstrom Air Force Base, home to a vast field of 150 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile silos. The nine officers were diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, according to a January briefing by U.S. Space Force Lt. Col. Daniel Sebeck.

Missileers ride caged elevators deep underground into a small operations bunker encased in a thick wall of concrete and steel. They remain there sometimes for days, ready to turn the launch keys if ordered to by the president.

“There are indications of a possible association between cancer and missile combat crew service at Malmstrom AFB,” Sebeck said in slides presented to his Space Force unit this month. The “disproportionate number of missileers presenting with cancer, specifically lymphoma” was concerning, he said.

Sebeck declined to comment when contacted by email by the AP on Saturday, saying the slides were “predecisional.” In the slides, he said the issue was important to the Space Force because as many as 455 former missileers are now serving as Space Force officers, including at least four of the nine identified in the slides.

In a statement to the AP, Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said that “senior leaders are aware of the concerns raised about the possible association of cancer related to missile combat crew members at Malmstrom AFB.”

Stefanek added: “The information in this briefing has been shared with the Department of the Air Force surgeon general and our medical professionals are working to gather data and understand more.”

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, which according to the American Cancer Society affects an estimated 19 out of every 100,000 people in the U.S. annually, is a blood cancer that uses the body’s infection-fighting lymph system to spread.

For comparison, only about 3,300 troops are based at Malmstrom at a time, and only about 400 of those are assigned either as missileers or as support for those operators. It is one of three bases in the U.S. that operate a total of 400 siloed Minutemen III ICBMs, including fields at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota and F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming.

The median age for adult non-Hodgkin lymphoma is 67, according to the National Institutes of Health. The former missileers affected are far younger. Officers are often in their 20s when they are assigned duty watch; the officer who died, who was not identified, was a Space Force officer assigned to Schriever Space Force Base in Colorado with the rank of major, a rank typically achieved in a service member’s 30s. Two of the others are in the same Space Force unit with the rank of lieutenant colonel, which is typically reached in a service member’s early 40s.

It’s not the first time the military has been alerted to multiple cancer cases at Malmstrom. In 2001 the Air Force Institute for Operational Health investigated the base after 14 cancers of various types were reported among missileers who had served there, including two cases of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

But the review found the base was environmentally safe and that “sometimes illnesses tend to occur by chance alone.” The report lamented that the list of those diagnosed had been collected because it “perpetuates the level of concern.”

The discovery of new cases comes as the U.S. government has shown more openness to acknowledging the environmental hazards, or toxic exposures, troops may face while serving.

In her statement to the AP, Air Force spokeswoman Stefanek said, “We are heartbroken for all who have lost loved ones or are currently facing cancer of any kind.”

It was not clear whether some of the nine officers identified in the January briefing slides, whose diagnoses occurred between 1997 and 2007, overlap some of the cases identified in the Air Force’s 2001

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investigation. It's also not known if there were similar reports of cancers at other nuclear silo bases or whether that is being investigated by the Air Force.

"Missileers have always been concerned about known hazards, such as exposure to chemicals, asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls, lead and other hazardous material in the work environment," Sebeck said in the January slides. "All missileers should be screened and tracked for the rest of their lives."

Last year President Joe Biden signed the PACT Act, which greatly expanded the types of illnesses and toxic exposures that would be considered presumptive — meaning a service member or veterans would not face an uphill battle to convince the government that the injury was tied to their military service in order to receive covered care.

## 'Here again': Abortion activists rally 50 years after Roe

By CLAIRE RUSH and HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — From beach cities to snow-covered streets, abortion supporters rallied by the thousands on Sunday to demand protections for reproductive rights and mark the 50th anniversary of the now-overturned Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision that established federal protections for the procedure.

The reversal of Roe in June unleashed a flurry of legislation in the states, dividing them between those that have restricted or banned abortion and those that have sought to defend access. The Women's March, galvanized during Donald Trump's presidential inauguration in 2017 amid a national reckoning over sexual assaults, said it has refocused on state activism after Roe was tossed.

"This fight is bigger than Roe," Women's March said in a tweet. "They thought that we would stay home and that this would end with Roe — they were wrong."

A dozen Republican-governed states have implemented sweeping bans on abortion, and several others seek to do the same. But those moves have been offset by gains on the other side.

Abortion opponents were defeated in votes on ballot measures in Kansas, Michigan and Kentucky. State courts have blocked several bans from taking effect. Myriad efforts are underway to help patients travel to states that allow abortions or use medication for self-managed abortions. And some Democratic-led states have taken steps to shield patients and providers from lawsuits originating in states where the procedure is banned.

Organizers with the Women's March said their strategy moving forward will focus largely on measures at the state level. But freshly energized anti-abortion activists are increasingly turning their attention to Congress, with the aim of pushing for a potential national abortion restriction down the line.

Sunday's main march was held in Wisconsin, where upcoming elections could determine the state Supreme Court's power balance and future abortion rights. But rallies took place in dozens of cities, including Florida's state capital of Tallahassee, where Vice President Kamala Harris gave a fiery speech before a boisterous crowd.

"Can we truly be free if families cannot make intimate decisions about the course of their own lives?" Harris said. "And can we truly be free if so-called leaders claim to be ... 'on the vanguard of freedom' while they dare to restrict the rights of the American people and attack the very foundations of freedom?"

In Madison, thousands of abortion rights supporters donned coats and gloves to march in below-freezing temperatures through downtown to the state Capitol.

"It's just basic human rights at this point," said Alaina Gato, a Wisconsin resident who joined her mother, Meg Wheeler, on the Capitol steps to protest.

They said they plan to vote in the April Supreme Court election. Wheeler also said she hoped to volunteer as a poll worker and canvass for Democrats, despite identifying as an independent voter.

"This is my daughter. I want to make sure she has the right to choose whether she wants to have a child," Wheeler said.

Buses of protestors streamed into the Wisconsin capital from Chicago and Milwaukee, armed with banners and signs calling for the Legislature to repeal the state's ban.



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Eliza Bennett, a Wisconsin OBGYN who said she had to stop offering abortion services to her patients after Roe was overturned, called on lawmakers to put the choice back in the hands of women. "They should be making decisions about what's best for their health, not state legislatures," she said.

Abortions are unavailable in Wisconsin due to legal uncertainties faced by abortion clinics over whether an 1849 law banning the procedure is in effect. The law, which prohibits abortion except to save the patient's life, is being challenged in court.

Some also carried weapons. Lilith K., who declined to provide their last name, stood on the sidewalk alongside protestors, holding an assault rifle and wearing a tactical vest with a holstered handgun.

"With everything going on with women and other people losing their rights, and with the recent shootings at Club Q and other LGBTQ night clubs, it's just a message that we're not going to take this sitting down," Lilith said.

The march also drew counter-protestors. Most held signs raising religious objections to abortion rights. "I don't really want to get involved with politics. I'm more interested in what the law of God says," John Goeke, a Wisconsin resident, said.

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. The lone clinic in North Dakota relocated across state lines 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.

Wisconsin's conservative-controlled Supreme Court, which for decades has issued consequential rulings in favor of Republicans, will likely hear the challenge to the 1849 ban filed in June by the state's attorney general, Josh Kaul. Races for the court are officially nonpartisan, but candidates for years have aligned with either conservatives or liberals as the contests have become expensive partisan battles.

Women's rallies were expected to be held in nearly every state on Sunday.

The eldest daughter of Norma McCorvey, whose legal challenge under the pseudonym "Jane Roe" led to the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, was set to attend the rally in Long Beach, California. Melissa Mills said it was her first Women's March.

"It's just unbelievable that we're here again, doing the same thing my mom did," Mills told The Associated Press. "We've lost 50 years of hard work."

The Women's March has become a regular event — although interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic — since millions rallied in the United States and around the world the day after Trump's January 2017 inauguration.

Trump made the appointment of conservative judges a mission of his presidency. The three conservative justices he appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court — Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett — all voted to overturn Roe v. Wade.

## **Dems: Biden should be 'embarrassed' by classified docs case**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senior Democrats, dismayed by a steady stream of startling disclosures, expressed criticism Sunday of how President Joe Biden handled classified material after leaving office as vice president and disappointment that the White House has not been more forthcoming with the public.

Lawmakers who might have anticipated questions focusing on the debt limit or Ukraine aid when they were booked last week for the Sunday news shows found themselves quizzed about the latest development over the weekend in the document drama that has put Biden's presidency on the defensive: During a search Friday of Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, the FBI found additional documents with classi-

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fied markings and took possession of some of his handwritten notes, the president's lawyer said Saturday. Biden should be "embarrassed by the situation," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate, adding that the president had ceded the moral high ground on an issue that has already entangled former President Donald Trump. Special counsels appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland are investigating both cases.

"Well, of course. Let's be honest about it. When that information is found, it diminishes the stature of any person who is in possession of it because it's not supposed to happen. ... The elected official bears ultimate responsibility," Durbin said.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said Biden "should have a lot of regrets. ... You just might as well say, 'Listen, it's irresponsible.'" The president told reporters on Thursday that he had "no regrets" over how and when the public learned about the documents and that there was "no there there."

Despite their criticism, Biden's fellow Democrats defended what they said was his cooperation with the Justice Department as the search for additional classified material unfolds. They contrasted it with Trump's resistance to efforts to recover hundreds of documents after he left office.

"It is outrageous that either occurred," Durbin said. "But the reaction by the former president and the current president could not be in sharper contrast."

Biden voluntarily allowed the FBI into his home on Friday, but the lack of a warrant did not dim the extraordinary nature of the search. It compounded the embarrassment to Biden that started in earlier in January with the disclosure that the president's lawyers had found a "small number" of classified records at a former office at the Penn Biden Center in Washington shortly before the Nov. 8 elections.

The White House has disclosed that Biden's team found classified documents and official records on three other occasions in recent months — in follow-up searches on Dec. 20 in the garage of his Wilmington home, and on Jan. 11 and 12 in his home library.

The discoveries have become a political liability as Biden prepares to kick off his 2024 reelection bid, and they undercut his efforts to portray an image of propriety to the American public after the tumultuous presidency of his predecessor, Trump.

Manchin excoriated both men for their handling of sensitive security documents. "It's just hard to believe that in the United States of America, we have a former president and a current president that are basically in the same situation," he said. "How does this happen?"

At the same time, Democrats worried that Biden's travails have created an opening for newly empowered House Republicans.

"We have to worry, since this new group that has taken over control of the House of Representatives has promised us endless investigations, confrontations, impeachments and chaos, what is going to happen," Durbin said.

The new chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., said he took Biden "at his word when the first set of documents were found. ... But now this is gone from just simply being irresponsible to downright scary."

The Justice Department says Trump 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. Biden has willingly turned over the documents once found. But the issue is wearing on Biden and his aides, who have said they acted quickly and appropriately when the documents were discovered, and are working to be as transparent as possible.

Durbin appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," Manchin was on CNN and NBC's "Meet the Press" and Comer was interviewed on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

## Minister: Germany won't block Poland giving Ukraine tanks

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The German government will not object if Poland decides to send Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine, Germany's top diplomat said Sunday, indicating movement on supplying weapons that Kyiv has described as essential to its ability to fend off an intensified Russian offensive.

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German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told French TV channel LCI that Poland has not formally asked for Berlin's approval to share some of its German-made Leopards but added "if we were asked, we would not stand in the way."

German officials "know how important these tanks are" and "this is why we are discussing this now with our partners," Baerbock said in interview clips posted by LCI.

Ukraine's supporters pledged billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine during a meeting at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Friday. International defense leaders discussed Ukraine's urgent request for the Leopard 2 tanks, and the failure to work out an agreement overshadowed the new commitments.

Germany is one of the main donors of weapons to Ukraine, and it ordered a review of its Leopard 2 stocks in preparation for a possible green light. Nonetheless, the government in Berlin has shown caution at each step of increasing its military aid to Ukraine, a hesitancy seen as rooted in its history and political culture.

Germany's tentativeness has drawn criticism, particularly from Poland and the Baltic states, countries on NATO's eastern flank that feel especially threatened by Russia's renewed aggression.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said that if the fellow NATO and European Union member did not consent to transferring Leopard tanks to Ukraine, his country was prepared to build a "smaller coalition" of countries that would send theirs anyway.

"Almost a year had passed since the outbreak of war," Morawiecki said in an interview with Polish state news agency PAP published Sunday. "Evidence of the Russian army's war crimes can be seen on television and on YouTube. What more does Germany need to open its eyes and start to act in line with the potential of the German state?"

Previously, some officials in Poland indicated that Finland and Denmark also were ready to send Leopards to Ukraine.

Earlier Sunday, the speaker of the lower house of Russia's parliament, State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin, said governments that give more powerful weapons to Ukraine risked causing a "global tragedy that would destroy their countries."

"Supplies of offensive weapons to the Kyiv regime would lead to a global catastrophe," Volodin said. "If Washington and NATO supply weapons that would be used for striking peaceful cities and making attempts to seize our territory as they threaten to do, it would trigger a retaliation with more powerful weapons."

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, said Sunday that he had asked his defense minister to "work on" the idea of sending some of France's Leclerc battle tanks to Ukraine.

Macron spoke during a news conference in Paris with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as France and Germany commemorated the 60th anniversary of their post-World War II friendship treaty. In a joint declaration, the two countries committed to their "unwavering support" for Ukraine.

France will make its tank decision based on three criteria, Macron said: that sharing the equipment does not lead to an escalation of the conflict, that it would provide efficient and workable help when training time is taken into account, and that it wouldn't weaken France's own military.

Scholz did not respond when asked about the Leopard 2 tanks Sunday, but stressed that his country already has made sizable military contributions to Ukraine.

"The U.S. is doing a lot, Germany is doing a lot, too," he said. "We have constantly expanded our deliveries with very effective weapons that are already available today. And we have always coordinated all these decisions closely with our important allies and friends."

In Washington, two leading lawmakers urged the U.S. on Sunday to send some of its Abrams tanks to Ukraine in the interests of overcoming Germany's reluctance to share its own, more suitable tanks.

"If we announced we were giving an Abrams tank, just one, that would unleash" the flow of tanks from Germany, Rep. Michael McCaul, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told ABC's "This Week on Sunday." "What I hear is that Germany's waiting on us to take the lead."

Sen. Chris Coons, a Democrat who is on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also spoke up for the U.S. sending Abrams.

"If it requires our sending some Abrams tanks in order to unlock getting the Leopard tanks from Germany, from Poland, from other allies, I would support that," Coons said.

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Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of the Russian Security Council, said Friday's U.S.-led meeting at the air base in Germany "left no doubt that our enemies will try to exhaust or better destroy us," adding that "they have enough weapons" to achieve the purpose.

Medvedev, a former Russian president, warned that "in case of a protracted conflict," Russia could seek to form a military alliance with "the nations that are fed up with the Americans and a pack of their castrated dogs."

Ukraine has argued it needs more weapons as it anticipates Russia's forces launching a new offensive in the spring.

Oleksii Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's Security and Defense Council, warned that Russia may try to intensify its attacks in the south and in the east and to cut supply channels of Western weapons, while conquering Kyiv "remains the main dream" in President Vladimir Putin's "fantasies," he said.

In a column published by online newspaper Ukrainska Pravda, he described the Kremlin's goal in the conflict as a "total and absolute genocide, a total war of destruction"

Among those calling for more arms for Ukraine was the former British prime minister, Boris Johnson, who made a surprise trip to Ukraine on Sunday. Johnson, who was pictured in the Kyiv region town of Borodyanka, said he traveled to Ukraine at the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"This is the moment to double down and to give the Ukrainians all the tools they need to finish the job. The sooner Putin fails, the better for Ukraine and for the whole world," Johnson said in a statement.

The last week was especially tragic for Ukraine even by the standards of a brutal war that has gone on for nearly a year, killing tens of thousands of people, uprooting millions more and creating vast destruction of Ukrainian cities.

A barrage of Russian missiles struck an apartment complex in the southeastern city of Dnipro on Jan. 14, killing at least 45 civilians. On Wednesday, a government helicopter crashed into a building housing a kindergarten in a suburb of Kyiv. Ukraine's interior minister, other officials and a child on the ground were among the 14 people killed.

Zelenskyy vowed Sunday that Ukraine would ultimately prevail in the war.

"We are united because we are strong. We are strong because we are united," the Ukrainian leader said in a video address as he marked Ukraine Unity Day, which commemorates when east and west Ukraine were united in 1919.

## Drake delivers nostalgia, teases new music at Apollo show

By GARY GERARD HAMILTON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It's easy to forget how many hit songs Drake created in his nearly 15-year musical career. But he presented an emphatic reminder with an intimate concert at Harlem's Apollo Theater on Saturday, his first-ever show at the legendary venue.

During the performance, the four-time Grammy winner teased that new music could be on the way, despite releasing two albums last year.

"I thought about a bunch of things in life, but at this moment in time, none of those things are stopping making music for you," Drake told the dotting crowd. "I hope I can strike up some more emotions for you, maybe this year — I might get bored and make another one."

The first night of two Apollo weekend shows presented by SiriusXM, featured the 36-year-old ripping off songs at a frantic pace — most with just a verse and chorus — satisfying day-one fans with fan-favorite, deep non-radio cuts as well as those only familiar with his No. 1 hits. The recorded performances will air on Drake's SiriusXM Sound 42 channel in the coming weeks.

Noting this was his first show in about five years and later stating "I'll be out and about on the road a lot this year," Spotify's most-streamed artist in the U.S. last year told his captivated audience the show was about gratefulness.

"I wanted to make this a show about gratitude," Drake said. "This is a little story we put together: my deep love for my family, for my dear friends and each and every one of you that have been supporting



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me for a long time.”

Donning cornrows while wearing baggy jeans and a blue and yellow Jimmy Brooks basketball jersey — a nod to his days as an actor on the teen drama series “Degrassi” — Drake opened the performance with “Over My Dead Body” as celebrity guests such as Justin and Hailey Bieber, former NBA MVP and current Brooklyn Nets star Kevin Durant, NFL star Odell Beckham Jr., rappers A\$AP Ferg and A Boogie wit da Hoodie watched.

Sitting on a bed positioned stage-right, modeled after his bedroom in his mom’s Toronto basement where he said he wrote songs, Drake belted out many of his down-tempo, B-side hits such as “Wu-Tang Forever,” “Trust Issues,” “Practice” and “Feel No Ways.”

He also sang his most popular deep cut, “Marvin’s Room,” as the standing-room only crowd joined him word-for-word before transitioning into his hook from Timbaland’s “Say Something” as the “Marvin’s Room” beat continued.

As the bedroom set dimmed and the light shifted to the left side of the stage, revealing a board room, Drake changed into a black leather hoodie with his OVO owl symbol. The rapper stood in front of a performer playing a record label exec who skeptically noted it was “interesting” he was a rapper from Canada, before saying, “Alright, let’s see what you got.” (Drake would later remind the crowd how every major record label in New York passed on him.)

Starting with “Best I Ever Had,” the R&B smash that jump-started his career, he continued his musical journey with early Young Money-era hits such as Headlines, “HYFR,” “Started From the Bottom” and “I’m on One.” The crowd also two-stepped to his more danceable records like “Massive” from last year’s “Honestly, Nevermind” project, as well as “Hold On, We’re Going Home,” “One Dance,” “Passionfruit” and “In My Feelings.”

The final leg of the 90-minute set opened with a surprise performance by the popular early 2000s Harlem rap collective, The Diplomats, which featured Drake wearing Cam’ron’s signature pink hoodie and headband. He was then joined by 21 Savage to perform songs such as “Rich Flex,” “Spin Bout You” and “Knife Talk” from their joint project, “Her Loss,” released in November.

The longtime tagline for the Apollo is “Where Stars are Born and Legends are Made!” So it was either strategic or serendipitous that he ended the show with “Legend.” While it might be too soon to drape him with the legend moniker in the manner that Apollo Walk of Fame icons such Michael Jackson, Prince, Aretha Franklin James Brown carry, he left no doubt that he is well on his way.

## Swift firing of police is rare, but could become more common

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The speed with which five Memphis police officers were fired following the traffic stop of a man who later died in a hospital is unusual but could become more common, according to those studying police and criminal justice issues.

The five Memphis Police Department officers were fired Friday, less than two weeks after the Jan. 7 arrest of Tyre Nichols, 29, Officials said the five were dismissed for excessive use of force, failure to intervene and failure to render aid.

It’s rare for a police department to act so quickly, said David Thomas, a professor of forensic studies at Florida Gulf Coast University. Investigations can sometimes go on for up to a year, he said.

“It never happens this quickly,” Thomas said.

All five officers -- Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills, Jr. and Justin Smith – are Black, as was Nichols. The decision to fire the officers followed a probe by the Memphis Police Department. Nichols died three days after the traffic stop.

The U.S. Justice Department has opened a civil rights investigation. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation also is looking into the force used in the arrest.

One recent turning point has been the advent of police body cameras, which can be quickly reviewed, along with cellphone video taken by passersby, said Thomas, who served 20 years as a police officer in

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Michigan and Florida.

"In the old days, you'd have the officer's word. If the victim was still alive, you'd have their testimony, if someone had died, you'd have the medical examiner's report. All of that would play a role," he said. "With body cameras, the evidence is right there."

Nichols was arrested after officers stopped him for reckless driving, police said. There was a confrontation when officers approached Nichols, and he ran before he was confronted again and arrested, authorities said. He complained of shortness of breath and was hospitalized.

Relatives have accused police of beating Nichols and causing him to have a heart attack. Authorities said Nichols experienced a medical emergency. Relatives have pushed for the release of police body camera footage and called for officers to be charged.

Body cameras can only tell a full story if they are on and working throughout an entire incident, Thomas said. Some officers may forget to turn them on. Others may deliberately turn them off.

"Law enforcement can no longer act with impunity," he said. "Absolutely, officers will be let go more quickly."

Typically before a firing, officials will determine if an officer has violated a department's general orders, which set out the procedures and regulations officers are meant to follow, said Patrick Oliver, director of the criminal justice program at Cedarville University in Ohio.

"The seriousness of the job action is based on the severity of the violation," said Oliver, who spent 28 years in law enforcement, 16 of them as a police chief, including as chief of the Cleveland Police Department.

Firing an officer is the most severe job action, Oliver said, suggesting that department officials feel confident they can support the decision.

"There is far more scrutiny of police today," he said. "When I was in policing there was less of a likelihood that something a police officer was doing would be caught on video."

Oliver added that many times videos will confirm police acted properly. "I would say that's the majority of times," he said.

While unusual, it's not unheard of for a city to fire an officer before criminal charges are filed, but that's not necessarily the end of the story, said Stephen Rushin, a Loyola University Chicago law school professor who has studied police contracts.

Cities often give officers the ability to appeal disciplinary action, including termination of their employment, Rushin said.

"In many agencies, the initial decision to fire an officer begins a lengthy appellate process that can take months to complete," he said. "At the end of this process, it is not uncommon for an officer to be rehired on appeal."

## **Brazil's new president works to reverse Amazon deforestation**

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Shaking a traditional rattle, Brazil's incoming head of Indigenous affairs recently walked through every corner of the agency's headquarters — even its coffee room — as she invoked help from ancestors during a ritual cleansing.

The ritual carried extra meaning for Joenia Wapichana, Brazil's first Indigenous woman to command the agency charged with protecting the Amazon rainforest and its people. Once she is sworn in next month under newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Wapichana promises to clean house at an agency that critics say has allowed the Amazon's resources to be exploited at the expense of the environment.

As Wapichana performed the ritual, Indigenous people and government officials enthusiastically chanted "Yoohoo! Funai is ours!" — a reference to the agency she will lead.

Environmentalists, Indigenous people and voters sympathetic to their causes were important to Lula's narrow victory over former President Jair Bolsonaro. Now Lula is seeking to fulfill campaign pledges he made to them on a wide range of issues, from expanding Indigenous territories to halting a surge in il-

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legal deforestation.

To carry out these goals, Lula is appointing well-known environmentalists and Indigenous people to key positions at Funai and other agencies that Bolsonaro had filled with allies of agribusiness and military officers.

In Lula's previous two terms as president, he had a mixed record on environmental and Indigenous issues. And he is certain to face obstacles from pro-Bolsonaro state governors who still control swaths of the Amazon. But experts say Lula is taking the right first steps.

The federal officials Lula has already named to key posts "have the national and international prestige to reverse all the environmental destruction that we have suffered over these four years of the Bolsonaro government," said George Porto Ferreira, an analyst at Ibama, Brazil's environmental law-enforcement agency.

Bolsonaro's supporters, meanwhile, fear that Lula's promise of stronger environmental protections will hurt the economy by reducing the amount of land open for development, and punish people for activities that had previously been allowed. Some supporters with ties to agribusiness have been accused of providing financial and logistical assistance to rioters who earlier this month stormed Brazil's presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court.

When Bolsonaro was president, he defanged Funai and other agencies responsible for environmental oversight. This enabled deforestation to soar to its highest level since 2006, as developers and miners who took land from Indigenous people faced few consequences.

Between 2019 and 2022, the number of fines handed out for illegal activities in the Amazon declined by 38% compared with the previous four years, according an analysis of Brazilian government data by the Climate Observatory, a network of environmental nonprofit groups.

One of the strongest signs yet of Lula's intentions to reverse these trends was his decision to return Marina Silva to lead the country's environmental ministry. Silva formerly held the job between 2003 and 2008, a period when deforestation declined by 53%. A former rubber-tapper from Acre state, Silva resigned after clashing with government and agribusiness leaders over environmental policies she deemed to be too lenient.

Silva strikes a strong contrast with Bolsonaro's first environment minister, Ricardo Salles, who had never set foot in the Amazon when he took office in 2019 and resigned two years later following allegations that he had facilitated the export of illegally felled timber.

Other measures Lula has taken in support of the Amazon and its people include:

- Signing a decree that would rejuvenate the most significant international effort to preserve the rainforest — the Amazon Fund. The fund, which Bolsonaro had gutted, has received more than \$1.2 billion, mostly from Norway, to help pay for sustainable development of the Amazon.

- Revoking a Bolsonaro decree that allowed mining in Indigenous and environmental protection areas.

- Creating a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, which will oversee everything from land boundaries to education. This ministry will be led by Sônia Guajajara, the country's first Indigenous woman in such a high government post.

"It won't be easy to overcome 504 years in only four years. But we are willing to use this moment to promote a take-back of Brazil's spiritual force," Guajajara said during her induction ceremony, which was delayed by the damage pro-Bolsonaro rioters caused to the presidential palace.

The Amazon rainforest, which covers an area twice the size of India, acts as a buffer against climate change by absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide. But Bolsonaro viewed management of the Amazon as an internal affair, causing Brazil's global reputation to take a hit. Lula is trying to undo that damage.

During the UN's climate summit in Egypt in November, Lula pledged to end all deforestation by 2030 and announced his country's intention to host the COP30 climate conference in 2025. Brazil had been scheduled to host the event in 2019, but Bolsonaro canceled it in 2018 right after he was elected.

While Lula has ambitious environmental goals, the fight to protect the Amazon faces complex hurdles. For example, getting cooperation from local officials won't be easy.

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Six out of nine Amazonian states are run by Bolsonaro allies. Those include Rondonia, where settlers of European descent control local power and have dismantled environmental legislation through the state assembly; and Acre, where a lack of economic opportunities is driving rubber-tappers who had long fought to preserve the rainforest to take up cattle grazing instead.

The Amazon has also been plagued for decades by illegal gold mining, which employs tens of thousands of people in Brazil and other countries, such as Peru and Venezuela. The illegal mining causes mercury contamination of rivers that Indigenous peoples rely upon for fishing and drinking.

"Its main cause is the state's absence," says Gustavo Geiser, a forensics expert with the Federal Police who has worked in the Amazon for over 15 years.

One area where Lula has more control is in designating Indigenous territories, which are the best preserved regions in the Amazon.

Lula is under pressure to create 13 new Indigenous territories — a process that had stalled under Bolsonaro, who kept his promise not to grant "one more inch" of land to Indigenous peoples.

A major step will be to expand the size of Uneixi, part of one of the most remote and culturally diverse regions of the world that is home to 23 peoples. The process of expanding the boundaries of Uneixi started four decades ago, and the only remaining step is a presidential signature, which will increase its size by 37% to 551,000 hectares (2,100 square miles).

"Lula already indicated that he would not have any problem doing that," said Kleber Karipuna, a close aide of Guajajara.

## Native Hawaiians flock to Las Vegas for affordable living

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

KAPOLEI, Hawaii (AP) — Kona Purdy never wanted to live anywhere but Hawaii. As a Native Hawaiian, he wanted his children to grow up like he did: rooted in their culture, and nourished by the mountains and ocean.

But raising a family in Hawaii meant squeezing nine people into a four-bedroom house — rented with extended family — in Waipahu, a Honolulu suburb. It felt cramped, but the Purdys accepted that this was the price to survive in their homeland.

"We stuffed ourselves into one room," Purdy said of his four-member family's living arrangements.

Their share of the monthly rent was \$2,300. When rent increased, the Purdys realized that they could no longer afford to live in Hawaii.

"I was so busy working, trying to make ends meet," he said. "We never took our kids out to the beach. We didn't go hiking."

It's increasingly common for Hawaii residents to be priced out of the Aloha State, where the median price for a single-family home topped \$900,000 during the pandemic. On Oahu, the most populous island and where Honolulu is, the median price is more than \$1 million.

Many residents work in low-wage service jobs, and the financial strain is especially significant for Hawaii's Indigenous people. A state analysis published last year showed that a single person working 40 hours a week would need to earn \$18 an hour to pay for housing and other necessities in Hawaii, but the state minimum wage is currently \$12 an hour.

Many, like the Purdys, have headed to Las Vegas.

According to 2021 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the biggest growth of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander populations was in Clark County, Nevada, which includes Las Vegas, and Sacramento County, California. The biggest decline of Native Hawaiian residents was in Honolulu.

Hawaii residents are spending on average 42.06% of their income on rent, which is the highest of any state, according to a Forbes Home analysis. California ranks second, but at a much smaller proportion of income going toward rent: 28.47%.

Estimates from the American Community Survey showed that in 2011, there were about 296,400 Native Hawaiians in Hawaii and about 221,600 on the continental U.S. Just a decade later, those numbers



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flipped. In 2021, there were about 309,800 Native Hawaiians in Hawaii and about 370,000 in other states.

"There's no Hawaii without Hawaiians," said Honolulu City Council Chair Tommy Waters, who is Native Hawaiian. His five siblings have all moved to the continental U.S. "That's just incredibly sad to me, that Hawaiians cannot afford to live in Hawaii."

Las Vegas was desirable to the Purdys because it's a popular vacation destination for Hawaii residents, which meant family would likely visit often. Also, the cost of living is significantly lower.

So in 2017, they uprooted their family and moved to Henderson, a Las Vegas suburb in Clark County, where they could afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment for \$1,000 a month.

Far from Hawaii's shores, they felt like "fish out of water," Purdy said.

"So it's real 'eha,'" Purdy said, using the Hawaiian word for painful, "because you do get disconnected from the land, which we're so connected to, being born and raised here."

But even though they were nearly 3,000 miles from home, Hawaiian culture was all around them. Thanks to many other transplants, the Las Vegas area is full of restaurants catering to Hawaiian taste and cultural events expressing Hawaiian pride.

There's even a real estate brokerage that helps families relocate from the islands — run by mostly former Hawaii residents.

"You go into any store in any part of the valley and you'll find someone from Hawaii working there or shopping there," Purdy said.

A three-bedroom home priced at \$300,000 in a Las Vegas suburb would be \$1.2 million in Honolulu, said Terry Nacion, a Native Hawaiian realtor. She left Hawaii for Las Vegas in 2003 because home ownership felt unattainable. "Back home, you either had to have your home passed down to you or you have to work four jobs," she said.

A few months after they moved, about 20 other relatives, including Purdy's mother, uncle and sister Lindsay Villarimo, followed them.

"Over time, it just became exhausting trying to make ends meet," said Villarimo. "It's heartbreaking that's the choice we make. The majority of us, I think we just got priced out of home." When Villarimo and her family decided to move to Nevada, her husband Henry had never even left Hawaii.

Las Vegas' affordability was "liberating," she said. With cheaper rent and groceries, and no state income tax, she could stretch her paycheck further.

"We were just living it up in the dollar store," she said. In Hawaii, that type of store doesn't exist.

For Hawaii residents, the draw to Las Vegas can all be traced back to a downtown hotel that opened in 1975, author Dennis M. Ogawa said.

The hotel originally catered to Californians, but he struggled to get business. Reminded of gambling's popularity in Hawaii, it shifted focus to visitors from the islands. "Aloha Spoken Here" became the hotel's slogan.

In 2019, Doreen Hall Vann decided to move to Las Vegas to be closer to her daughter, who had moved to Seattle for more job opportunities.

On Facebook, she gushed about how much cheaper everything was, from bread to rent. But she started to worry about staying connected to her culture while living far from home, especially because she uprooted her son, who was then 6 years old, from his Hawaiian language immersion school.

"It's just like when you give birth and you cut your umbilical cord. For us Native Hawaiians, our 'piko' is the source of life," Hall Vann said, using the Hawaiian word for navel or umbilical cord. "When we move off island ... we are disconnected because we're not on our land anymore."

But in her new home, she found she had more time and less stress.

"I was so busy back home trying to make a living," she said. "When I moved to Vegas, it really put a pause in my life and I could see things a lot clearer."

That allowed her to get involved in the Las Vegas Hawaiian Civic Club, where she now teaches Hawaiian.

"We have our people, our home, our community is thriving," she said.

In Las Vegas, Purdy's children began to learn hula and the family enjoyed "hoolaulea," cultural festivals

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that were bigger than celebrations back in Hawaii.

But in August 2021, exactly four years after leaving Hawaii, the Purdys moved back home.

Purdy said that his wife wanted to take care of her mother, who began showing signs of dementia. Their daughter also got accepted to Kamehameha Schools, a highly selective and relatively affordable private school system that gives admissions preference to students with Hawaiian ancestry.

The family moved to Kapolei, a Honolulu suburb not far from where they once lived, to share a five-bedroom house with their extended family. Now that the Purdys have three children, they rent two of the bedrooms.

Purdy is trying to find time to take his kids to hula lessons. Since moving back, the family has only been to the beach once.

"It's a grind, it's hard, it's really expensive," he said. "But I also feel like we're exactly where we're supposed to be right now."

## As Haitian gangs expand control, cop's family is left shaken

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Every day when Marie Carmel Daniel's husband put on his flak vest and walked out the door for another day of fighting Haiti's gangs, she wondered if he would come home that night.

Friday was the day her smiling spouse of 18 years, Ricken Staniclasse, didn't.

One of the country's nearly 200 gangs ambushed his police unit that morning, sending gunfire echoing through the streets in an unexpected area — a mansion-lined stretch of the country's capital, Port-au-Prince.

A gang led by Lionel Lazarre battled the police patrol under the sweltering Caribbean heat as officers desperately called for backup. But help never came, the country's police union said.

The fighting killed three officers, hospitalized a fourth with bullet wounds and left the 44-year-old Staniclasse missing.

Daniel, meanwhile, was terrified for herself and their three children.

"My husband was fighting a lot with the gangs, and we don't know what could happen to us," Daniel, 43, said while curled up on her red couch surrounded by neighbors. "I can't sleep at the house anymore because I don't know what could happen to us."

The firefight was just the latest example of how Haitian gangs have grown in power and expanded in reach, leaving much of the population terrorized.

While the United Nations estimates that 60% of Port-Au-Prince is controlled by the gangs, nowadays most Haitians on the street reckon that number is closer to 100%.

Haiti has struggled with endemic gang violence for years, but the country spiraled into lawlessness after the 2021 killing of former President Jovenel Moïse.

Powerful gangs have taken advantage of the political chaos and discontent with the current government led by Prime Minister Ariel Henry to further consolidate their control.

The government has failed to ease the violence, forcing many to flee their homes. News of rapes, kidnappings and ambushes on police have become the new norm.

Jolicoeur Allande Serge, director of the police unit that was attacked, said the Friday blitz in the Pétion-Ville neighborhood was a sign of that. He noted that moving into upper class areas "benefits (the gangs') economic interests."

Kidnappings and ransoms as high as \$1 million have been a key part of the financing for such armed groups.

Meanwhile, police units struggle to keep up.

While Canada and the United States have sent armored vehicles and other supplies to Haiti, law enforcement officials say it is just a fraction of what they really need.

Tensions remained high Saturday, and in the afternoon Serge stood among a pack of armored trucks dented with bullet strikes. Officers holding automatic weapons, their faces covered by black masks, bustled

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about.

A group of 50 officers was returning to the area where they fought Friday night to try to break a gang blockade and search for the missing officer, Staniclasse.

"I lost three men ... We're not scared. We're frustrated because we don't have enough equipment to fight," Serge said as he watched a convoy of police trucks roll out from the station. "We need ammo, helmets, armored vehicles."

Analysts expect the bloodshed to get worse, especially after Haiti's final 10 elected officers ended their Senate terms in early January, leaving the parliament and presidency unfilled because the government has failed to hold elections.

Critics say that has turned Haiti into a "de-facto dictatorship."

Meanwhile, people like Marie Carmel Daniel feel hope drain for their country. Daniel said her husband always hoped he could help clean up his city. Together, they built a home and a life together. Their 11-year-old son dreamed of following in his father's footsteps.

"He loved people, he loved to help people," she said of her husband.

But two years ago, violence began to get so bad in their neighborhood that they applied for a visa to migrate to the United States, hoping to join an exodus of people leaving Haiti. They never got a reply.

"I don't know if he's alive or dead, but I'm worried," she said. "If we were able to leave the country, my husband would be alive."

## **Sanders' Latinx ban wades into community's generational rift**

By ANDREW DeMILLO and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — One of Sarah Huckabee Sanders' first acts as Arkansas governor was to ban most state agencies from using the gender-neutral term Latinx, tapping into a debate that's divided Hispanics along generational lines.

Sanders called the word "culturally insensitive" in an order that's prompted complaints from some critics who view it as yet another attack by Republicans on the LGBTQ community. Yet her move may have limited impact, given that the word does not appear to be widely used in Arkansas government.

It was among several orders the 40-year-old former White House press secretary signed within hours of taking office that were cheered by conservatives, including restrictions on teaching critical race theory in public schools and banning TikTok on state devices. The Latinx prohibition gives agencies 60 days to revise written materials to comply.

"One of the things as governor that I will not permit is the government using culturally insensitive words," Sanders said as she signed the order.

Sanders' order adds to the debate over a word that's found little widespread support among Latinos and even prompted backlash from some Democrats. It comes as Republicans have sought to rally around culture war issues. They also are seeking to make inroads with Latino voters, but fell short of the major shifts some in the party were hoping for in last year's elections.

The term Latinx was coined in recent years as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino and Latina, since all nouns in the Spanish language are gendered. Many in the LGBTQ Latino community have embraced the word, but it has been slow to catch on more widely, with some Latino figures calling the term unnecessary.

The League of United Latin American Citizens, the oldest Latino civil rights group in the U.S., announced in 2021 that it would no longer use the term Latinx. The group declined to comment on Sanders' order.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego from Arizona also said that year his staff was not allowed to use the term in official communications.

"When Latino politicians use the term it is largely to appease white rich progressives who think that is the term we use," Gallego tweeted in 2021.

The Log Cabin Republicans, which represents LGBT members of the party, praised Sanders' order.

"The term Latinx is just another misguided product of the modern left's relentless obsession with stripping gender from American life, an obsession that LGBT conservatives fight back against daily," Charles

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Moran, the group's president, said in a statement.

Sanders' order doesn't apply to the state's institutes of higher education or other state agencies considered constitutionally independent, such as the Arkansas Department of Transportation. It also allows the governor to grant exemptions for the word's use.

Several state agencies said they were reviewing their forms to make sure they would comply. Health Department spokeswoman Meg Mirivel said two jobs that had been unofficially called the Latinx public information coordinator and the Latinx outreach coordinator will continue to work with the Latino community but will no longer include Latinx in their titles.

Sanders isn't the first governor to ban or restrict the use of certain words. Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul last year signed a bill in New York removing from state education law the word "incorrigible," a term that critics had called sexist and racist.

In 2015, then-Florida Gov. Rick Scott was criticized after former officials said they were instructed to not use the terms "climate change" and "global warming." Scott, a Republican who now serves in the Senate, denied he banned the terms.

Critics of Sanders' order have said that just because the term isn't universal among Spanish speakers, that doesn't mean it's insensitive to use.

"Language is constantly evolving," said Manuel Hernandez, head of the Latino LGBTQ group Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action. "We don't speak Old English. I've never met someone who says 'thy.'" Hernandez called Sanders' order "an attempt to erase" the LGBTQ Latino community.

Sanders signed the order the day after Arkansas lawmakers kicked off a session that's already included newly proposed restrictions on the LGBTQ community. One bill would classify drag shows as adult-oriented businesses, and another would ban transgender people from using bathrooms at K-12 schools that align with their gender identity.

Sanders has also said she would support legislation similar to Florida's law that forbids instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade. Critics have dubbed it the "Don't Say Gay" law.

Sanders' executive order banning Latinx cites a 2020 report from Pew Research Center, which found that 1 in 4 U.S. Hispanics have heard the term "Latinx," but just 3% use it.

Age is an important factor. Hispanics ages 18-29 are six times more likely than older generations to have heard of the term — 42% compared with 7% of those ages 65 or older, Pew found.

Its popularity has risen since 2016, but remains below Latina, Latino and Hispanic, according to the report.

"If you're trying to categorize a community with the term that they seemingly are rejecting or in some cases are even openly hostile against, it makes sense that that term would in essence, go the way of the dodo, which Latinx seems to have done," said Fernand Amandi, president of Bendixen & Amandi, a multilingual public opinion research firm.

Among those using the term is Angel Castillo Reyes, a 21-year-old nonbinary student at the University of Arkansas who uses the pronouns they/them. Castillo Reyes uses both Latinx and "Latine," another gender-neutral term that's been used by some in the Latino community to describe their ethnic identity.

"I appreciate those terms because I know it doesn't come from a sense of wanting to divide," Castillo Reyes said. "It comes from the sense of wanting to unite."

Conversations with older Latino people about gender neutrality can be difficult, Castillo Reyes said. Their parents, who are evangelical Pentecostal Christians, find the terms "ridiculous."

Castillo Reyes criticized Sanders' order as unnecessary, but said they think it will offer an opportunity to discuss the need for gender-neutral terms with a wider community.

"Now that I know Spanish can be used in a way that is inclusive, it's like, 'Wow, I never thought this was possible,'" they said.



## Lawmakers seek to bar insurrectionists from holding office

By MAYSOON KHAN Associated Press/Report for America

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Democratic lawmakers in a handful of states are trying to send a message two years after the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol: Those who engage in an attempted overthrow of the government shouldn't be allowed to run it.

New York, Connecticut and Virginia are among states where proposed legislation would prohibit anyone convicted of participating in an insurrection from holding public office or a position of public trust, such as becoming a police officer.

While the bills vary in scope, their aim is similar.

"If you've tried to take down our government through violent means, in no way should you be part of it," New York state Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal said.

He is sponsoring a bill that would bar people convicted of engaging in an insurrection or rebellion against the United States from holding civil office, meaning they would not be able to serve as a judge or member of the Legislature. Hoylman-Sigal said he introduced the bill this year because he saw more people who were involved in the riot in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, running for office last year.

He described the assault on the Capitol as "a real attack on the foundations of our free and fair democracy and the values which enable that to persist."

A Virginia lawmaker introduced a bill this month, on the second anniversary of the Capitol riot, that would prohibit anyone convicted of a felony related to an attempted insurrection or riot from serving in positions of public trust — including those involving policymaking, law enforcement, safety, education or health.

A Connecticut bill would prohibit people convicted of sedition, rebellion, insurrection or a felony related to one of those acts from running for or holding public office. Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, who introduced the measure, told The Associated Press that he wants the legislation eventually to bar them from holding state or municipal jobs.

The legislation in the states comes after the House Jan. 6 committee's final report, which found Donald Trump criminally engaged in a conspiracy to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 presidential election he lost and failed to take action to stop his supporters from attacking the Capitol.

The committee's recently concluded work may have provided another springboard for lawmakers to act and propose ways to hold people accountable, said Victoria Bassetti, a senior policy adviser at States United Democracy Center, a nonpartisan organization that advocates for fair elections.

Some Republicans say the legislation is unnecessary.

In New York, Republican Assemblyman Will Barclay, the minority leader, called the bill there a "political statement," saying it is "more political than it is a concern about public policy."

He said existing rules already apply to people in certain positions who are convicted of crimes and that those laws "should be sufficient."

The legislation is another example of how the Capitol riot has become a political Rorschach test in the country.

Many Republicans refuse to see the attempt to violently halt the presidential certification — which was based on lies that 2020 election was stolen — as an insurrection, while a strong majority of the party continues to believe that President Joe Biden was not legitimately elected. Even students are being taught different versions of the attack, depending on whether they live in more conservative or liberal parts of the nation.

The opposing realities came into sharp focus this month in Pennsylvania during a fraught exchange between two lawmakers.

In a committee hearing, Republican state Sen. Cris Dush slammed his gavel as he ruled Democratic state Sen. Amanda Cappelletti out of order after she described the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as "the site of an insurrection."

"Insurrection, nobody has been charged with that," Dush said. "There's not been a single charge against any of those people as insurrectionists. In this committee, we are not using that term."

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Nearly 1,000 people have been charged in the Capitol riot with federal crimes, with about half of them pleading guilty to riot-related charges and more than three dozen convicted at trial. The charges range from misdemeanors for those accused of entering the Capitol illegally but not participating in violence to felony seditious conspiracy for far-right extremist group members accused of plotting to stop the transfer of presidential power.

In November, two leaders of the Oath Keepers extremist group were convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors alleged was a weeklong plot to use force to keep Trump in office. Leaders of the Proud Boys and additional members of the Oath Keepers are currently standing trial on the sedition charge, which carries up to 20 years behind bars.

Weeks after the committee exchange, Cappelletti told The Associated Press that it's important to make sure people understand that the attack on the Capitol was an insurrection.

"These are factually correct things," she said. "That doesn't mean that we can't disagree politically about policy or other things, but we can acknowledge that that happened and start to figure out how we move forward to work together to build up that public trust again."

Dush remained steadfast in his view that what unfolded on Jan. 6 was not an insurrection.

"If there had been some sort of plot for an insurrection, that would've come apart quite quickly after the government got the control back," he said in a phone interview.

There have been some earlier attempts to prevent certain officials from either running for or holding office.

A New Hampshire bill that would have barred anyone who participates in an insurrection or rebellion from holding office in the state died last year.

Also last year, groups brought lawsuits under a rarely cited section of the 14th Amendment dealing with insurrection. They sought to disqualify a handful of U.S. House members from seeking reelection for events surrounding the Jan. 6 riot.

In New Mexico, a state court in September disqualified a rural county commissioner from holding public office for engaging in the Capitol insurrection. Couy Griffin had been previously convicted in federal court of a misdemeanor for entering the Capitol grounds, without going inside the building. He was sentenced to 14 days and given credit for time served.

The judge permanently barred Griffin, who was then an elected commissioner from Otero County, from federal and local public office.

In West Virginia, a former state lawmaker who pleaded guilty to a felony — civil disorder — for participating in the riot and who served time, announced earlier this month that he was running for Congress.

"We have to really rid ourselves of those who would take down our government," said Duff, the Connecticut lawmaker. "There's no place for any of them to be (in) any kind of elected or appointed officer."

## Hockey brawls to debt limit: Emmer wrangles House GOP votes

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The way Republican Rep. Tom Emmer tells it, the lousiest job he ever had — he has a saltier way of describing it — was running the House Republican campaign committee.

But after having helped lead his party back into control of the House in November, the former youth hockey coach now must round up votes from those Republicans, as the majority whip, in order to pass GOP priorities.

Corralling colleagues for their support on the debt ceiling, spending cuts and investigating the Biden administration will be tough work for the third-ranking leader who has served in Congress since 2015. With Republicans holding only 222 seats in the 435-member House, almost everyone is needed to reach the 218 votes needed for approving most bills.

Just agreeing to elect California Rep. Kevin McCarthy as the House speaker took 15 ballots.

Emmer was a central negotiator in that effort, hammering out the side-deal to win over holdouts after endless meetings in his first-floor office at the Capitol. It was a crash-course for the budget battles and showdowns ahead.

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A look at how the rough-and-tumble Minnesotan told The Associated Press he plans to tackle the job.  
SPEAKER'S ELECTION AS HOCKEY BRAWL

Before joining Congress, Emmer was a lawyer and state legislator. Some of his most applicable professional experience, however, comes from coaching hockey.

When McCarthy failed to win the speaker's race on the first votes, Emmer convened the holdouts in his still new Capitol office, so bare there are no pictures hanging on the walls.

"Good teams are always going to have differences of opinion," Emmer said. "If you don't let them express that, you are never going to succeed."

Emmer told the story of a fabled hockey coach who would let players fight it out during practices — almost encouraging it, he said — much the way Republicans nearly came to blows on the House floor during the speaker's election.

"You know what, these guys actually become closer," Emmer said.

## BRACING FOR BUDGET BATTLES

Emmer is not part of the conservative House Freedom Caucus. In fact, some Republicans did not think he was conservative enough for the leadership post.

But he won his own internal GOP election to become the whip, brushing back two challengers. When it came time to broker the deal for McCarthy's election, Emmer had to win over some of those same conservative holdouts.

One of the many key concessions McCarthy made to earn the votes of his detractors was a commitment to return to federal spending to 2022 budget levels. Cuts of that size would amount to an 8% reduction in domestic defense, veterans and domestic accounts — or even more, 17%, if the Pentagon money is spared.

The Republicans also agreed to aim for a balanced budget in 10 years.

From Emmer's point of view, much of what was agreed to with the holdouts is "aspirational."

"Some might criticize me when I say it's an aspirational document because they think it's more than that, and they're right," Emmer said. "Because we now have to hold ourselves to this."

## SPEAKER BOEHNER, SPEAKER RYAN AND DEBT CEILINGS PAST

One of the biggest challenges Emmer will face is rounding up the votes for the coming debt ceiling showdown.

Congress is being asked by the Treasury Department to raise the nation's debt cap so it can borrow more money to pay off the nation's already accruing bills.

House Republicans insist they will not lift that limit without changes in the way the federal government spends money — most likely, cuts in spending levels. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in an Associated Press interview Saturday that she expects Congress will ultimately vote to increase the cap. But she said GOP demands for spending cuts in return for backing an increase are "a very irresponsible thing to do" and risk creating a "self-imposed calamity" for the global economy.

It's a repeat from the battles Republicans waged last time they had the House majority, when then-Reps. John Boehner of Ohio and Paul Ryan of Wisconsin were the speakers during the Obama and Trump administrations. In those days the Republicans tried to curb federal spending, with some success, but also with failures that disappointed the right flank.

Those decades-old spending battles simmer on Capitol Hill, especially for conservatives, which is why the Freedom Caucus and others drove such a hard bargain with McCarthy during the speaker's race.

"A lot of it was personality issues that have probably been driven from as far back as when John Boehner was the speaker and then Paul Ryan," Emmer said about dynamics.

"And there's just been a lot over the last several years."

## SPARING DEFENSE CUTS

Republicans have different views when it comes to what spending to cut as they try to use the debt ceiling vote to extract their own budget priorities.

While some say they want to see all spending on the table for review, Emmer is among those who be-

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lieve defense should largely be spared.

"The argument is if you go to FY22 baseline, it affects both domestic and defense — not under Republicans," he said, referring to 2022 budget levels. "Republicans will look for efficiencies, they'll look for waste. We aren't cutting defense. We assured our appropriators and ask our House Armed Services Committee. That's not what we're doing."

## THE BEST, WORST JOB

Having helped to elect the class of new House Republicans, Emmer now must help lead them.

The reason he didn't like his old campaign chairman job was because he had to be the "attack dog," as he put it, always on offense. He also had to provide quite a bit of customer service to the Republican candidates. He twice ran the National Republican Congressional Committee.

The GOP whip's job?

"Contrary to popular belief, it's a lot the same," he said — lots of listening and lots of responding.

"The great thing about having 222 (House Republicans) is every voice matters," he said. "So you respect everybody, you respect their opinion. Don't have to agree with them. You don't even have to like them. That's not the issue. But you have to respect them."

And so what's the strategy for passing the debt ceiling or the spending bills?

"I'll let our members tell you a plan," Emmer said. "Our job is to make sure that once that plan is ready for primetime, we get it across the finish line."

## State lawmakers propose power grid protections after attacks

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press/Report for America

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — When gunshots at two electrical substations cut power to thousands of central North Carolina homes for several days in early December, Republican state Rep. Ben Moss watched his vibrant district full of family farms, small businesses and sprawling golf courses become "a ghost town."

After the latest attack last week on a substation in Randolph County, northeast of Charlotte, Moss is urging fellow lawmakers to prioritize new legislation that would secure the state's critical infrastructure when the legislative session begins in earnest this week. He's among the first state legislators to propose power grid protections this year amid a surge in attacks on U.S. substations, primarily in the Carolinas and Pacific Northwest.

The recent attacks in Moore County, North Carolina, and others in Washington, Oregon, South Carolina and Nevada, have underscored the vulnerability of the nation's far-flung electrical grid, which security experts have long warned could be a target for domestic extremists.

Lawmakers in at least two affected states — North Carolina and South Carolina — have begun proposing remedies.

"I don't want to see anybody else go through what Moore (County) did," said Moss, a 2024 candidate for state labor commissioner whose district saw a peak of more than 45,000 customers lose power. "When the power goes out, you don't have heat, don't have food, can't get fuel or some medications, the people are unsafe."

Moss is drafting legislation, obtained in its preliminary form by The Associated Press, that would require utilities to provide 24-hour security at substations, which transform high-voltage electricity into the lower voltages that power communities. Security provisions would vary across sites, some of which are already gated with nearby cameras while others are more exposed.

He considers the bill "a conversation opener" between lawmakers, utilities and security experts to help the General Assembly identify cost-effective defenses that wouldn't drive up consumer prices.

His call for increased surveillance comes as questions linger about the Moore County shootings. The FBI is still seeking information and no arrests have been made.

Federal regulators in December ordered a review of physical security standards across the nation's vast electricity transmission network following the attacks in North Carolina. The North American Electric Reli-



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ability Corporation (NERC), which oversees the nation's bulk power system, has until early April to submit a report and recommend possible improvements.

Manny Cancel, a NERC senior vice president and the CEO of the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center, said the situation demands more communication and collaboration between the different levels of government, industry leaders and law enforcement.

"The frequency has increased, the targeting has increased," Cancel said. "What we've seen are patterns of clusters ... or assets that are in proximity to each other being repeatedly targeted."

Utilities in South Carolina — where gunshots were fired near a Duke Energy facility but caused no damage days after the North Carolina shootings — are asking lawmakers to increase penalties for intentionally destroying electrical infrastructure or other utility property.

A state Senate proposal would set a sliding scale based on how much damage is done — if it costs more than \$25,000 to fix equipment and cover losses, the perpetrator could face up to 20 years in prison, double the current 10-year maximum.

A maximum 25-year penalty would apply if anyone died or their health was endangered by a resulting outage.

Dominion Energy South Carolina President Keller Kissam said the state saw at least 12 incidents of people intentionally damaging equipment last year.

"You want to demoralize people, you put them in the dark," he said.

Some state senators worried that the law could be used against hunters who accidentally damage utility equipment. Kissam agreed but said sometimes that damage isn't an accident, as hunters use equipment to set their gun sights or as target practice. A subcommittee plans to review the bill further in a few weeks.

Another South Carolina bill seeks stiffer penalties for destruction caused specifically by a gun or explosive.

Brian Harrell, former assistant secretary for infrastructure protection at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said that although harsher penalties for equipment sabotage may be a deterrent, state legislatures can best support utilities by freeing up funds for additional security measures.

"Specifically, ensuring monies for perimeter security, cameras and alarms," said Harrell, who now oversees security for an energy company that services multiple states.

Construction of all new security features would cost about \$2.5 million per site, he said. But many substations already have fencing, which reduces the cost significantly. About \$800,000 can outfit a single substation with pan-tilt-zoom cameras, intrusion detection and an access control system.

The Pacific Northwest has become a hotspot for these physical attacks, with Washington and Oregon utilities reporting at least 15 incidents in 2022, including 10 in the last two months of the year.

Attackers hit four Washington substations on Christmas Day, forcing entry, setting fire to equipment and temporarily cutting power to thousands of customers.

Michael Furze, director of the Washington State Energy Office, said that although no legislation specifically addressing substation security has been introduced, broader bipartisan discussions are underway about grid resilience.

Washington is already revamping its electrical infrastructure under the Clean Energy Transformation Act, which commits the state to an electricity supply free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Physical and cybersecurity updates are in the works as the electrical grid undergoes significant changes to meet new standards, Furze said.

"Security by design' is a core component of these systems," he said.

In neighboring Oregon, the state's Public Utility Commission is working with regulated utilities to increase vigilance and explore possible security updates, after gunfire attacks damaged two substations southeast of Portland in late November. Spokesperson Kandi Young said the commission monitors proposed legislation and is not aware of any related bills introduced this session.

And in Nevada, where a man set fire to a solar power unit this month, a search of the 138 bill draft requests with pre-filed text found none that would explicitly address electrical infrastructure security. But with more than two weeks until the biennial session begins, most legislative proposals have yet to be

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formally introduced.

## Today in History: JAN 23, ABC begins mini-series "Roots"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 23, the 23rd day of 2023. There are 342 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 23, 1964, the 24th Amendment to the United States Constitution, eliminating the poll tax in federal elections, was ratified as South Dakota became the 38th state to endorse it.

On this date:

In 1368, China's Ming dynasty, which lasted nearly three centuries, began as Zhu Yuanzhang (zhoo whan-zhahng) was formally acclaimed emperor following the collapse of the Yuan dynasty.

In 1789, Georgetown University was established in present-day Washington, D.C.

In 1845, Congress decided all national elections would be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

In 1932, New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1950, the Israeli Knesset approved a resolution affirming Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

In 1962, Jackie Robinson was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced an accord had been reached to end the Vietnam War, and would be formally signed four days later in Paris.

In 1977, the TV mini-series "Roots," based on the Alex Haley novel, began airing on ABC.

In 1998, fighting scandal allegations involving Monica Lewinsky, President Clinton assured his Cabinet during a meeting that he was innocent and urged them to concentrate on their jobs.

In 2002, John Walker Lindh, a U.S.-born Taliban fighter, was returned to the United States to face criminal charges that he'd conspired to kill fellow Americans. (Lindh was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to providing support for the Taliban; he was released in May 2019 after serving more than 17 years.)

In 2020, Chinese state media said the city of Wuhan would be shutting down outbound flights and trains, trying to halt the spread of a new virus that had sickened hundreds of people and killed at least 17. The World Health Organization said the viral illness in China was not yet a global health emergency, though the head of the U.N. health agency added that "it may yet become one."

Ten years ago: Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered fiery rejoinders to Republican critics of the Obama administration's handling of the deadly attack on a U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya. Cardinal Jozef Glemp, 83, the longtime head of Poland's influential Roman Catholic church at a time when it played a key role in the fight against communism, died in Warsaw.

Five years ago: An early-morning shooting at a high school in Benton, Kentucky, left two 15-year-old students dead and more than a dozen others injured; authorities charged a 15-year-old classmate with murder and assault. LeBron James, at 33, became the youngest player in NBA history with 30,000 career points, reaching that mark during the Cleveland Cavaliers' 114-102 loss to the San Antonio Spurs; he was the seventh player to score that many points in his career. "The Shape of Water" led the way with 13 Academy Award nominations, including one for best picture. (It went on to win four Oscars, including best picture.)

One year ago: Police in Brussels fired water cannons and tear gas to disperse violent demonstrations against COVID-19 vaccinations and restrictions; the protest drew tens of thousands of people, some traveling from France, Germany and other countries. As China tightened anti-disease controls ahead of the Winter Olympics, people in a Beijing district with some 2 million residents were ordered to undergo mass coronavirus testing following a series of infections. After topping the North American charts in its sixth weekend in theaters, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" became the sixth highest grossing film of all time,

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globally.

Today's birthdays: Actor Chita Rivera is 90. Actor-director Lou Antonio is 89. Jazz musician Gary Burton is 80. Actor Gil Gerard is 80. Sen. Thomas R. Carper, D-Del., is 76. Actor Richard Dean Anderson is 73. Rock musician Bill Cunningham is 73. Rock singer Robin Zander (Cheap Trick) is 70. Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (vee-yah-ry-GOH'-sah) is 70. Princess Caroline of Monaco is 66. Singer Anita Baker is 65. Reggae musician Earl Falconer (UB40) is 64. Actor Peter Mackenzie is 62. Actor Boris McGiver is 61. Actor Gail O'Grady is 60. Actor Mariska Hargitay is 59. R&B singer Marc Nelson is 52. CBS Evening News anchor Norah O'Donnell is 49. Actor Tiffani Thiessen is 49. Rock musician Nick Harmer (Death Cab for Cutie) is 48. Actor Lindsey Kraft is 43. Singer-actor Rachel Crow is 25.