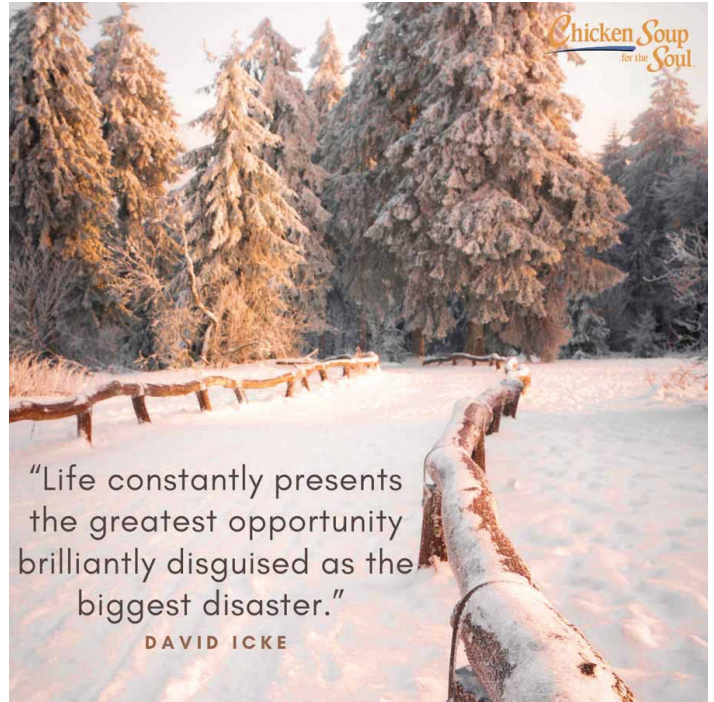


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## Groton Community Calendar

### Tuesday, Jan. 24

- Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, glazed carrots, apricots, cookie.
- School Breakfast: Sausage and cheese egg cups.
- 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

### Thursday, Jan. 26

- Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.
- School Lunch: Goulash, fresh baked bun, corn.
- Boys Basketball at Webster: C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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

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## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

- Four more members of the far-right extremist group Oath Keepers have been convicted of sedition charges for plotting to violently overturn President Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory.
- Former FBI special agent Charles McGonigal and Sergey Shestakov, a court interpreter, have been charged with several counts after allegedly aiding a U.S.-sanctioned Russian oligarch and accepting payments for services.
- A secretly made documentary against Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh has sparked a flurry of new tips sent to filmmakers. The film premiered at Sundance last week and looks into sexual misconduct allegations against Kavanaugh.
- Turkey has threatened to derail Sweden's NATO membership bid following far-right and Kurdish protests in Stockholm in which a politician burned the holy book of Islam, the Quran.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian state TV host Margarita Simonyan has said that a "big war" is set to commence by the end of winter, following ultimatums made by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Nearly 18,500 civilians have died or been injured in Ukraine since Russia's war began exactly 11 months ago.

### 'Doomsday Clock' is Ticking, But How Much Time is Left?

TL/DR: "This year, the war in Ukraine was front and center in our deliberations," a co-chair of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Science and Security Board told Newsweek.

How long do we have before humanity destroys itself? We will find out today. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists will unveil this year's Doomsday Clock for the first time since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The clock is a visual representation of how close humanity is to destroying life, with midnight representing the eruption of a global catastrophe. "The risk of escalation from a conventional war to use of nuclear weapons is real," Sharon Squassoni of the Bulletin's Science and Security Board told Newsweek.

At the same time, other countries have continued to build their nuclear arsenals, and "arms control efforts have stalled," Tara Drozdenko of the Union of Concerned Scientists said. The clock was introduced during the Cold War when the time was set at seven minutes to midnight. In 1991, the clock was pushed back to 17 minutes to midnight after the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was signed to cut down on nuclear weapons. The clock currently sits at 100 seconds to midnight since 2020. Nuclear war is not the only factor in deciding how much the clock ticks forward. "Climate change has a much longer fuse for us. We also assess developments in the areas of biosecurity and a range of disruptive technologies that may factor into existential risk," Squassoni said.

What happens now? This year had been different for the members of the Bulletin's Science and Security Board, Drozdenko said. "We met more frequently and began discussions of the implications of the war in Ukraine very early after it began." Climate change and collaboration between countries on multilateral issues were among other topics discussed. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists will host a virtual conference at 10 a.m. ET to reveal the position of the Doomsday Clock for 2023, which will be available to watch live on its site and Facebook page.

• Seven people were killed in two related shootings at agricultural facilities in California yesterday, marking the state's third mass killing in eight days. Suspect Chunli Zhao, 67, has been arrested. On the same day, two students died after a school shooting in Iowa.

• President Biden's classified documents probe is a "self-inflicted wound" which has damaged the president and the Democratic Party, said John Bolton, Donald Trump's former national security adviser.



## Gov. Kristi Noem's Personal Cell Phone Hacked

PIERRE, S.D. – Following the leak of Governor Kristi Noem and her family's personal Social Security numbers and other private information by the January 6th Committee, Governor Noem's personal cell phone number has been hacked and used to make hoax calls. Governor Noem had no involvement in these calls.

"Callous mishandling of personal information has real world consequences," said Governor Noem. "If you get such a phone call from my number, know that I had no involvement. I have urged both the United States Attorney General and multiple congressional committees to investigate the leaking of my family's personal information, and I look forward to whatever resolution they can provide."

The South Dakota Fusion Center has been notified of this breach.

## Gov. Noem Funds Equipment at South Dakota Tech Colleges

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced \$10 million in funding for modern equipment at South Dakota's four technical colleges. The funding will come from Future Funds and thus will not require a legislative appropriation. Governor Noem is providing a 2-to-1 match for funding that is being put up by the technical colleges themselves for a total investment of \$15 million.

"This equipment will help our technical colleges train our kids and grandkids for the jobs of the future," said Governor Noem. "We have some of the best technical colleges in the nation, and we will continue working closely with them to tackle our state's workforce needs."

Lake Area Technical College in Watertown received \$4.7 million in Future Funds for a \$7.1 million total investment. The largest investments went to the following programs: Heavy Equipment Operator, Robotics/Electronics, Precision Machining, Med Fire Rescue, and Diesel Technology.

Mitchell Technical College in Mitchell received \$2.3 million in Future Funds for a \$3.5 million total investment. The largest investments went to the following programs: Technician Programs, Radiology Technology, and Sonography.

Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls received \$1.6 million in Future Funds for a \$2.4 million total investment. The largest investments went to the following programs: Licensed Practical Nursing, Mechanics Technology, and Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

Western Dakota Technical College in Rapid City received \$1.6 million in future funds for a \$2.3 million total investment. The largest investments went to the following areas: student housing, classroom furniture, and the CDL-Truck Driving program.

South Dakota's technical colleges are governed by the South Dakota Board of Technical Education.

# GDILIVE.COM

## 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)

GDI Subscribers will have free access.

## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### Tinker v. Des Moines: Anchoring Students' Free Speech Rights

Half a century later, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) remains the Supreme Court's authoritative ruling on symbolic speech and the First Amendment rights of K-12 students to express their political views.

Delivered in the context of the widespread social activism that defined the 1960s—anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-war protests—Justice Abe Fortas's 7-2 landmark opinion upheld the right of students to wear black armbands in school as means of demonstrating their opposition to the Vietnam War. Justice Fortas famously declared that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate," unless it "materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others."

Mary Beth Tinker, a 13-year-old 8th grader, along with her brother John and friend Chris Eckhardt, both high school students, displayed their opposition to the war on December 16, 1965, by wearing black armbands in their respective schools in Des Moines. School district officials had gotten wind of their plans and had issued an order prohibiting armbands from city schools, even though students often displayed political campaign buttons and Iron Crosses and engaged in other forms of symbolic speech. The prohibition was aimed at anti-war speech, which, on its face, violated Supreme Court rulings that banned the state from practicing "viewpoint discrimination." Nonetheless, as expected, the students were suspended from school for violating the district's policy. Members of the school board, after a heated public meeting, voted to maintain the ban and suspension of students.

The students went to court, represented by the Iowa Civil Liberties Union. A federal district judge acknowledged that the armbands represented a form of symbolic speech and thus deserved First Amendment protection. But that right, the court ruled, was secondary in importance to the school's greater need to maintain a "disciplined atmosphere" in the classroom. On appeal, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals was equally divided, leaving the lower court ruling in place and setting the stage for a showdown in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Until *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Supreme Court had said little about the rights of schoolchildren, but what it had said was memorable. In 1943, in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, Justice Robert H. Jackson's opinion for the Court upheld student's freedom of religion and speech but established no test or standard. Jackson wrote of the role and duty of public schools: "That they are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual, if we are not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of government as mere platitudes."

Justice Fortas's opinion grasped the opportunity to thread the needle between the school's interest in classroom discipline and the right of students to express themselves. The Tinkers' armbands, he agreed, "may start an argument or cause a disturbance." But "our Constitution says we must take this risk." He added, "This hazardous freedom—this kind of openness—is the basis of our national strength and independence" in an often "disputatious society."

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The record, Justice Fortas explained, indicated no evidence of disruption in the schools, no finding or showing of forbidden conduct in the classroom. School officials' "undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression." The test or standard, he wrote, must be evidence of a "material disruption" of classroom activities to censor speech.

The "material disruption" test is fair and reasonable. A lesser standard would drain freedom of expression of its meaning. The state's interest in imposing a prohibition on a "particular expression of opinion," Fortas wrote, cannot be justified by a "mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint." If discomfort became the standard for denying constitutional protection, there would be little or no protection for speech that challenged convention, strangling, as it were, in the words of Justice Jackson, "the free mind at its source."

Students are "persons" too, Justice Fortas pointed out, "in school as well as outside school, possessed of fundamental rights that the state must respect." Three members of the Court challenged the idea that students enjoyed the same constitutional rights as those possessed by adults. Justice Potter Stewart wrote a brief concurring opinion, indicating his doubts about such constitutional equivalence.

But it is Justice Hugo Black's stinging dissent, joined by Justice John Harlan, that surprised many familiar with his long and distinguished record of defending freedom of speech, to the point where he was described by some as nearly an "absolutist" when it came to the First Amendment right of expression.

Black, in his 80s and, in the estimation of some friends, growing "crotchety," was of the old school that believed children should be seen and not heard. Black's dissent asserted that the Court's opinion was ushering in "the beginning of a new revolutionary era of permissiveness in this country fostered by the judiciary." He lumped the students, who were entirely peaceful and passive in their symbolic protest, with the "loudest-mouthed" students who "have too often violently attacked" their classmates. Justice Black wasn't the first, and won't be the last, Justice to engage in hyperbole.

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## Groton Are hoop teams have clean sweep over Northwestern

Four players hit double figures as Groton Area defeated Northwestern in boys basketball action played Monday in Groton, 77-52.

The Tigers jumped out to an 18-0 lead en route to a 27-14 first quarter lead Lane Tietz made 13 points in the first quarter and Cole Simon had seven. Groton Area led at half time, 45-25, and after three quarters, 59-38.

Lane Tietz made three of six three-pointers for 19 points, four rebounds, two assists and four steals. Jacob Zak made 14 points, had five rebounds, four assists and two steals. Cole Simon had 13 points, two rebounds, four assists and two steals. Tate Larson had 10 points, four rebounds, one assist and one steal. Ryder Johnson had eight points, three rebounds and one assist. Keegan Tracy made two three-pointers in the fourth quarter to have six points. Cade Larson had five points and three assists. Taylor Diegel had two points and four steals. Colby Dunker had one rebound and one assist. Logan Ringgenberg had one rebound, three assists and two blocks.

The Tigers made 21 of 32 two-pointers for 66 percent, nine of 18 three-pointers for 50 percent, eight of 19 free throws for 42 percent, had 20 rebounds, 15 turnovers, 19 assists, 15 steals, 15 team fouls and two blocks.

Lincoln Woodring and Jude Ortmeier led the Wildcats with 13 points apiece, Chase Neiber had 11, Reilly Schmitt had five, Quintin Fischbach four, Nathan Melus three, Dallas Stoltenberg two and Tanner Ewalt one. Northwestern made 20 of 45 total field goals for 44 percent, was eight of 11 from the line for 73 percent, had 19 team fouls and 13 turnovers.

The girls varsity game featured eight lead changes with the game being tied four times before the Tigers got the upper hand for the 39-33 win. Northwestern held an 11-7 lead after the first quarter and an 18-16 lead at half time. Groton Area was on top, 27-25, after three quarters of play. The tale of the game had to come from the free throw line as Groton Area was 14 of 24 while the Wildcats were three of eight. Both teams put up 47 shots with Groton Area making 10 and Northwestern 13.

Jaedyn Penning had 11 points, six rebounds, and one steal for the Tigers. Sydney Leicht also had 11 points, had two rebounds, one assist and four steals. Brooke Gengerke had five points, two rebounds, one assist and two steals. Kennedy Hansen had five points, one rebound and one assist. Faith Traphagen had three points, three rebounds and one steal. Aspen Johnson had two points, five rebounds and one steal. Jerica Locke had two points, seven rebounds, three assists, two steals and one block. Rylee Dunker had two rebounds, one assist and one steal.

Groton Area had 28 rebounds, 14 turnovers, seven assists, 12 steals, 17 team fouls and one blocked shot.

Adriana Ratigan led the Wildcats with 11 points while Ashley Haven and Tara Blachford each had eight and Ella Haven had six points. Northwestern had 25 turnovers and 21 team fouls.

The Groton Area boys junior varsity team defeated Northwestern, 58-23. Scoring for the Tigers: Ryder Johnson 9, Logan Ringgenberg 8, Holden Sippel 6, Dillon Abeln 5, Keegan Tracy 5, Gage Sippel 4, Carter Simon 2, Colby Dunker 2, Turner Thompson 2, and Logan Pearson 2.

Dallas Stoltenberg led Northwestern with 14 points.

And the Tiger squads made it a clean sweep with a 37-17 win in the girls junior varsity game. Scoring for Groton Area: Kennedy H Hansen 13, Taryn Traphagen 6, Brooklyn Hansen 5, Laila Roberts 2, Kella Tracy 3, faith Traphagen 2, Talli Wright 2, Mia Crank 1.

Natalia Schipke led Northwestern with five points.

All four games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. Shane Clark provided the play-by-play action for the girls games. The Junior Varsity games were sponsored by Gordon and Dorene Nelson. The varsity games were 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.

## 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.



# GDILIVE.COM

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

**C Game starts at 5 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  
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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Infrastructure bill resists attempts to quash it in House of Representatives

**Monday vote frees up \$200 million in funding for workforce housing**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 23, 2023 6:02 PM**

PIERRE – The House of Representatives sent a \$200 million infrastructure bill to Gov. Kristi Noem’s desk on Monday with a hard-won 54-16 vote.

Senate Bill 41 is a fix to 2022 bill that sought to send infrastructure funds to developers to help fill gaps in workforce housing. The agency deemed responsible for dispersing the mix of state and federal funds decided not to award the money over concerns that it lacked the authority to do so.

Several planned projects were placed on hold as a result of the hold-up.

The new bill clarifies that the Housing Development Authority can dispense the funds, \$150 million of which comes from state coffers. The updated bill for 2023 uses \$100 million of those state funds to create a revolving loan program to support continued development.

The bill carries an emergency clause, which means it will become law the moment Gov. Noem signs it, which she has promised to do. That clause also required that the bill earn the support of two-thirds of House members.

The Senate passed the bill in its first week of session. The bill was a harder sell in the House, which has several members who opposed the proposal last session and carried their opposition into the 2023 session.

On Friday, the House punted the bill to this week, scuttling hopes for a more rapid win by its sponsors. On Monday, the bill survived four attempts to amend it, with pitches that would have removed the emergency clause, defined workforce housing, made it a felony for a lawmaker to benefit financially from the funds and barred developers using the funds from using tax-increment financing.

Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, decried the bill as a harmful disruption to the housing market that puts more responsibility for community growth and personal well-being in the hands of government bureaucrats.

Karr pointed to efforts to offer parental leave and bolster daycares as evidence that the state is intervening too often in the markets.

“Perhaps the next session, we can figure out how we can make sure everybody has a car, so that way they can get to and from their government-incentivized house to their government-incentivized daycare to their government-incentivized job,” Karr said.

Arguments from Karr and others only delayed an outcome that wasn’t in question, according to many who spoke on the floor. Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, the prime sponsor in the House, said he spent hours trying to convince opponents to come to his side on Sunday, but to no avail.

Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg, challenged other members to explain how the bill squares with the state GOP platform, but only after saying “it probably won’t change anyone’s mind.”

Several opponents spoke of the poor precedent the state would set by using one-time funds – some of the money came through federal COVID-19 relief – to deal with ongoing problems.

Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, disputed that, noting the creation of the revolving loan fund in the updated bill.

“We should not confuse the difference between a one-time expense and an ongoing benefit,” Venhuizen said.

After an hour and a half of debate, the bill passed with the two-thirds majority required for a bill with an

emergency clause. Immediately following the vote, Rep. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, attempted to undo it by accusing Rep. Chase of a conflict of interest. House Speaker Hugh Bartels, R-Watertown, quickly dispatched that argument, saying his review of the effort showed no financial interest for Chase in Senate Bill 41.

The bill now heads to Noem's desk.

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

## Bill to change the makeup of state Tribal Relations Committee passes Senate

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 23, 2023 5:27 PM**

PIERRE—A bill that would change the bipartisan makeup of the state's Tribal Relations Committee passed through the Senate 27-7 on Monday and now heads to the House.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, R- Watertown, would strike a requirement for balance between Democrats and Republicans on the committee. Opponents argue that the move will reduce the number of tribal legislators on the committee.

The South Dakota State Tribal Relations Committee is responsible for fostering relationships between the state government and South Dakota's nine tribal nations.

The committee is currently made up of six Republicans and four Democrats. There are 94 Republicans and 11 Democrats in the legislature.

The bill strikes a rule requiring that no more than six committee members be appointed from the same political party with one where appointments are "proportional to a party's representation," with at least two members appointed from the minority party.

Proponents call it a win-win

Proponents argue that it would create a more fair representation of the state's population. The current structure has accomplished little for the tribes, said Rep. Tamara St. John, R-Sisseton.

"Homeownership is a huge issue, housing is a huge issue on the reservations," St. John said after the bill was introduced last week. "Those things are super important. So, we need to have conversations about these issues and not so much the prevailing cultural issues that take up the current committee's time."

Additionally, Schoenbeck said, the proposed changes would create learning opportunities for non-tribal members.

"People should quit putting Native Americans on this committee because it runs contrary to the interests of the tribal communities," Schoenbeck said during a committee hearing. "What you should do is put people who are not Native American on this committee so that they get exposed to, and get an understanding for, the state tribal issues."

Shoenbeck said he did not talk with members of the state's tribes or current committee members prior to introducing the bill.

Critics say it sidelines tribal influence

Critics argue that the bill suggests expertise does not matter on the committee. Only committee Republicans have backed the change, said Sen. Shawn Bordeaux, D-Mission.

Bordeaux is a member of the committee.

"I think the underlying motivation is just to get rid of another Native American from the Senate side of the state tribal Relations Committee," Bordeaux said. "We only have two of us that are Native American: Senator (Red Dawn) Foster from Pine Ridge and myself from Rosebud."

The tribes have unique perspectives that need to be heard and addressed, according to O.J. Semans, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and co-executive director of Four Directions Native American Voting Rights.

"Within South Dakota, we have nine separate nations, nine different governments, and those governments operate on their own laws and principles," Semans said. "And in order for the state to work with these nations, they need to have input from tribal members within committees."

The committee serves as a platform for tribes to share their thoughts and concerns with the state government, and for state Government to share its plans and actions with the tribes.

The committee meets to discuss issues and to work on finding solutions, Bordeaux said, but few meetings have taken place recently.

The committee has clashed with Governor Kristi Noem and other Republicans in recent years. In 2020, it issued a rebuke of Noem's executive order moving the Office of Indian Education into the jurisdiction of the state Department of Education.

Last year's Speaker of the House Spencer Gosch and Schoenbeck removed all committee members the following year.

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

## 'Center for American Exceptionalism' gets first committee endorsement

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 23, 2023 4:21 PM**

A House panel endorsed a bill that would create a Center for American Exceptionalism at Black Hills State University on Monday.

House Bill 1070, introduced by Rep. Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, passed through the House Education Committee on a 9-6 vote and now heads to the House Appropriations Committee.

The bill would allocate \$150,000 for the center, which would curate supplemental curriculum on American history and civic education. Teachers would not be obligated to teach the center's lessons, nor would the lessons be folded into the official curricula for K-12 or university students in the state.

If passed and signed into law, the center would be responsible for :

Developing an American history K-12 curriculum, including South Dakota and Native American history, that local school districts could adopt.

Offering professional development workshops to teachers about educating children on American history, government institutions, civic engagement, civil discourse and constitutional rights.

Overseeing the promotion and implementation of "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program" at South Dakota schools.

Developing college courses comparing communist and socialist countries to Western-style democratic countries and comparing command-style socialist economies to free-market capitalist economies throughout history.

"We're not interested in indoctrinating students," Odenbach told the committee. "We want students to engage in critical thinking."

The \$150,000 earmarked for the center would fund two full-time positions at BHSU during its first year of operation, Odenbach said.

Proponents were connected to BHSU or had worked directly with the "We the People" program, including a Spearfish teacher and a former employee of the Chiesman Center for Democracy. "We the People" is a course and competition that aims to teach students about governance and civic engagement.

Opponents included representatives and lobbyists for South Dakota school groups and the Bureau of Finance and Management.

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The bill does not "serve a need," said Rob Monson, with the School Administrators of South Dakota. Monson, echoing several opponents, said the framework to address curriculum is "already set up." The state Department of Education's Division of Learning and Instruction handles K-12 curriculum, and university curriculum is covered by the Board of Regents for college students.

Dianna Miller, with the Large School Group, also pointed to the South Dakota Board of Standards as an existing entity to handle curriculum needs. "We the People" supporters could request that the program be included in the next round of standards, she said.

"You're bringing private entities into deciding curriculum," Miller said. "I would caution you to be very careful about all the people you want involved in statewide education."

Monson added that \$150,000 would not be enough to cover the cost of such an organization, since larger school districts regularly spend around \$400,000 for curriculum in one content area.

School districts would have the choice to use the curriculum produced by the center, Odenbach said of his proposal, and it would start out as a supplemental curriculum.

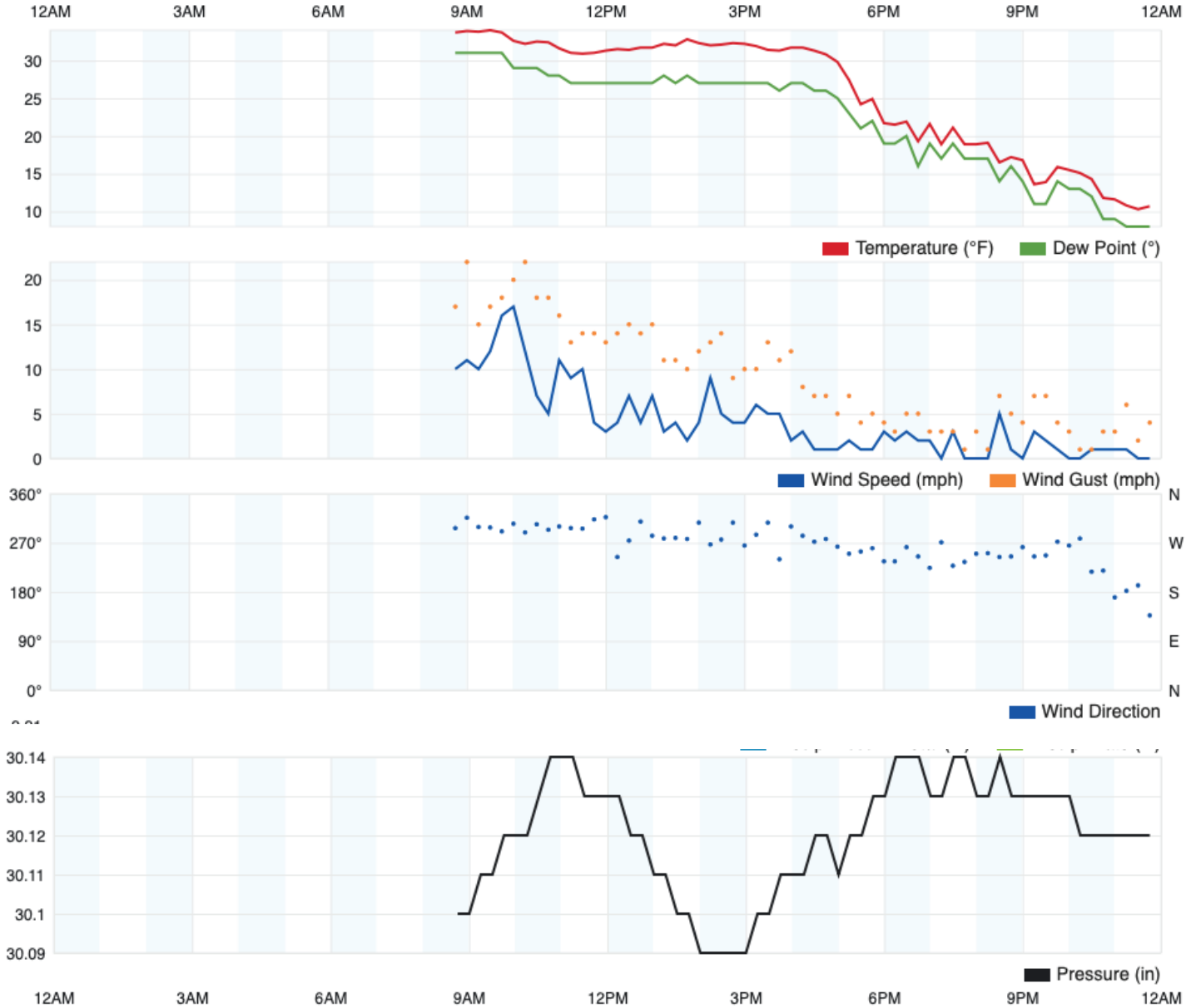
"We would be very well served to have an institute like this at one of our universities that could partner up with our K-12 and basically let the taxpayers get their money's worth in letting all the institutions that are publicly funded work together to make education better in this state," Odenbach said.

*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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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow and Blustery	Slight Chance Snow and Blustery then Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Partly Sunny and Breezy	Windy. Wintry Mix Likely then Chance Wintry Mix	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy then Mostly Cloudy
High: 30 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 16 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 34 °F



## Through The Week

January 24, 2023  
4:42 AM

Two Systems Followed By An Arctic Plunge

### Clipper System Today/Tonight

- Morning Fog
- Very Light Snow (Dusting to 1/2 Inch)
- Strong Winds Tonight (Gusts > 30mph)

### Clipper System Late Thurs - Friday

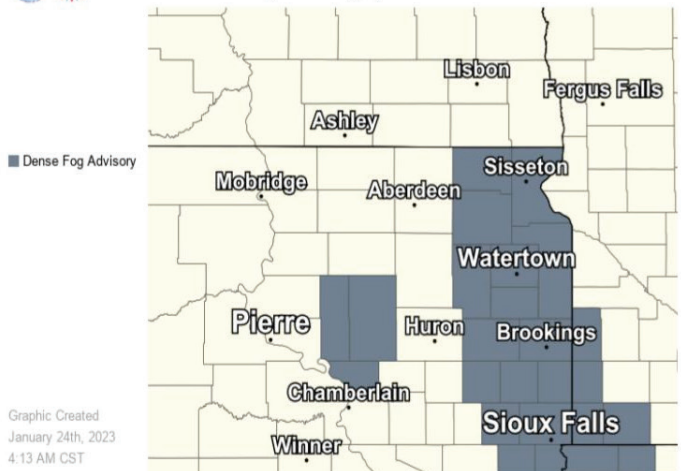
- Strong Winds (Gusts > 50mph)
- Wintry Mix + Blowing Snow

### Arctic Plunge

- Temperatures This Weekend 20 to 30 Degrees Below Average



Current Watches, Warnings, and Advisories



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Looks like the weather is get a bit more inclement this week. The first clipper we're tracking will bring some very light snow and windy conditions with a very brief cooldown. The second, stronger system will come with a wintry mix, much stronger winds and is followed by a much colder airmass.

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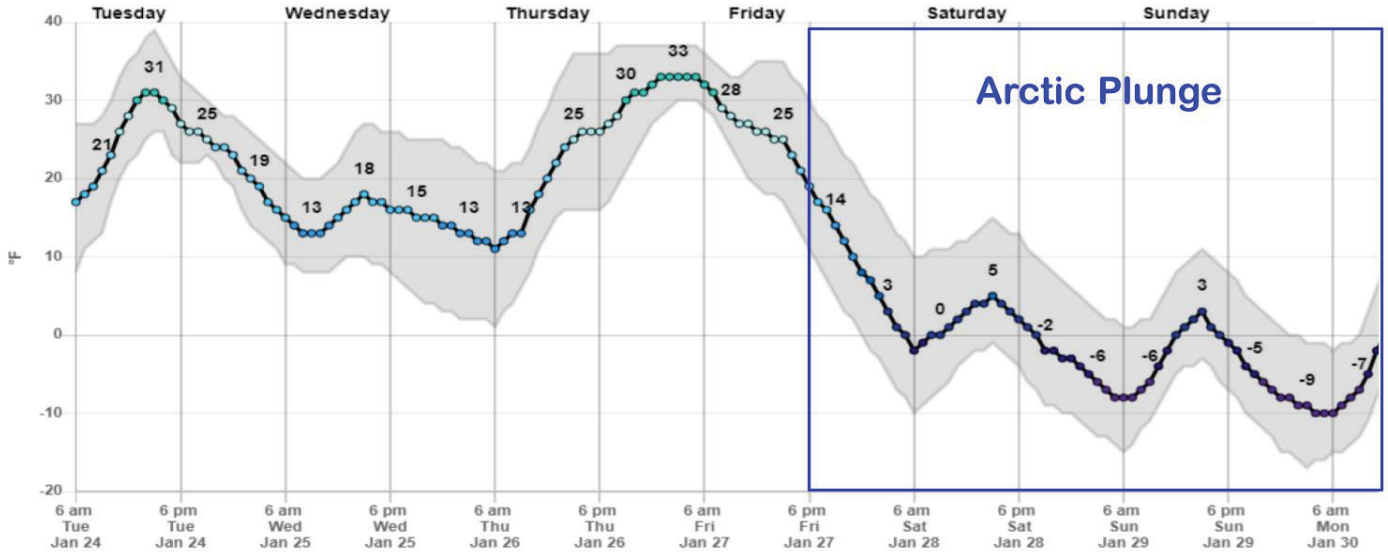


## Temperatures Across The Forecast Area

January 24, 2023  
4:53 AM

Highs & Lows Through The Weekend

### Regional Temperature Forecast



(Warmest = Central SD/Colest = Northeast SD/western MN)



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Mild temperatures continue with a brief cool down on Wednesday before mild air returns. The switch is flipped late Friday when Arctic air moves back into the region.



## Wind Gust Forecast

January 24, 2023  
4:53 AM

Arctic Plunge

### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	1/24 Tue		1/25 Wed						1/26 Thu						1/27 Fri						1/28 Sat										
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am								
Aberdeen	14	14	18	18	17	25	31	32	29	26	22	16	8	8	7	7	8	9	17	30	40	44	43	41	37	28	26	24	21	21	18
Britton	18	21	18	16	15	21	26	28	28	23	20	16	9	9	6	5	5	9	21	32	43	44	40	40	40	30	28	25	22	20	16
Eagle Butte	25	30	35	36	33	32	30	30	26	20	23	24	28	30	30	26	18	18	28	40	51	52	48	47	46	29	28	23	21	21	21
Eureka	16	18	28	28	29	29	29	31	23	15	16	16	14	15	14	15	13	23	36	43	46	51	52	48	32	28	25	22	20	17	
Gettysburg	14	21	25	26	26	30	32	32	30	21	18	18	15	17	20	20	18	13	22	31	43	46	46	45	44	31	26	23	20	20	18
Kennebec	14	21	22	20	15	26	33	35	35	26	24	21	13	16	21	22	21	14	17	23	39	49	49	45	44	30	29	23	16	17	20
McIntosh	26	30	36	36	35	33	30	25	17	14	18	23	28	29	26	21	14	15	30	41	49	52	52	46	29	25	23	21	20	18	
Milbank	10	14	18	17	14	16	23	30	33	31	31	29	26	25	18	16	13	8	14	21	37	43	41	44	44	32	31	29	26	23	20
Miller	16	16	22	21	18	25	29	29	28	25	22	20	13	13	10	13	14	14	17	26	38	43	44	45	44	30	25	22	18	20	20
Mobridge	13	21	25	26	23	26	29	25	22	13	13	13	12	16	17	16	13	12	20	31	45	47	44	46	45	30	24	22	20	18	16
Murdo	22	25	25	23	18	23	30	32	30	23	23	23	21	26	29	28	22	16	23	31	47	53	49	46	45	28	26	23	17	20	20
Pierre	9	18	20	18	18	26	29	30	26	18	16	16	14	16	20	20	15	10	17	26	40	46	45	41	39	28	25	21	17	18	18
Redfield	13	12	14	14	14	26	30	31	29	28	25	18	10	8	8	8	9	15	26	35	39	43	43	41	29	28	23	21	20	20	
Sisseton	12	16	20	18	18	23	26	31	31	30	26	25	22	21	14	12	10	9	16	24	38	45	44	44	44	33	31	29	28	23	20
Watertown	12	16	17	17	15	17	21	25	29	29	28	26	22	18	13	12	10	9	16	24	36	40	43	43	41	32	31	29	24	20	17
Webster	18	20	20	18	18	22	29	31	33	31	28	26	18	16	10	10	10	8	18	31	43	47	46	47	47	32	31	29	25	23	20
Wheaton	13	15	15	14	10	14	22	26	28	28	26	25	23	21	14	12	10	7	14	18	29	31	33	37	37	32	31	30	28	24	20



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD



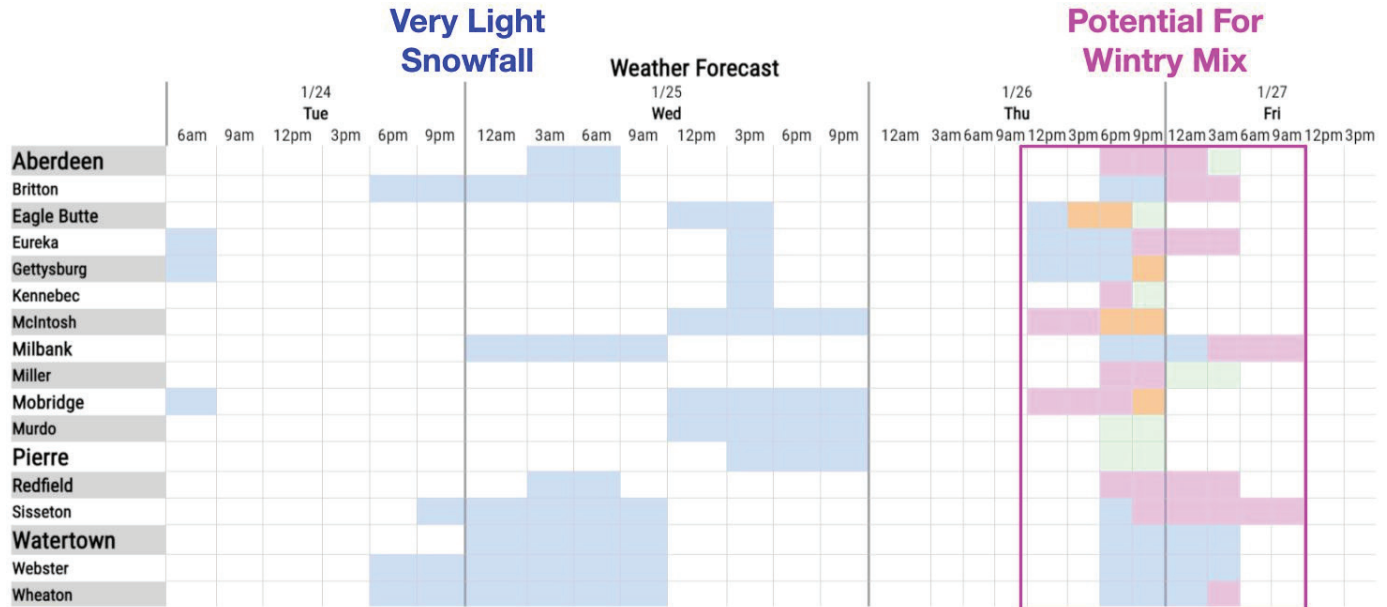
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## Weather Associated With Clippers

January 24, 2023  
4:53 AM



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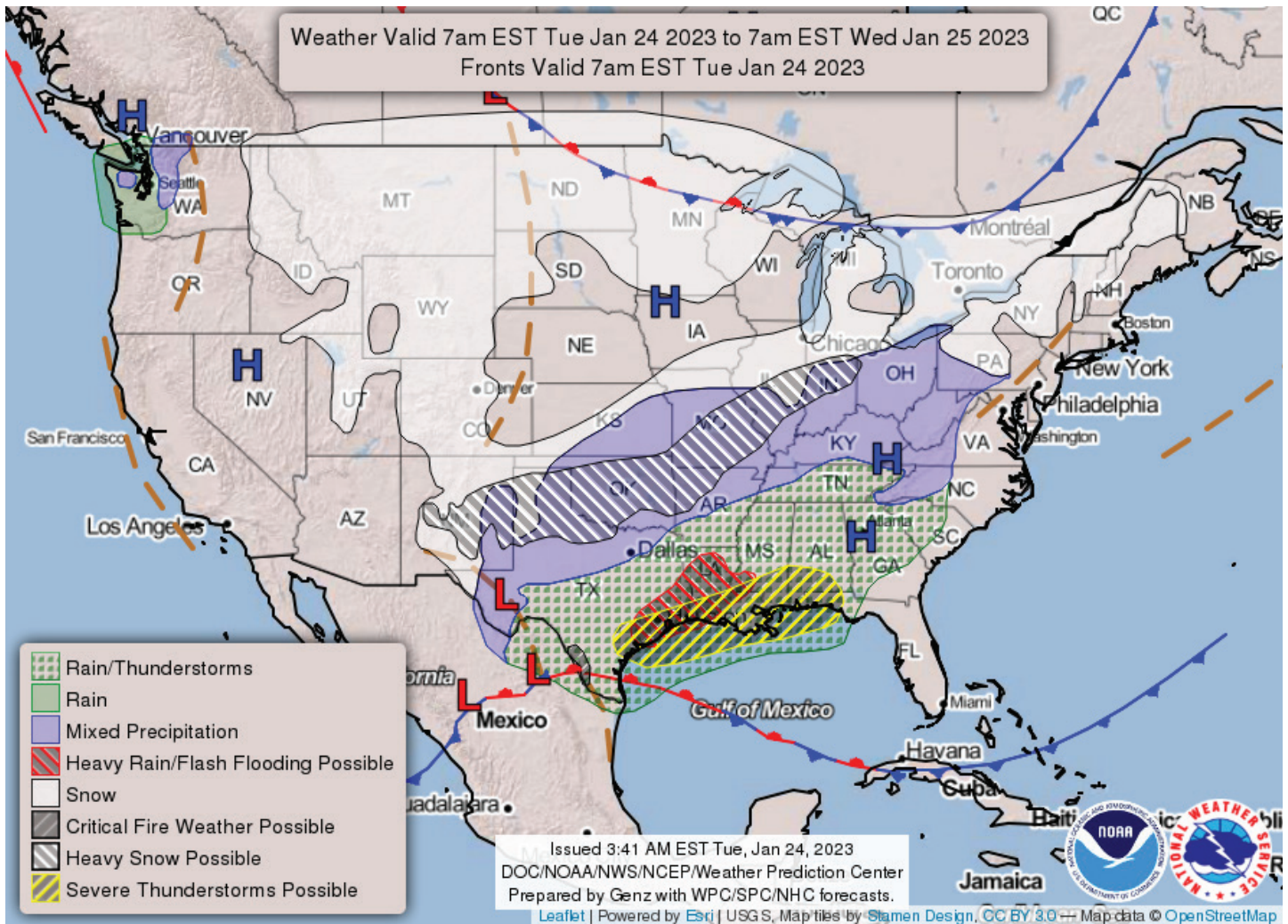
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 34 °F at 9:07 AM**  
**Low Temp: 10 °F at 11:21 PM**  
**Wind: 22 mph at 9:00 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 9 hours, 29 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1981  
Record Low: -35 in 1915  
Average High: 24°F  
Average Low: 1°F  
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.44  
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.44  
Precip Year to Date: 0.00  
Sunset Tonight: 5:29:01 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58:59 AM



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## Today in Weather History

January 24, 1972: Snowfall of a dusting to as much as 8 inches accompanied by 30 to 40 mph winds resulted in widespread blowing and drifting snow across much of South Dakota. Many roads were blocked by drifting snow. Visibilities were near zero at times. Many activities were canceled or postponed.

January 24, 1985: Blizzard conditions associated with an Arctic front moved into western Minnesota and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and continued into the evening. The blizzard brought travel to a standstill. Winds increased to 40 to 60 mph. Many roads were closed due to drifts of snow. Temperatures fell rapidly behind the front with wind chills of 30 to 50 below zero overnight. There were some accidents and stranded motorists. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with many people stranded. The National Guard was called upon to search for stranded motorists. Portions of northeast South Dakota experienced near-blizzard conditions as wind speeds gusted to near 60 mph with dangerous travel conditions.

1916 - The temperature at Browning MT plunged 100 degrees in just 24 hours, from 44 degrees above zero to 56 degrees below zero. It was a record 24 hour temperature drop for the U.S. (Weather Channel) (National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1935 - Snowstorms hit the northeastern U.S. and the Pacific Northwest producing record 24 hour snowfall totals of 23 inches at Portland ME and 52 inches at Winthrop MA. (David Ludlum)

1940: A record-breaking 19.9 inches of snow fell in Richmond, Virginia, on this day. The storm, which began on the 23rd, produced 21.6 inches of snow for the Richmond area. The headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch was "Blizzard Sweeps State, Bringing Deep Snow; Public Schools Closed."

1956 - Thirty-eight inches of rain deluged the Kilauea Sugar Plantation of Hawaii in 24 hours, including twelve inches in just one hour. (David Ludlum)

1963 - A great arctic outbreak reached the southern U.S. The cold wave broke many records for duration of cold weather along the Gulf Coast. A reading of 15 degrees below zero at Nashville TN was an all-time record low for that location. (David Ludlum)

1967: A tornado outbreak across the Central U.S. was the furthest north ever recorded in the winter up to that time. Severe weather occurred across a good portion of the southeast and east-central Iowa. Two-inch hail fell at Armstrong, and over two dozen tornadoes were reported. Five miles north of Fort Madison, one fatality occurred from a tornado, along with six injuries. A tornado causing F4 damage killed 3 people and injured 216 in St. Louis County, Missouri. Storms also affected parts of northern and central Illinois. One strong tornado in Mason County killed one person and injured three others. Another tornado moved across the Champaign-Urbana metropolitan area, injuring five people. Other strong tornadoes were reported across Carroll County in Mt. Carroll, where 12 people were injured, and near Gladstone in Henderson County. Funnel clouds were reported across the southwest section of Chicago, IL. Iowa had never recorded a tornado in January before this outbreak. 32 total tornadoes occurred, 14 of them in Iowa. Nine twisters occurred in Missouri, 8 in Illinois, and 1 in Wisconsin.

1982 - Chinook winds plagued the foothills of southeastern Wyoming and northern and central Colorado for the second straight Sunday. The winds gusted to 140 mph at Wondervu CO, located northeast of Denver. Chinook winds a week earlier produced wind gusts to 137 mph. (Storm Data)

1987 - Temperatures in Minnesota plunged far below the zero mark. International Falls MN reported a morning low of 35 degrees below zero, and Warroad MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 45 below zero. A storm developing in northeastern Texas produced severe thunderstorms with large hail in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Camden AR reported golf ball size hail. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A blizzard rapidly developed in the north central U.S. In just one hour weather conditions in eastern North Dakota switched from sunny skies, light winds and temperature readings in the 20s, to rapidly falling temperatures and near zero visibility in snow and blowing snow. High winds in Wyoming, gusting to 72 mph at Gillette, produced snow drifts sixteen feet high. Northwestern Iowa experienced its second blizzard in just 24 hours. High winds in Iowa produced wind chill readings as cold as 65 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE BEST-LAID PLANS

The only certainty in life is that life is uncertain. We never know, from one moment to the next, what God may have in store for us. Our God is eternal and in control of everything, everywhere, all of the time. Although we may have the utmost confidence in the plans He has for our lives, we must always be alert to His gentle guidance and compassionate care, and at times His stern discipline and chastening. We know that He has a plan for each of us and that it is a good and perfect plan.

But we must never become complacent and feel that we have more knowledge about our lives than He does. It is foolish to chart a course for ourselves, close our eyes to His will, stop our ears to His voice, and try to take control of things and plan our future without Him.

Solomon wisely said, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." Plans for any future date can never be certain because we do not know what God may have in store for us. Now, does that mean we are not to plan for tomorrow?

The ability to plan is a gift from God. We see it throughout His carefully crafted creation. Since we are created in His image, we are endowed with the ability to plan. However, the warning contained in this proverb is the folly of presumptuous boasting about our plans - doing what we want to do without taking God's Word, ways, and will into our plans. God is in control of His universe and that includes each of us. We must take the gifts He has given us, look for the opportunities He sets before us, seek His guidance and follow Him closely.

Prayer: Father, may we look to You each moment of every day asking You to reveal Your plans for us. May we look to You to guide us, guard us, and give us Your help. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Proverbs 27:1



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 DRAW: 15 Hrs 17 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.23.23

6 8 16 43 47 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$34,370,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 17 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.23.23

1 2 26 36 38 1

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.21.23

3 11 12 22 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$27,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 17 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.23.23

6 15 31 45 58 5

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 16 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.23.23

12 31 47 58 60 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$526,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 16 Mins 25 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

## Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 64, Warner 41  
Clark/Willow Lake 55, Great Plains Lutheran 25  
DeSmet 56, Castlewood 36  
Deuel 77, Britton-Hecla 51  
Estelline/Hendricks 66, Wilmot 35  
Faith 63, Philip 59  
Freeman 49, Mitchell Christian 22  
Groton Area 77, Northwestern 52  
Lennox 69, West Central 44  
Marty Indian 59, Avon 29  
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 51, Sioux Falls Lutheran 50, OT  
Richland, N.D. 63, Sisseton 55  
St. Mary's, Neb. 53, Gregory 50  
Stuart, Neb. 63, Burke 20  
Vermillion 70, Pine Ridge 52  
Wakpala 58, Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 43  
Wausa, Neb. 56, Gayville-Volin 33

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Burke 50, Stuart, Neb. 32  
Corsica/Stickney 48, Bridgewater-Emery 27  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 56, Garretson 43  
Deuel 46, Britton-Hecla 42  
Ethan 52, Canistota 22  
Freeman 59, Mitchell Christian 18  
Groton Area 39, Northwestern 33  
Howard 51, McCook Central/Montrose 42  
Kimball/White Lake 42, Platte-Geddes 39  
Lennox 67, Madison 22  
Lyman 73, Colome 45  
Miller 43, Chamberlain 31  
Mobridge-Pollock 58, Potter County 47  
Napoleon/G-S, N.D. 56, Herreid/Selby Area 46  
New Underwood 50, Kadoka Area 46  
Sioux Falls Christian 67, West Central 55  
Sisseton 62, Richland, N.D. 33  
South Border, N.D. 76, North Border 68  
South Border, N.D. 76, North Central Co-Op 68, OT  
St. Mary's, Neb. 61, Gregory 46  
Wakpala 54, Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 23  
Warner 57, Aberdeen Christian 13  
Wausa, Neb. 44, Gayville-Volin 30  
Webster 53, Waverly-South Shore 17



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Winner 61, Crow Creek 47

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

## South Dakota House passes \$200M for housing infrastructure

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House passed a \$200 million fund for housing infrastructure projects, pushing the funding package over its final hurdle in the Legislature after a right-wing group of Republicans sought to thwart its passage.

The funding package evenly divides the \$200 million between loans and grants from the South Dakota Housing Development Authority for construction companies to build infrastructure projects like roads and water lines around new housing developments. It uses \$150 million of state general funds and \$50 million in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.

It is one of the first pieces of legislation to clear the Republican-controlled Legislature this year and includes an emergency clause that will allow the money to be distributed immediately after Gov. Kristi Noem signs it. The distribution of the funding has seen delays since amid a political fight between a right-wing group of lawmakers and the Republican governor.

Last year, the Republican-controlled Legislature, against the governor's wishes, allocated the funds to the South Dakota Housing Development Authority rather than the Governor's Office of Economic Development. The Housing Development Authority, however, declined to spend the money because it did not match with its mission of providing housing for low- and moderate-income people and made the funding available regardless of income level.

Republican Rep. Roger Chase, who carried the bill in the House, said that he heard from many communities last year that had to halt housing projects until the funding could be distributed. The Legislature has sought to spur housing development amid a labor shortage in the rural state.

"This is an important economic development tool that we are creating," he said.

The governor and Republican legislative leaders aimed to speed a fix to the issue through the Statehouse this year and included an emergency clause that would allow the money to be spent ahead of the spring construction season. It faced a final legislative vote in the House last week, but a right-wing group of lawmakers sought to stop the funding.

On Monday, some House lawmakers appeared determined to halt passage of the funding package, even if it meant by only a few minutes. A group of right-wing lawmakers pushed multiple amendments to the bill, inducing rounds of vote and debate that stretched into the afternoon.

Republican Rep. Jon Hansen derided the package as "big government spending" that would subsidize a construction industry already seeing plenty of growth. Republicans opposed to the bill also harped on where the money would be sent.

Republican Rep. Phil Jensen, who opposed the bill, also accused his fellow GOP member, Chase, of engaging in a conflict of interest by carrying the bill because he works in the real estate industry as a broker. Republican House Speaker Hugh Bartels overruled Jensen's objection.

The bill, which passed Monday on a 54-16 vote, gained the two-thirds majority needed to enact it immediately and will head to Noem's desk for final signature.

## State lawmakers: Teach 'American exceptionalism' in schools

By AMANCAI BIRABEN Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A group of South Dakota lawmakers pushed forward an initiative on Monday that offers an optional social studies curriculum for K-12 and university students rooted in "American exceptionalism" and the founding ideals of the U.S.

Programs offering similar educational models have been explored in other states, like a Michigan-based program from conservative Hillsdale College that has found support in South Dakota, Tennessee and Florida

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lawmakers. But the Center for American Exceptionalism out of Black Hills State University, South Dakota's largest teacher preparation institute, would present a state-funded one.

The bill passed through the House education committee, which recommended it go to the state budget-making process. Should the bill be enacted, it would be the first of its kind, and would involve the center developing public university courses comparing the U.S. with socialist and communist nations, and overseeing a K-12 social and civic curriculum from the Center for Civic Education called, "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program."

Prime sponsor Republican Rep. Scott Odenbach emphasized that the \$150,000 bill aims to balance critical thinking with a love for the U.S.

He said when students graduate from institutions, "they should love America."

Black Hills State University political science professor Nicholas Drummond praised the center's proposed goal of creating a unified history by generating hope for the future based on founding ideals. He argued the country is going down two paths; one of excessive individualism and another of warring identity politics.

"I spent far too much time studying the decline of this country," Drummond said. "(It) leads us away from a conception of a national interest in the common good."

Odenbach referenced Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's recent enthusiasm for social studies that embrace the nation's founding ideals. He also argued it would help school districts avoid education material companies that can charge the state \$400,000 to implement even just one content area.

Jonathan Zimmerman, an education historian at the University of Pennsylvania, said that "American exceptionalism" has long been a "rallying cry" on the political right, but he was not aware of anywhere else where such an educational goal has been enshrined in law. He added that liberals have also embraced ideals like equality and human rights that are detailed in the nation's founding documents.

The state's standards for social studies have been under review for over a year, and education groups have been critical of Noem's effort to infuse "patriotic" education goals into them. State education groups on Monday also pointed out limits to Odenbach's plan, such as its lack of long-term funding and being out of touch with individual schools.

Diana Miller, who lobbies for the state's 25 largest schools, said the proposed center would disrupt a delicate chain of command. She questioned why this bill involves adding another government entity and board into local school districts.

"K through 12 education is not broken," Miller said.

## South Dakota's Noem says cell phone number hacked

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that her personal cell phone number has been hacked and blamed it on the release of her Social Security number amid hundreds of documents that the House Jan. 6 committee released last year.

The Republican governor, who is weighing a 2024 White House bid, said in a statement that her personal cell phone number had been linked to hoax calls. She has written letters urging U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and Congress to investigate the release of her family's Social Security numbers after they were included in a list of personal information for thousands of people who visited the White House during then-President Donald Trump's term.

"Callous mishandling of personal information has real world consequences," Noem said in a statement. "If you get such a phone call from my number, know that I had no involvement."

Noem said that South Dakota's Fusion Center, a state agency that compiles criminal intelligence, has been notified of the cell phone hack. Her office did not offer further evidence that the release of her personal information led to the hack.

## South Dakota tribe: Storm deaths 'could have been prevented'

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Honor Beauvais' every breath was a battle as a snowstorm battered the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in

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South Dakota.

The asthmatic 12-year-old's worried aunt and uncle begged for help clearing a path to their cattle ranch near the community of Two Strike as his condition worsened, his fragile lungs fighting a massive infection. But when an ambulance finally managed to get through, Honor's uncle already was performing CPR, said his grandmother, Rose Cordier-Beauvais.

Honor, whose Lakota name is Yuonihan Ihanble, was pronounced dead last month at the Indian Health Service's hospital on the reservation, one of six deaths that tribal leaders say "could have been prevented" if not for a series of systemic failures. Targets of the frustration include Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, the U.S. Congress, the Indian Health Service and even — for some — the tribe itself.

"We were all just in shock," said Cordier-Beauvais, who recalled that when the snow finally cleared enough to hold the funeral, the family gave out toys to other children as a symbol of how he played with his siblings. "He loved giving them toys."

As the storm raged, families ran out of fuel, and two people froze to death, including one in their home, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe said in a letter this month seeking a presidential disaster declaration.

The letter described the situation on the reservation in a remote area on the state's far southern border with Nebraska, 130 miles (about 209 kilometers) southeast of Rapid City, as a "catastrophe."

And in a scathing State of the Tribes address delivered last week in the state Legislature, Peter Lengkeek, chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, accused emergency services of being "slow to react" as tribes struggled to clear the snow, with many using what he described as "outdated equipment and dilapidated resources."

Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, said the claims were part of a "false narrative" and "couldn't be further from the truth." The Indian Health Services didn't immediately return email messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Noem, who is seen as a potential contender for the 2024 White House, declared an emergency on Dec. 22 to respond to the winter storm and activated the state's National Guard to haul firewood to the tribe.

But by then the Rosebud Sioux Tribe was worn out from a series of storms starting about 10 days before that were so severe that its leaders ultimately rented two helicopters to drop food to remote locations and rescue the stranded.

The firewood, said OJ Semans, a consultant for the tribe, came in the form of uncut logs, which were not immediately usable. The tribe wrote in its letter that volunteers continue to work diligently to get the wood cut.

"It was a political stunt that did nothing to help the people that were in trouble," he said.

It all started on Dec. 12, when the tribe shut down offices so people could prepare for the first onslaught. The storm hit in earnest around midnight, dumping an average of nearly 2 feet (0.61 meters) of snow on the reservation, most of it in the first day, said Alex Lamers, a National Weather Service meteorologist.

By the time the storm let up on Dec. 16, the reservation also was coated with one-quarter of an inch of ice and wind gusts as high as 55 mph had blown the snow into drifts of up to 25 feet (7.6 meters).

The tribe issued a no travel advisory, except for emergencies, threatening a \$500 fine for violators. Still some traveled and got stuck, the tribe said, their abandoned vehicles creating a hazard for first responders.

Starting on Dec. 18, soon after the blizzard moved out, there were 11 straight days with sub-zero temperatures. Wind chills were dangerous, hitting -51 degrees Fahrenheit (-46.11 degrees Celsius) at their lowest. The length and severity of the cold made it one of the worst such stretches on record, Lamers said.

Then, as fierce cold and storms descended across much of the rest of the country, claiming at least 40 lives in western New York, a phenomenon called a ground blizzard hit the reservation on Dec. 22. Strong winds blew existing snow on the ground, and visibility fell to a quarter mile, Lamers said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs sent staff to help, and the White House said FEMA also spoke to the tribe's president. But snowplows were paralyzed in the cold, with the freezing temperatures turning the diesel fuel and hydraulics into gel, the tribe said.

Shawn Bordeaux, a Democratic state lawmaker and a former tribal council member, was running out

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of propane heat at his home on the reservation when Noem announced she was sending in the National Guard. Unable to get out and shop, he had no Christmas gifts for his children. Even for those who could get out, the store shelves were growing bare. Gas stations were running out of gas.

"I don't want to totally dog out the system, but we kind of got left to our own devices," said Bordeaux, who is a frequent critic of the governor. "She basically left us hanging."

The tribe also alleges Congress is at fault for not changing rules that allocate how money from a tribal transportation program is distributed among the nation's 574 federally recognized tribes.

Semans said the program's reliance on making determinations based on tribal enrollment hurts the Rosebud Sioux because while its enrollment of 33,210 members is relatively modest, its land base of nearly 890,000 acres spread across five counties, is massive.

That meant there simply wasn't enough equipment to respond, said Semans, who lost two family members in the storm.

One of them, his 54-year-old cousin, Anthony DuBray, froze to death outside, his body found after Christmas.

The other victim, his brother-in-law, Douglas James Dillon Sr., called for help during the first storm because his asthma was flaring up. But getting to the hospital would have meant being carried more than a quarter of a mile over snowbanks to a deputy's patrol car.

Semans said a glimpse outside showed it was "almost impossible," so Dillon went to bed. He died Dec. 17 at the age of 59.

Semans and his wife, Barbara, were snowed in for 15 days, using a propane space heater to ward off the cold after losing power. They were dug out just in time to make it to Dillon's funeral 11 days after his death.

"Even angry doesn't reach the level of the neglect," Semans said. "This was an atrocity,"

For Honor, who was beloved as a jokester, his illness came at the worst possible moment of the storm. It was Dec. 14 and his aunt, Brooki Whipple, whom he spent weekdays with as she and her family lived close to his school, was growing frantic as Honor struggled to breath.

The family pleaded for help, and finally a snow plow cleared the road to their ranch. Cordier-Beauvais said Honor and his uncle, Gary Whipple, set off immediately for the hospital just 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) away.

There, Honor was diagnosed with influenza and sent home despite the fact that Cordier-Beauvais, whom he spent weekends and summers with, called and told hospital staff the family wanted him admitted because they were worried about getting out again.

By the next day, Honor was still struggling — and the roads were impassable.

"Due to the high winds," the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Highway Safety warned that day, "the routes plows make are quickly being filled back in."

Cordier-Beauvais, the tribe's business manager, stayed on the phone with her worried daughter, who had delivered a baby boy just days earlier, praying through the hours-long effort to get help clearing the road.

But the help came too late.

A doctor called to break the news to Brooki, who was home with the baby and her daughter so close in age to Honor that their family called them "the twins."

"In our Lakota way, they're brothers and sisters. Inseparable," Cordier-Beauvais said. "She was not handling it well. Of course, she's a child and Brooki was so stressed out. But she had her baby, and had to tend to them. And it was just awful."

With no break in the weather, Honor wasn't buried for nearly four weeks.

At the funeral, Cordier-Beauvais recalled how her basketball-loving grandson's closest friends were pallbearers.

"They all just miss him so much," she said.

## '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

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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 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.

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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.

## Debt ceiling: 2011 showdown leaves lessons for Biden, GOP

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The debate around raising the debt ceiling sounds eerily similar: Newly elected House Republicans, eager to confront the Democratic president in the White House, refused to raise the debt limit without cuts to federal spending.

Negotiations over the debt ceiling consumed Washington in 2011, a high-stakes showdown between the Obama White House and the new generation of "tea party" House Republicans.

"Now we're getting down to the real hard stuff: I'll trade you my bicycle for your golf clubs," the chief negotiator, Vice President Joe Biden, said at the time.

But weeks of tense talks between Biden and the House Republicans collapsed that summer, sending Washington careening toward a fiscal crisis. When Republicans in Congress refused to raise the debt ceiling, the government risked a catastrophic default and suffered a devastating credit downgrade, a first in the nation's history.

Lessons learned from the debt ceiling standoff more than a decade ago are rippling through Washington, as the White House and Congress brace for another fiscal showdown — one that appears headed toward a very similar outcome. Neither Republicans nor Democrats are willing to budge.

"The whole debate is a façade," said William Gale, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan Brookings Institution who wrote "Fiscal Therapy: Curing America's Debt Addiction and Investing in the Future," a book on the U.S. debt.

"That was the height of the 'tea party' stuff and they wanted to flex their muscles, but it's just such a stupid way to try to do it — because you don't really want to risk the good credit rating of the United States government," Gale said. "I suspect most of these guys already knew it."

The Treasury Department has notified Congress that it's time to again raise the nation's debt ceiling,

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now at \$31 trillion, to allow more borrowing to pay off the country's accumulated bills. Treasury said it has started taking "extraordinary measures" to keep paying the bills, but the money will run out by June.

Raising the nation's debt ceiling had been a routine matter historically, a final task after Congress had authorized federal spending and appropriated the money needed to pay for the country's various programs and services.

But that all changed when the Republican tea party came to town after the 2010 election.

Saying Americans were "taxed enough already," the tea party House Republicans arrived promising to slash federal spending, using the debt ceiling vote as their political leverage.

Debt had doubled during the George W. Bush presidency and the post-9/11 wars overseas, and it skyrocketed under President Barack Obama in the aftermath of the Great Recession, teetering around \$15 trillion.

At one point, Republicans were seeking \$1-for-\$1 tradeoffs — a dollar of spending cuts for every dollar of new borrowing. They also wanted a "cut, cap and balance" approach that would eventually curb deficits.

"We met for months," Republican Eric Cantor, the former House majority leader tasked by Speaker John Boehner to negotiate with Biden, recalled in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "We all sat down. But this year, this time, President Biden is now refusing negotiate."

In the end, House Republicans could not agree on a deal with the Obama White House.

When the August 2011 deadline came to raise the debt ceiling, only an eleventh-hour agreement with Senate Republicans led by Mitch McConnell and some Democrats tasking a "Super Committee" to recommend further federal reductions ensured there would be no debt default.

Spooked by the political crisis in Washington, the credit markets downgraded the nation's credit ranking for the first time, upping the costs of future borrowing.

The Biden White House appears to have drawn the conclusion that it's not worth negotiating with new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who won a slim GOP majority in last November's midterm elections and who may — or may not — be able to deliver the votes on any debt ceiling deal.

"Look, lowering the deficit has always been a top priority," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday at the White House.

She said Biden, a Democrat, has "always said he is happy to talk to anyone who wants to deal with that in a responsible way."

"But preventing the default," she said, "is a separate matter."

Biden is scheduled to meet Tuesday with Democratic congressional leaders at the White House and is planning to invite McCarthy in the future.

McCarthy has been trying to push Biden to the table. "I think it's arrogance to say, 'Oh, we're not going to negotiate anything,'" the speaker told the AP recently at the Capitol.

McCarthy has already shown how hard it will be to lead his majority -- it took 15 ballots just to make him the House speaker in the face of resistance from right-flank Republicans.

To win over the holdouts, McCarthy promised his detractors he would fight to bring federal spending back to fiscal 2022 levels — an 8% reduction, or 17% if defense military spending is spared.

In pushing McCarthy to drive a hard bargain in debt talks, House Republicans may be taking a lesson from the tea party era that one way to force their leadership's hand is to threaten his ouster if he caves.

During his campaign to become speaker, McCarthy also agreed to the hard-right demand to reinstate a House rule that allows a single lawmaker to file a "motion to vacate the chair," essentially a House vote to oust the speaker.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., all but dared McCarthy on Monday to put the GOP's proposed spending reductions on the table. "If Republicans are talking about draconian cuts, they have an obligation to show Americans what those cuts are, and let the public react," he said.

But it's not clear if the proposed fiscal 2022 spending cuts, or any, would win over McCarthy's hard-right flank to raise the debt ceiling.

One major difference compared to 2011 is that "Republicans have not coalesced" around a unified position, said Rohit Kumar, who was an aide to McConnell during that showdown.

"At this point, I think it's unclear what could get 218 Republican votes in conjunction with a debt limit

increase, even just as an opening bid," said Kumar, now an executive with the tax services firm PwC, referring to the tally of votes typically needed to pass House legislation.

McConnell again is expected to play a pivotal role in easing the debt ceiling standoff, and some have pointed to bipartisan Senate legislation that would review spending, much the way the failed Super Committee was tasked with finding cuts after the 2011 debt ceiling showdown.

"Forget the Super Committee," Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., the GOP whip, said in a recent AP interview. "What a ridiculous outcome."

Many House Republicans were not in Congress during the 2011 debt ceiling showdown. Said Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., one of the McCarthy holdouts: "I'm certainly not focused on what happened 10 years ago."

## World War II-era map sparks treasure hunt in Dutch village

By ALEKSANDAR FURTULA Associated Press

OMMEREN, Netherlands (AP) — A hand-drawn map with a red letter X purportedly showing the location of a buried stash of precious jewelry looted by Nazis from a blown-up bank vault has sparked a modern-day treasure hunt in a tiny Dutch village more than three quarters of a century later.

Wielding metal detectors, shovels and copies of the map on cellphones, prospectors have descended on Ommeren — population 715 — about 80 kilometers (50 miles) southeast of Amsterdam to try to dig up a potential World War II trove based on the drawing first published on Jan. 3.

"Yes, it is of course spectacular news that has enthralled the whole village," local resident Marco Roodveldt said. "But not only our village, also people who do not come from here."

He said that "all kinds of people have been spontaneously digging in places where they think that treasure is buried — with a metal detector."

It wasn't immediately clear if authorities could claim the loot if it was found, or if a prospector could keep it.

So far, nobody has reported finding anything. The treasure hunt began this year when the Dutch National Archive published — as it does every January — thousands of documents for historians to pore over.

Most of them went largely unnoticed. But the map, which includes a sketch of a country road and another with a red X at the base of one of three trees, was an unexpected viral hit that briefly shattered the mid-winter calm of Ommeren.

"We're quite astonished about the story itself. But the attention it's getting is as well," National Archive researcher Annet Waalkens said as she carefully showed off the map.

Photos on social media in early January showed people digging holes more than a meter (three feet) deep, sometimes on private property, in the hope of unearthing a fortune.

Buren, the municipality Ommeren falls under, published a statement on its website pointing out that a ban on metal detection is in place for the municipality and warned that the area was a World War II front line.

"Searching there is dangerous because of possible unexploded bombs, land mines and shells," the municipality said in a statement. "We advise against going to look for the Nazi treasure."

The latest treasure hunters aren't the first to leave the village empty handed.

The story starts, Waalkens said, in the summer of 1944 in the Nazi-occupied city of Arnhem — made famous by the star-studded movie "A Bridge Too Far" — when a bomb hit a bank, pierced its vault and scattered its contents — including gold jewelry and cash — across the street.

German soldiers stationed nearby "pocket what they can get and they keep it in ammunition boxes," Waalkens said. As World War II nears its end in 1945, the Netherlands' German occupiers were pushed back by Allied advances. The soldiers who had been in Arnhem found themselves in Ommeren and decided to bury the loot.

"Four ammunition boxes and then just some jewelry that was kept in handkerchiefs or even cash money folded in. And they buried it right there," she said, citing an account by a German soldier who was interviewed after the war by Dutch military authorities in Berlin and who was responsible for the map. The



archive doesn't know if the soldier is still alive and hasn't released his name, citing European Union privacy regulations.

Dutch authorities using the map and the soldier's account went hunting for the loot in 1947. The first time, the ground was frozen solid and they made no headway. When they went back after the thaw, they found nothing, Waalkens said.

After the unsuccessful attempts, the German soldier said "he believed that someone else has already excavated the treasure," she added.

That detail was largely overlooked by treasure hunters who descended on Ommeren in the days after the map's publication. On a recent visit to the village, there were no diggers to be seen as peace and quiet has returned to Ommeren.

But the village's brief brush with fame left a sour taste for some residents. Ria van Tuil van Neerbos said she didn't believe in the treasure story, but understood why some did.

"If they hear something, they'll head toward it," she said. "But I don't think it's good that they just dug into the ground like and things like that."

## No more nuggets? School lunch goes farm-to-table — for some

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

CONCORD, Calif. (AP) — As the fine-dining chef at her high school served samples of his newest recipes, Anahi Nava Flores gave her critique of a baguette sandwich with Toscano salami, organic Monterey Jack, arugula and a scratch-made basil spread: "This pesto aioli is good!"

Classmate Kentaro Turner devoured a deli-style pastrami melt on sourdough and moved on to free-range chicken simmered in chipotle broth with Spanish-style rice. "Everything is delicious!"

These are not words typically uttered in school cafeterias.

The food served at the suburban San Francisco school system, Mount Diablo Unified, reflects a trend away from mass-produced, reheated meals. Its lunch menus are filled with California-grown fruits and vegetables, grass-fed meats and recipes that defy the stereotype of inedible school food.

Among American schoolchildren, these students are in the lucky minority. Making fresh meals requires significant investment and, in many areas, an overhaul of how school kitchens have operated for decades. Inflation and supply chain disruptions have only made it harder on school nutrition directors, widening gaps in access to affordable, high-quality food.

What's more, federal money to boost lunch budgets has declined. The government last year ended a pandemic-era program offering free school meals to everyone. A few states, such as California, have been paying to keep meals free for all students, but most states went back to charging all but the neediest kids for meals.

Increases in money from California's state government have made it possible for Mount Diablo to buy fresher local ingredients and hire the chef, Josh Gjersand, a veteran of Michelin-starred restaurants. Local farms, bakers, creameries and fishermen now supply most ingredients to the district, which serves 30,000 students from wealthy and low-income communities east of San Francisco.

On a recent January morning, student taste testers were sampling Gjersand's latest creations. His daily specials have ranged from barbecue spare ribs to fresh red snapper on a whole-grain brioche bun.

"I love the idea of serving students better food," said Gjersand, who quit restaurants during the pandemic, when serving a wagyu-beef-and-caviar crowd lost its luster. "School cafeterias should feel like restaurants, and not fast food chains."

School systems elsewhere can only dream of such offerings.

"Financially, we are dying right now," said Patti Bilbrey, nutrition director for Arizona's Scottsdale Unified School District. It charges students \$2.85 per lunch, but that no longer comes close to covering the district's cost.

A staff shortage makes it impossible to cook more food from scratch, she said. The school relies on mass-produced food that is delivered, then reheated. The pizza: "It's done; you just bake it." The spicy

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chicken sandwich: "You heat it and put it on a bun." The corn dogs: "You just have to wrap it," she said. Some students give the food positive reviews. "I eat spicy chicken every day. That's my favorite," said Hunter Kimble, a sixth grader at Tonalea Middle School, where almost 80% of students still qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Eighth grader Araceli Canales is more critical. The school serves an orange chicken that she says makes her cringe. "The meat is like a different color," she said. At a recent lunchtime, Araceli picked at a chicken Caesar salad, noting the croutons were bland and hard. "The chicken tastes OK, but I want them to cook it longer and add more seasoning." When the bell rang, she tossed most of her salad in the garbage.

Not many schools can afford gourmet offerings like Mount Diablo's, which also benefits from California's year-round growing season. But school menus in several places have improved in the past decade, with fresher ingredients and more ethnic dishes, said School Nutrition Association spokesperson Diane Pratt-Heavner.

The pandemic, however, created new obstacles.

In a national survey of 1,230 school nutrition directors, nearly all said the rising costs of food and supplies were their top challenges this year. More than 90% said they were facing supply chain and staffing shortages.

The survey by the nutrition association also found soaring levels of student lunch debt at schools that have returned to charging for meals. The association is urging Congress to resume free breakfast and lunch nationwide.

"This is the worst and fastest accumulation of debt I've seen in my 12 years in school nutrition," said Angela Richey, nutrition director for the Roseville and St Anthony-New Brighton school districts in Minnesota, which serve about 9,400 students. They don't turn away a hungry child, but this year's school meal debt has surpassed \$90,000, growing at a rate of over \$1,000 a day.

Making food from scratch isn't just healthier, it's cheaper, many school nutrition directors say.

But that's only possible when schools have kitchens. A national shift away from school kitchens began in the 1980s, which ushered in an era of mass-produced, processed school food. Pre-made meals delivered by food service companies meant schools could do away with full-time cafeteria staff and kitchens.

"If you don't have a kitchen to chop things up, there's not much you can do with fresh vegetables," said Nina Ichikawa, executive director of the Berkeley Food Institute, part of a team evaluating a California farm-to-school incubator grant. She describes California's investments as undoing past damage.

In 2021, California committed to spending \$650 million annually to supplement federal meal reimbursements — money for food, staff, new equipment and other upgrades. Additionally, hundreds of millions of dollars are available for kitchen infrastructure and for schools that cook from scratch and buy from California farmers.

In California's rural Modoc Unified School District, near the Oregon border, lunch menus reflect what the state is trying to change: a rotation of hot dogs, chicken nuggets, pizza, burgers. There are vegetables, as required by federal guidelines, but usually not fresh. "I try not to do canned veggies more than twice a week," said Jessica Boal, nutrition director for the district of 840 students.

The district's five schools lack functional kitchens, so her staff spends half the day unpacking deliveries of processed, pre-made food. But Boal is excited about change on the horizon. The district recently applied for state grants to put new kitchens in every school and bring in more produce.

At Mount Diablo High School, there are still hot dogs and hamburgers, but the meats are grass-fed.

"I haven't served a chicken nugget here in two years. And the kids don't miss it," said Dominic Machi, who has reimagined meals for the district since he became nutrition director five years ago.

Students at the school, 96% of whom belong to a racial or ethnic minority group, say the attention to quality food sends a message of respect.

The school is in a neighborhood of fast-food strip malls. But inside its walls, "this food makes me feel more important. It makes you feel good to not eat trash food," said Kahlani Cravanas, 16.

Anahi Nava Flores, 17, said the meals instill a sense of self-worth. "When you go to a high-end restaurant,

you go home feeling good about life. That's what this food does."

## Earthquake kills 1, injures several in Nepal's mountains

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — An earthquake in Nepal rattled villages in remote Himalayan mountains on Tuesday, killing at least one person and injuring many more, officials said.

The 5.9 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter in Bajura district hit in the afternoon, sending people fleeing their houses, according to the chief district officer, Puskar Khadka.

He said one person was confirmed dead but details were still sketchy because many of the villages are accessible by foot.

Soldiers and police rescuers had already been dispatched, Khadka said. The earthquake also buried cattle and farm animals.

Bajura district is about 400 kilometers (250 miles) northwest of the capital, Kathmandu.

News reports said the earthquake could be felt in cities and towns across the border in India.

Earthquakes are common in Nepal, which is mostly covered by mountains and home to most of the highest peaks in the world.

## Poland asks Berlin to OK Ukraine tanks; Kyiv targets graft

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Poland has officially requested permission from Germany to transfer its Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine where they can help fight Russia's invasion, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak said Tuesday.

German officials confirmed to the dpa news agency they had received the application and said it would be assessed "with due urgency." German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Sunday that Berlin, which builds the tanks, wouldn't seek to stop Poland from providing the high-tech armor to Kyiv.

The development came as Ukrainian authorities moved to crack down on alleged corruption, with almost a dozen senior officials departing Tuesday.

Błaszczak, the Polish defense minister, appealed to Germany "to join the coalition of countries supporting Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks" — a reference to recent pressure on Berlin to send some of its own tanks. Germany has hesitated to take that step, despite Ukraine's pleas. The tank is adaptable to many types of combat situations.

"This is our common cause, because it is about the security of the whole of Europe!" Błaszczak tweeted.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday called for the speedy delivery of new weapons to Ukraine, where a broad battlefield stalemate is expected to give way to new offensives in the spring.

"At this crucial moment in the war, we need to provide Ukraine with heavier and more advanced systems, and we need to do it faster," Stoltenberg said Tuesday after talks with German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius in Berlin.

Polish officials have indicated that Finland and Denmark are ready to join Warsaw in sending Leopards to Ukraine. Poland wants to send a company of the 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 brigade size.

In Kyiv, meanwhile, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office quit Tuesday after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pledged to launch a staff shake-up amid high-level corruption allegations.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko asked to be relieved of his duties, according to an online copy of a decree signed by Zelenskyy and Tymoshenko's own social media posts. Neither gave a reason for the resignation.

Deputy Defense Minister Viacheslav Shapovalov also resigned, local media reported, alleging his departure was linked to a scandal involving the purchase of food for the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Deputy Prosecutor General Oleksiy Symonenko quit, too.

In all, four deputy ministers and five regional governors were set to leave their posts, the country's

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cabinet secretary said on the Telegram messaging app.

With Western allies pouring billions of dollars into Ukraine to help Kyiv's fight against Moscow, Zelenskyy had pledged to weed out corruption which some observers have described as endemic. Zelenskyy came to power in 2019 on an anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform.

Tymoshenko joined the presidential office in 2019, after working on Zelenskyy's media and creative content strategy during his presidential campaign.

Last year he was under investigation relating to his personal use of luxury cars. He was also among officials linked last September to the embezzlement of humanitarian aid worth more than \$7 million earmarked for the southern Zaporizhzhia region. He has denied all the allegations.

On Sunday, a deputy minister was dismissed for being part of a network embezzling budget funds. Ukraine's infrastructure ministry later identified the dismissed official as Vasyl Lozynsky, a deputy minister there.

Oleksandr Kubrakov, the infrastructure minister, said Lozynsky was relieved of his duties after Ukraine's anti-corruption agency detained him while he was receiving a \$400,000 bribe for helping to fix contracts related to restoring infrastructure facilities battered by Russian missile strikes.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said that Ukraine's focus on the war would not stop his government from tackling corruption.

"I want to be clear: There will be no return to what used to be in the past," Zelenskyy said.

The anti-corruption drive is vital if Ukraine wants to advance its application for membership of the European Union. To gain EU membership, countries must meet a detailed host of economic and political conditions, including a commitment to the rule of law and other democratic principles.

Last June, the European Union agreed Thursday to put Ukraine on a path toward EU membership, acting with uncharacteristic speed and unity to pull the embattled country further away from Russia's influence and bind it more closely to the West.

Ukraine has long aspired to join NATO, too, but the military alliance is not about to offer an invitation, in part because of the country's corruption, shortcomings in its defense establishment, and its contested borders.

In other developments:

Ukraine's presidential office said Tuesday that at least five civilians were killed and seven others were wounded in Ukraine over the previous 24 hours. One Russian rocket hit a school in eastern Ukraine, killing one person, Donetsk region Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Ukrainian TV.

Russian forces also shelled nine towns and villages in the northern Sumy region, which borders Russia, killing a young woman and wounding three other people, local Gov. Dmytro Zhyvytskyy reported on Telegram. He said the casualties all lived in the same house, which suffered a direct artillery hit.

## Finland's top diplomat hints at joining NATO without Sweden

By JARI TANNER and JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Finland's top diplomat appeared to suggest Tuesday that the country may have to consider joining NATO without Sweden after Turkey's president cast serious doubt on the expansion of the military alliance.

"We still have to evaluate the situation if it turns out that Sweden's application is stalling for a long time to come," Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told Finnish broadcaster YLE.

His comment came a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Sweden not to expect support for its bid for NATO membership following weekend protests in Stockholm by an anti-Islam activist and pro-Kurdish groups.

It was the first time a leading government official in either country had appeared to raise doubts about joining the alliance together. Haavisto later backpedaled, telling reporters in Parliament that his comment earlier Tuesday had been "imprecise" and that Finland's ambition to join NATO jointly with Sweden remained unchanged.

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He said he had spoken with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who had stressed to Haavisto that the military bloc would like to see the two Nordic nations join simultaneously.

"But of course there have been raised concerns within NATO on how the (recent) incidents in Sweden will affect the schedule," Haavisto said.

The bid by Sweden and Finland to join NATO needs the approval of all existing NATO members, including Turkey, which has so far blocked the expansion, saying Sweden in particular needs to crack down on exiled Kurdish militants and their sympathizers.

Until now, Sweden and Finland have been committed to joining the alliance together, but Haavisto's comment to YLE raised concerns that Finland was considering proceeding without its Nordic neighbor.

"We are in contact with Finland to find out what is really meant," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström said in a statement to The Associated Press. "Sweden respects the agreement between Sweden, Finland and Turkey regarding our NATO membership. We have done that so far and we shall continue to do so."

In a memorandum of understanding signed by the three countries at a NATO summit last year, Sweden and Finland committed not to support Kurdish militant groups and to lift arms embargos on Turkey imposed after its incursion into northern Syria in 2019.

Pro-Kurdish and anti-Turkish demonstrations in Stockholm have complicated the process. On Saturday, a far-right activist from Denmark staged a protest outside the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm where he burned the Quran, Islam's holy book. A separate pro-Kurdish demonstration was held later Saturday in the Swedish capital.

The Swedish government has tried to distance itself from the demonstrations, while insisting that such protests are allowed under the country's freedom of speech.

Turkey responded angrily to the protests, canceling a planned visit to Ankara by the Swedish defense minister. Protests were held outside Swedish diplomatic missions in Ankara and Istanbul.

Erdogan slammed Swedish authorities for allowing the Quran-burning demonstration.

"It is clear that those who allowed such vileness to take place in front of our embassy can no longer expect any charity from us regarding their NATO membership application," he said.

He also criticized the pro-Kurdish demonstration, accusing Sweden of letting "terror organizations run wild on your avenues and streets." He said that if Sweden won't show respect to Turkey or Muslims, then "they won't see any support from us on the NATO issue."

## 7 dead as California mourns 3rd mass killing in 8 days

By JEFF CHIU and OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. (AP) — A gunman killed seven people at two agricultural businesses in Northern California, plunging the state into mourning again in the wake of its third mass killing in eight days.

Officers arrested a suspect in Monday's shootings, 67-year-old Chunli Zhao, after they found him in his car in the parking lot of a sheriff's substation, San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said.

Seven people were found dead and an eighth injured at a farm and another location several miles away, the Sheriff's Office said. Officials believe Zhao worked at one of the facilities and that the victims were workers as well, Corpus said. Officials haven't determined a motive for the shooting.

California is still reeling from an attack on a Lunar New Year celebration in Monterey Park that killed 11 and cast a shadow over an important holiday for many Asian-American communities. Authorities are still seeking a motive for the Saturday shooting.

The new year has brought a shocking string of mass killings in the U.S. — six in less than three weeks, accounting for 39 deaths. Three have occurred in California since Jan. 16, according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. The database tracks every mass killing — defined as four dead not including the offender — committed in the U.S. since 2006.

The killings occurred on the outskirts of Half Moon Bay, a city about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of San Francisco.

Half Moon Bay Vice Mayor Joaquin Jimenez said the victims included Chinese and Latino farmworkers.

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Some workers lived at one of the facilities and children may have witnessed the shooting, she said. Corpus said it wasn't immediately clear how the two locations were connected.

The Sheriff's Office first received reports of a shooting in the afternoon and found four people dead and a fifth wounded at the first scene. Officers then found three more people fatally shot nearby, Capt. Eamonn Allen said in a news release.

About two hours later, a sheriff's deputy spotted Zhao's car parked outside a sheriff's substation in a strip mall and arrested him.

A video of the arrest showed three officers approaching a parked car with drawn weapons. Zhao got out of the car, and the officers pulled him to the ground, put him in handcuffs, and led him away. A weapon was found in his vehicle, officials said. The video was captured by Kati McHugh, a Half Moon Bay resident who witnessed the arrest.

The sheriff's department believes Zhao acted alone.

"We're still trying to understand exactly what happened and why, but it's just incredibly, incredibly tragic," said state Sen. Josh Becker, who represents the area and called it "a very close-knit" agricultural community.

Aerial television images showed police officers collecting evidence from a farm with dozens of greenhouses.

Half Moon Bay is a small coastal city with agricultural roots, home to about 12,000 people. The city and surrounding San Mateo County area is known for producing flowers as well as vegetables like brussels sprouts. The county allows cannabis farming in some areas.

It's a majority white community and about 5% of the population is Asian, according to Census data.

"We are sickened by today's tragedy in Half Moon Bay," Pine said. "We have not even had time to grieve for those lost in the terrible shooting in Monterey Park. Gun violence must stop."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom tweeted that he was "at the hospital meeting with victims of a mass shooting when I get pulled away to be briefed about another shooting. This time in Half Moon Bay. Tragedy upon tragedy."

On Jan. 16, a teenage mother and her baby were among six people killed in a shooting at a home in California's Central Valley.

## Shiffrin leads 1st run of GS as she chases record win No. 83

SAN VIGILIO DI MAREBBE, Italy (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin holds a slim lead after the first run of Tuesday's giant slalom and is in position for a record-breaking 83rd World Cup victory.

Shiffrin currently shares the women's record of 82 wins with former American teammate Lindsey Vonn.

Shiffrin is 0.13 seconds ahead of world champion Lara Gut-Behrami and 0.27 ahead of home favorite and former overall champion Federica Brignone at the Kronplatz resort in San Vigilio.

Petra Vlhova, Shiffrin's usual rival, was 1.01 back, with Olympic champion Sara Hector nearly two seconds behind.

The second run starts at 1:30 p.m.

If she does win, Shiffrin will then need only three more victories to match Ingemar Stenmark's overall mark — between men and women — of 86 victories. Stenmark competed in the 1970s and 80s.

Vonn retired four years ago when injuries cut her career short.

Mike Day, the head coach of Shiffrin's personal team, set the course for the first run. Mauro Pini, Vlhova's coach, will set the second run.

Shiffrin appeared to make a tactical decision to hold back slightly on the hardest part of a slope that is named Erta, which translates as "steep," featuring a 61% gradient. Then she accelerated on the flatter lower section and appeared satisfied upon seeing her result, pumping her fist slightly.

"There's some spots where I was skiing very strong but not always taking on the speed," Shiffrin said. "But I felt very, very good on the start. So just taking that skiing and being a bit more aggressive on the rest of the course.

"It was also smart after downhill, super-G to just get the timing back a bit," Shiffrin added. "I just tried

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to move really quick and (make) good, clean turns.”

This is Shiffrin’s fifth opportunity to break the record after matching Vonn’s mark in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, earlier this month. She finished second to Vlhova in a slalom, her best event, in Flachau, Austria, then missed the podium in three straight speed races in nearby Cortina d’Ampezzo last weekend.

Gut-Behrami came down immediately after Shiffrin and took a similar cautious approach on the steeps. The Swiss skier’s last GS win came in November in Killington, Vermont. She claimed the gold medal in the event at the 2021 world championships in Cortina.

The first run was held in flat light with snow falling.

Valerie Grenier, the Canadian who claimed her first World Cup win this month, stood fourth, 0.76 behind, and American skier Paula Moltzan was fifth, 0.84 behind.

## Analysis: Trying to play good NBA defense ‘wild, hot mess’

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — Contrary to all those high-scoring games, players still are playing defense in the NBA. Seriously, they are.

It’s just the task of stopping two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic or Luka Doncic or Joel Embiid or anyone else in the league has become more challenging than ever.

Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle may have described the assignment of locking down a premier — or even a reserve — player the best: “It’s a wild, hot mess trying to guard in the NBA now,” he said.

A combination of rule changes, style-of-play alterations, the ongoing addiction to the 3-point shot and more have added up to the game being significantly tilted toward the offensive player.

Someone will win “Defensive Player of the Year” this spring, even after a season where no one seems to be able to stop anyone with the ball. It’s almost certain that more players will average 20 points per game than ever before. A decade ago, there were a dozen or so players. This season, 50 isn’t out of the question (there were 27 last season and 31 in 2020-21).

The NBA will analyze all the variables after the season. But since its sense is fans love scoring, and there’s nothing out there contradicting that stance, a massive swing of the rules pendulum toward helping out defenders doesn’t seem likely.

“For me, a fan, the talent level is just off the charts, and that has a lot to do with what we’re seeing,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in Paris last week. “Of course, the enormous increase in 3-point shooting is going to lead to more scoring, too, especially when these guys, even the big men, shoot 3-point shots as well as they do.

“I don’t think it’s necessarily a case that defense is not being focused on as it once was,” Silver added. “I’ve been around the league long enough to remember when the claim was guys played no defense at all, and so there’s a fair amount of defense played.”

From zone defenses to constant rotations, teams are trying a little bit of everything to slow down offensive stars. Still, the stars shine. In January alone, Cleveland’s Donovan Mitchell scored 71 points on Jan. 2; Chicago’s Zach LaVine knocked down 11 3-pointers on Jan. 6; and Miami’s Jimmy Butler went 23 of 23 from the free throw line on Jan. 10.

Playing defense is harder these days, but not impossible.

“It just requires a real connectedness defensively,” Carlisle explained.

Scoring is up again this season, with teams averaging more points (114.1) than the league has seen at any time in the last half-century. Sacramento leads the way with 120 points per game, with six players averaging 12 or more points.

It’s hardly a surprise to longtime NBA veteran Ish Smith that 44 players are currently averaging at least 20 point a game.

“I guarantee you, when I come and show my kids the game in 10 or 15 years, we’re going to be talking about how it might be 100 guys now averaging 20,” cracked Smith, the Nuggets guard who broke into the league in 2010. “It’s just a tribute to guys getting better. Everybody can dribble, shoot, pass — and

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it makes it difficult.”

Bottom line: The standouts are simply doing what they do best — stand out. Doncic and Embiid lead in points per game (33.6), Jokic in triple-doubles (14), Shai Gilgeous-Alexander in two-point field goals (398) and Buddy Hield in 3-pointers (181).

“The league is in such a great place and people are so into checking out highlights and seeing high scores for entertainment,” said David Adelman, an assistant coach for the Nuggets and son of longtime NBA coach Rick Adelman. “I don’t think the NFL is any different. I mean, it’s hard to be a defensive back these days. That’s probably the hardest job in sports, maybe.

“So I don’t see (the NBA) changing it. My son is 9 years old and he loves watching the NBA because we’re scoring 130 points. That’s just the way it is.”

Given rule enforcements designed to allow more freedom of moment in both the post and on the perimeter, it’s only natural to expect free throws to be on the rise. There have been an average of 23.8 attempts at the line (through Sunday) this season, which is on pace to be the highest since 2010-11 (24.4).

“Generally, when you look at some of these really, really, explosive individual performances where guys have put up huge numbers, I think you can immediately look at the free-throw line. There’s always a correlation,” Chicago coach Billy Donovan explained. “The free throw and the fouling has become a real challenge, because the minute you get your hands on people, those elite scorers know how to manipulate and draw fouls.”

The league has tried to minimize that, at least when it comes to shooters looking to draw contact on flailed 3-pointers. But the NBA knows any rule change or shift always gets countered somehow by smart players, who just find another avenue to get to where they want.

“I remember people were saying, ‘It’s all about dunking and guys can’t shoot.’ Now it’s, ‘They shoot too well. It should be more of an inside game,’” Silver said. “We’ll keep looking at it.”

## Judge to hold hearing over Georgia special grand jury report

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A judge is set to hear arguments Tuesday on whether to release a report by a special grand jury tasked with investigating whether then-President Donald Trump and his allies broke any laws as they sought to overturn his narrow 2020 election loss in Georgia.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney will hear arguments from the district attorney’s office, news outlets and potentially other parties before making a decision on the release of the report. The special grand jury, whose work was overseen by McBurney, recommended that the report be made public.

The report is expected to include recommendations for Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis on possible criminal prosecution, though it’s unclear just how specific those recommendations will be. The special grand jury did not have the power to issue indictments, and it will ultimately be up to Willis to decide whether to seek indictments from a regular grand jury.

If McBurney decides to disseminate the report, he must also determine whether any parts of it should be redacted and whether the report should be made public now or later. It’s unclear how quickly he will rule.

The investigation is one of several that threaten potential legal consequences for the Republican former president as he seeks reelection in 2024. Over a period of roughly seven months, the special grand jury heard from dozens of witnesses, including high-profile Trump allies, such as attorney Rudy Giuliani and Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, and high-ranking Georgia officials, such as Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Gov. Brian Kemp.

Willis began investigating shortly after a recording of a January 2021 phone call between Trump and Raffensperger became public. In that call, the president suggested that the state’s top elections official, a fellow Republican, could “find” the votes needed to overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

“I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have,” Trump had said. “Because we won the state.”

A coalition of news organizations, including The Associated Press, argued in favor of the report’s re-



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lease in full, saying in a filing Monday that the document "is a court record subject to a presumption of openness" under state court rules and the state and federal constitutions. The media group said that the public interest in the report is "extraordinary" and that there "are no countervailing interests sufficient to overcome the presumption."

Willis, a Democrat, had not filed a brief by Monday outlining whether the report should be released.

Trump's legal team in Georgia said in a statement that it does not plan to be present or to participate in the hearing.

"To date, we have never been a part of this process," Drew Findling, Marissa Goldberg and Jennifer Little wrote, noting that the former president was never subpoenaed or asked to come in voluntarily as part of the investigation.

"Therefore, we can assume that the grand jury did their job and looked at the facts and the law, as we have, and concluded there were no violations of the law by President Trump," they wrote.

The order granting Willis' request for a special grand jury authorized the panel to "make recommendations concerning criminal prosecution as it shall see fit."

A grand jury handbook produced by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia says courts have repeatedly held that a grand jury "cannot include, in a report or general presentment, comments that charge or accuse identifiable person(s) of misconduct." That can only be done in a charging document, like an indictment, the handbook says.

"I don't think you can accuse anybody specifically of committing a crime, so it's going to have to be a general recommendation" on whether the district attorney should continue to pursue the investigation, Prosecuting Attorneys' Council executive director Pete Skandalakis said of the report.

If the special grand jury did recommend that specific people be charged, Skandalakis said he believes that would have to be redacted before the report can be released.

While the special grand jury's work took place in secret, as required by law, related public court filings provided a glimpse of investigative threads that were being pursued. Those included:

- Phone calls by Trump and others to Georgia officials in the wake of the 2020 election.
- A group of 16 Georgia Republicans who signed a certificate in December 2020 falsely stating that Trump had won the state and that they were the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors.
- False allegations of election fraud made during meetings of state legislators at the Georgia Capitol in December 2020.
- The copying of data and software from election equipment in rural Coffee County by a computer forensics team hired by Trump allies.
- Alleged attempts to pressure Fulton County elections worker Ruby Freeman into falsely confessing to election fraud.
- The abrupt resignation of the U.S. attorney in Atlanta in January 2021.

## Extreme Israeli group takes root in US with fundraising bid

By URI BLAU of Shomrim and TIA GOLDENBERG of The Associated Press  
JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli group raising funds for Jewish extremists convicted in some of the country's most notorious hate crimes is collecting tax-exempt donations from Americans, according to findings by The Associated Press and the Israeli investigative platform Shomrim.

The records in the case suggest that Israel's far right is gaining a new foothold in the United States.

The amount of money raised through a U.S. nonprofit is not known. But the AP and Shomrim have documented the money trail from New Jersey to imprisoned Israeli radicals who include Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin and people convicted in deadly attacks on Palestinians.

This overseas fundraising arrangement has made it easier for the Israeli group, Shlom Asiraich, to collect money from Americans, who can make their contributions through the U.S. nonprofit with a credit card and claim a tax deduction.

Many Israeli causes, from hospitals to universities to charities, raise money through U.S.-based arms.

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But having the strategy adopted by a group assisting Jewish radicals raises legal and moral questions.

It also comes against the backdrop of a new, far-right government in Israel led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, where ultranationalists and extremist lawmakers have gained unprecedented power.

According to Shlom Asiraich's promotional pamphlets, its beneficiaries include Yigal Amir, who assassinated Rabin in 1995; Amiram Ben-Uliel, convicted in the 2015 murder of a Palestinian baby and his parents in an arson attack; and Yosef Chaim Ben David, convicted of abducting and killing a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in Jerusalem in 2014. The group also assists an extremist ultra-Orthodox man who fatally stabbed a 16-year-old Israeli girl at Jerusalem's gay pride parade in 2015.

Shlom Asiraich, or "The Well-Being of Your Prisoners," has been raising money in Israel since at least 2018, and officially registered as a nonprofit in 2020 by a group mostly consisting of Israelis from hard-line settlements in the West Bank. At least five of the group's seven founders have themselves been questioned by Israeli authorities for crimes related to their activities against Palestinians. Some have been arrested and charged.

Recipients of its largesse have hailed the group for coming through in difficult times.

"You have no idea how much you help us," the family of Ben-Uliel, who is serving three life sentences, wrote in a hand-written letter posted to the group's Facebook page.

Being a relatively new organization, Shlom Asiraich's official filing to Israel's nonprofit registry provides little data and does not indicate how much money it has raised. But in its promotional flyers, recently broadcast by Israeli Channel 13 news, the organization indicated it has raised 150,000 shekels (about \$43,000).

Israeli nonprofits have long sought funding abroad, with the U.S. a major source. According to figures published by Noga Zivan, a consultant for nonprofits in Israel, between 2018 to 2020 Jewish-American organizations alone donated \$2 billion to Israel each year.

Israeli right-wing groups have long raised funds in the U.S. But Dvir Kariv, a former official in the department of Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet that deals with Jewish violence, said it is unusual for extremist Jews such as the ones who run Shlom Asiraich to do so.

He said the group appears to have taken a cue from other far-right Israeli groups, particularly Kach, an anti-Arab racist group that was once banned as a terror organization in the U.S. but which Kariv said was adept at raising money there decades ago.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, a senior Cabinet minister in Israel's new far-right government, is a disciple of Kach's founder, Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was once barred from Israeli politics.

It is not clear when Shlom Asiraich began working with the New Jersey-based World of Tzedaka, a nonprofit that says it works "to enable any individual or organization to raise money for their specific cause."

Donors in the U.S. can enter the Shlom Asiraich site and click on a link that takes them to a donation page hosted by World of Tzedaka. They can also donate directly from World of Tzedaka's site.

According to an instructional video on the World of Tzedaka site, fundraisers must list a rabbi as a reference and receive approval from a Lakewood religious committee. World of Tzedaka charges \$28 a month and a 3% processing fee for transferring funds to an Israeli bank account, the site says.

World of Tzedaka supports other charitable ventures, most of them focused on assisting Jewish families in distress, according to its website.

Ellen Aprill, an expert on tax and charities at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, said convicted criminals and their families could be considered in need and qualify as a permissible charitable purpose.

While supporting someone convicted of acts of terrorism could be seen as encouraging criminal activity, that would need to be proven, she said.

Marcus Owens, a lawyer who ran the IRS's nonprofit unit in the 1990s, took a tougher stance.

"The U.S. Department of Justice views assistance to the families of terrorists as a form of material support for terrorism," he said.

In order to become a tax-exempt group recognized by the IRS, an organization must operate exclusively for charitable, religious or educational purposes.

Repeated attempts to reach representatives of Shlom Asiraich were unsuccessful. A person who answered

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the group's phone number hung up on an AP reporter. Moshe Orbach, whose address in the hard-line West Bank settlement of Yitzhar is listed as the group's headquarters, declined through a lawyer to be interviewed.

A World of Tzedaka representative hung up when asked for comment.

The IRS refused to answer questions about the group, saying "federal law prohibits the IRS from commenting."

According to documents obtained by the AP, Shlom Asiraich was registered as a nonprofit with Israeli authorities by Chanamel Dorfman, an attorney and a top aide to Ben-Gvir, Israel's new national security minister.

Dorfman is also listed as the group's "lawyer/legal adviser" on Guidestar, the official nonprofit registry's site.

In a text message, Dorfman denied ever having been the group's legal adviser and did not respond to additional questions. Dorfman recently told the conservative daily Israel Hayom he was simply acting as a lawyer and that "if I knew that this is what this organization does, I wouldn't have registered it."

In October, on the eve of the Jewish New Year, Shlom Asiraich tweeted a photo of snacks it provided to Jewish suspects under house arrest, and to families of Israelis convicted or charged with crimes against Palestinians. A note accompanying the wine and other goods the nonprofit provided called the men "beloved heroes."

"Stay strong and remain loyal to the people of Israel and to the holy Torah and don't stop being happy!" the note read.

## 16 objects from Germany tell story of Holocaust in new ways

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Lore Mayerfeld was 4 years old when she escaped from the Nazis in 1941. Together with her mother, the little Jewish girl ran away from her German hometown of Kassel with nothing but the clothes she wore and her beloved doll, Inge.

Mayerfeld found a safe haven in the United States and later immigrated to Israel. Her doll, a present from her grandparents who were killed in the Holocaust, was always at her side until 2018 when she donated it to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

More than 80 years later, the doll has returned to Germany. It will be at parliament in Berlin as part of an exhibition slated to open Tuesday evening just days before the country marks the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on Jan. 27, 1945.

The exhibition, Sixteen Objects, also marks the 70th anniversary of the Yad Vashem memorial, bringing back to Germany an array of items Jews took with them when they fled the Nazis. There's a black piano, a diary, a red-and-white-patterned towel, a stethoscope, a glitzy evening purse and a menorah among the exhibit's objects.

They were chosen from more than 50,000 items at Yad Vashem that are connected to the Holocaust. The exhibit's items represent Germany's 16 states with one coming from each region. They all tell a unique story but share themes of love, attachment, pain and loss.

"These are all absolutely familiar German objects, and they would have stayed that way had the Holocaust not happened," said Ruth Ur, the curator of the exhibition and Yad Vashem's representative in Germany.

"The idea of this exhibition is to return these objects back to Germany for a short while, to bring a new energy to the objects themselves, and also to the gaps they have left behind."

In one of the showcases, there's a nondescript piece of cloth. It's part of a flag that once belonged to Anneliese Borinski, who was part of a Jewish youth group in Ahrensdorf outside Berlin. She helped her group prepare for emigration and life in what would later become the state of Israel.

After the Nazis issued deportation orders, the 12 members decided to cut up their "Maccabi Hatzair" youth group flag into 12 pieces, and promised each other that after the war they would meet again in Israel to reassemble the flag.

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Only three survived the Holocaust, and Borinski was the lone member who managed to take her piece of the flag to Israel. In 2007, her son donated it to Yad Vashem.

Another item is a brown leather suitcase. On one side, "Selma Sara Vellemann from Bremen" is written in bold white letters.

This suitcase was found in Berlin several years after the war. Yad Vashem researchers were unable to determine how the suitcase got to the German capital, but they discovered that a woman with the same name from the northern city of Bremen had lived in the retirement home in Berlin. In 1942, at the age of 66, she was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, and two months later sent to her death in the Treblinka extermination camp.

Beside each of the exhibition objects, Ur and her team put up life-size photos of buildings and street corners where the items' owners lived before the Nazis came to power. The images show modern-day scenes instead of historic ones, a stark contrast to the devastation the Third Reich caused decades ago.

Six million European Jews were killed by the Nazis and their henchmen during the Holocaust. Some survivors are still alive today, but their numbers are dwindling due to sickness and old age.

Mayerfeld, the little girl who fled with her doll Inge in 1941, is one of them. She returned to Germany this week to attend the opening of the exhibition.

Looking at her blond, blue-eyed doll, the now 85-year-old woman pointed out that the doll was wearing the pajamas she wore as a barely 2-year-old toddler on Nov. 9, 1938. On that date, she was hiding with her mother during Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass," when Nazis — several ordinary Germans among them — terrorized Jews, vandalized their businesses and burned more than 1,400 synagogues.

"It's not a doll that you play so easily with because she's breakable. So my own children, I didn't allow them to play with her," Mayerfeld said. "She sat up on a shelf in my home and they would look at her and I explained, she's going to break, you know, just look and enjoy her."

Mayerfeld said it was important for her to come back to Germany and let the public know about her doll, her life and also what happened during the Holocaust.

"The world hasn't learned anything from this past war," she said. "There's so many people who say it never even happened. They can't tell me that. I was there. I lived it."

## Promising gene therapy delivers treatment directly to brain

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

When Rylae-Ann Poulin was a year old, she didn't crawl or babble like other kids her age. A rare genetic disorder kept her from even lifting her head. Her parents took turns holding her upright at night just so she could breathe comfortably and sleep.

Then, months later, doctors delivered gene therapy directly to her brain.

Now the 4-year-old is walking, running, swimming, reading and riding horses — "just doing so many amazing things that doctors once said were impossible," said her mother, Judy Wei.

Rylae-Ann, who lives with her family in Bangkok, was among the first to benefit from a new way of delivering gene therapy — attacking diseases inside the brain — that experts believe holds great promise for treating a host of brain disorders.

Her treatment recently became the first brain-delivered gene therapy after its approval in Europe and the United Kingdom for AADC deficiency, a disorder that interferes with the way cells in the nervous system communicate. New Jersey drugmaker PTC Therapeutics plans to seek U.S. approval this year.

Meanwhile, about 30 U.S. studies testing gene therapy to the brain for various disorders are ongoing, according to the National Institutes of Health. One, led by Dr. Krystof Bankiewicz at Ohio State University, also targets AADC deficiency. Others test treatments for disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's.

Challenges remain, especially with diseases caused by more than a single gene. But scientists say the evidence supporting this approach is mounting — opening a new frontier in the fight against disorders afflicting our most complex and mysterious organ.

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"There's a lot of exciting times ahead of us," said Bankiewicz, a neurosurgeon. "We're seeing some breakthroughs."

The most dramatic of those breakthroughs involve Rylae-Ann's disease, which is caused by mutations in a gene needed for an enzyme that helps make neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, the body's chemical messengers. The one-time treatment delivers a working version of the gene.

At around 3 months old, Rylae-Ann began having spells her parents thought were seizures — her eyes would roll back and her muscles would tense. Fluid sometimes got into her lungs after feedings, sending her to the emergency room. Doctors thought she might have epilepsy or cerebral palsy.

Around that time, Wei's brother sent her a Facebook post about a child in Taiwan with AADC deficiency. The extremely rare disorder afflicts about 135 children worldwide, many in that country. Wei, who was born in Taiwan, and her husband, Richard Poulin III, sought out a doctor there who correctly diagnosed Rylae-Ann. They learned she could qualify for a gene therapy clinical trial in Taiwan.

Though they were nervous about the prospect of brain surgery, they realized she likely wouldn't live past 4 years old without it.

Rylae-Ann had the treatment at 18 months old on November 13, 2019 — which her parents have dubbed her "reborn day." Doctors delivered it during minimally invasive surgery, with a thin tube through a hole in the skull. A harmless virus carried in a functioning version of the gene.

"It gets put into the brain cells and then the brain cells make the (neurotransmitter) dopamine," said Stuart Peltz, CEO of PTC Therapeutics.

Company officials said all patients in their clinical trials showed motor and cognitive improvements. Some of them, Peltz said, could eventually stand and walk, and continue getting better over time.

Bankiewicz said all 40 or so patients in his team's NIH-funded study also saw significant improvements. His surgical approach is more involved and delivers the treatment to a different part of the brain. It targets relevant circuits in the brain, Bankiewicz said, like planting seeds that cause ivy to sprout and spread.

"It's really amazing work," said Jill Morris, a program director with the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, which helped pay for the research. "And he has seen a lot of consistency between patients."

One is 8-year-old Rian Rodriguez-Pena, who lives with her family near Toronto. Rian got gene therapy in 2019, shortly before her 5th birthday. Two months later, she held her head up for the first time. She soon started using her hands and reaching for hugs. Seven months after surgery, she sat up on her own.

"When the world was crumbling around us with COVID, we were at our house celebrating like it was the biggest party of our lives because Rian was just crushing so many milestones that were impossible for so long," said her mom, Shillann Rodriguez-Pena. "It's a completely different life now."

Scientists say there are challenges to overcome before this approach becomes widespread for more common brain diseases.

For example, the timing of treatment is an issue. Generally, earlier in life is better because diseases can cause a cascade of problems over the years. Also, disorders with more complex causes — like Alzheimer's — are tougher to treat with gene therapy.

"When you're correcting one gene, you know exactly where the target is," said Morris.

Ryan Gilbert, a biomedical engineer at New York's Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, said there can also be issues with the gene-carrying virus, which can potentially insert genetic information in an indiscriminate way. Gilbert and other researchers are working on other delivery methods, such as messenger RNA — the technology used in many COVID-19 vaccines — to deliver a genetic payload to the nucleus of cells.

Scientists are also exploring ways to deliver gene therapy to the brain without the dangers of brain surgery. But that requires getting around the blood-brain barrier, an inherent roadblock designed to keep viruses and other germs that may be circulating in the bloodstream out of the brain.

A more practical hurdle is cost. The price of gene therapies, borne mostly by insurers and governments, can run into the millions. The one-time PTC therapy, called Upstaza, costs more than \$3 million in Europe,

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for example.

But drugmakers say they are committed to ensuring people get the treatments they need. And researchers are confident they can overcome the remaining scientific obstacles to this approach.

"So I would say gene therapy can be leveraged for many sorts of brain diseases and disorders," Gilbert said. "In the future, you're going to see more technology doing these kinds of things."

The families of Rylae-Ann and Rian said they hope other families dealing with devastating genetic diseases will someday get to see the transformations they've seen. Both girls are continuing to improve. Rian is playing, eating all sorts of foods, learning to walk and working on language. Rylae-Ann is in preschool, has started a ballet class, and is reading at a kindergarten level.

When her dad picks her up, "she runs to me ... just gives me a hug and says, 'I love you, Daddy.' he said. "It's like it's a normal day, and that's all we ever wanted as parents."

## Cops took 5 hours to warn dance hall shooter was on the run

By BERNARD CONDON, JIM MUSTIAN and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

Lost in the aftermath of the Monterey Park, California, ballroom dance hall shooting that left 11 people dead is an alarming fact: It took five hours for authorities to alert the public that the gunman was on the loose Saturday night.

Even after the 72-year-old shooter brought a submachine gun-style weapon into another nearby dance hall about a half-hour later, a potential attack thwarted by a hero who grabbed the weapon and chased the man away, it would be hours more before police held a news conference to announce the suspect was still at large.

Experts say the weekend mass shooting that sent fear through Los Angeles-area Asian American communities highlights the lack of national standards for notifying the public, and the need for an aggressive alert system — similar to Amber alerts — that would immediately set off alarms on cellphones in surrounding areas and post warnings on highway signs.

"Five hours is kind of ridiculous," said Chris Grollnek, an expert on active-shooter tactics and a retired police officer and SWAT team member. "This is going to be a really good case study. Why five hours?"

Brian Higgins, a former SWAT team commander and police chief in Bergen County, New Jersey, said an alert should have gone out right away, and a half hour between the two incidents was more than enough time to do so.

"What took so long?" said Higgins, an adjunct professor at New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "Maybe they were still doing their investigation. Maybe they didn't have a good handle on what they had. But if they didn't know, they should have erred on the side of caution and put this out."

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna on Monday said his department was "strategic" in its decision to release information but that he would review what happened.

"When we started putting out public information, the priority was to get this person into custody," Luna said. "Ultimately it worked. We will go back and look at it as we always do. Nobody is as critical as ourselves as to what worked and specifically what didn't work, and evaluate that, and see what the wait was in determining what the public risk was at that time."

A timeline of events shows police were silent for hours, not only about a shooter being on the loose but about the fact that a shooting had taken place at all, with information trickling from police scanners and sources rather than official channels. The delays came just hours after tens of thousands of revelers had been in the streets of the heavily Asian American city for a celebration of the Lunar New Year.

Authorities said the first call about the shooting at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio came in Saturday at 10:22 p.m. local time and officers responded within three minutes. Monterey Park police said it took several minutes for officers — several of whom were rookies on the force — to assess the chaotic scene and look for the gunman, who had already fled.

About 20 minutes after the first shooting, at 10:44, the gunman who would later be identified as Huu Can Tran marched into the Lai Lai Ballroom about 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) away in Alhambra. He was

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confronted in the lobby by 26-year-old Brandon Tsay.

Tsay, a computer coder who helps run the dance hall for his family, told The New York Times he was unaware of the previous shooting in Monterey Park when he lunged at the man and began struggling to get the weapon out of his hands. Tsay eventually commandeered the weapon, ordered him to "Go, get the hell out of here!" and watched as he drove away in a white van.

More than an hour later, at 11:53 p.m., word came that the shooter was still at large — not from an official source, but from a media outlet monitoring police chatter on a scanner. "The suspect is still on the loose according to PD on scene," RMG News tweeted.

The Associated Press began telephoning the Monterey Park police and fire departments and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department shortly before the RMG News alert, and kept calling for nearly three hours. Monterey Park police never responded. A sheriff's official confirmed to the AP there were nine dead shortly before 2:36 a.m. Sunday, when the AP published an alert.

At 2:49 a.m., the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Information Bureau issued a news advisory confirming the fatalities and adding the suspect was male. There was still no mention he was on the loose.

Finally, just after 3:30 a.m., five hours after the shooting, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Capt. Andrew Meyer held a news conference to announce the death toll was 10 and for the first time publicly stating "the suspect fled the scene and remains outstanding."

By midday Sunday, police 30 miles (48 kilometers) away in Torrance swarmed a strip mall parking lot and surrounded a white van matching the description of the one Tran was last seen driving. After approaching carefully, SWAT teams broke in at 1 p.m. and found Tran dead in the driver's seat with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Police are still investigating a motive for the slayings.

Katherine Schweit, a retired FBI agent who spearheaded the agency's active shooter program, acknowledged such mass shooting cases can be confusing and hectic and that "the first priority is always the victims and survivors."

But, she said, "communicating with the public is equally important. In general, when law enforcement believes there is an added threat to the public or are looking for a suspect, they notify the public."

Vibrating smartphone warnings about everything from missing children and senior citizens to impending snow squalls and flash floods have become commonplace over the past decade. More than 1,600 federal, state and local jurisdictions -- including Los Angeles County -- are equipped to send such cellphone alerts through the federally funded Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"We have the technology," said former FBI agent Gregory Shaffer, now head of a Dallas-based risk management and tactical training firm. "It's just not being utilized."

A House bill last year would have established an Active Shooter Alert Network to replace the messy patchwork of alert systems used by thousands of towns and cities that is plagued by messaging delays and low enrollment. It died in the Senate but one of its sponsors, U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson, a California Democrat, said late Monday he intends to re-introduce the legislation.

"I think the fact that people were left in the lurch in this situation for an awful long time speaks to the need for the bill," Thompson said. "People need to be warned."

## Asian shares rise, track Wall St gains as earnings ramp up

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Stocks were higher in Asia on Tuesday after a tech-led rally on Wall Street as investors bet the Federal Reserve will trim its rate hikes to tamp down inflation.

Many markets in the region were closed for Lunar New Year holidays.

A preliminary reading for manufacturing in Japan remained steady in January at its lowest level in over two years, with exports declining faster. But the strength in technology shares helped spur buying of manufacturers like electronics maker Omron, which gained 2.7%, and robot supplier Fanuc Corp., which gained 2%.

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Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index gained 1.7% to 27,367.03 and the Sensex in Mumbai added 0.5% to 61,223.88. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.4% to 7,486.60 while the SET in Bangkok was up 0.2%.

"Markets are assuming a pro-growth stance as investors get more comfortable with the idea of an improving macro backdrop ahead of a busy week of data from both a macro and micro perspective," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

"And if one takes a look under the hood, in the heat of the moment, it has that unmistakable feel of pandemic-era trading, supported by solid moves in mega cap tech stocks," he said.

On Monday, the S&P 500 rose 1.2% to 4,019.81. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.8% to 33,629.56 and the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite closed 2% higher, at 11,364.41. Small company stocks also rose, pushing the Russell 2000 index up 1.3% to 1,890.77.

Tech stocks in the S&P 500 rose 2.3% Monday, with chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices leading the pack with a 9.2% gain.

Markets have been swinging between hope and caution as investors watch to see if the Federal Reserve will dial back on interest rate hikes meant to tame inflation, which has begun to abate in many countries in recent months. The fear is that the Fed and other central banks might go too far, tipping the U.S. and other economies into recession by slowing spending and investment too much.

The Fed has already pulled its key overnight rate up to a range of 4.25% to 4.5% from virtually zero early last year, and traders are now betting on a nearly 99% probability that the Fed will raise rates by just a quarter point on Feb. 1, according to CME Group.

The yield on the two-year Treasury, which tends to track expectations for Fed movement, rose to 4.22% from 4.18% late Friday. The 10-year yield, which helps set rates for mortgages and other important loans, rose to 3.52% from 3.48%.

Another partisan battle in Washington over the nation's ability to borrow may roil markets if the Democrats and Republicans can't agree on allowing the U.S. government to borrow more.

Corporate earnings are seen as a good indicator of how well companies are coping with the slowing economy and higher costs. Profits are one of the main levers that set stock prices.

This week, more than seven dozen companies in the S&P 500 will report their results for the last three months of 2022. That includes headliners like Microsoft, on Tuesday, and Tesla on Wednesday.

Such big tech-oriented companies have begun layoffs to slash expenses after acknowledging they misread the boom coming out of the pandemic and grew too quickly. Spotify said Monday it will cut 6% of its workforce, and its shares rose 2.1%.

Big Tech stocks have a big influence on Wall Street because they're some of the market's most valuable. After soaring through the pandemic thanks to super-low interest rates and a surge in demand from suddenly homebound customers, they've been struggling over the last year as the Fed has sharply raised rates.

In other trading Tuesday, U.S. benchmark crude oil picked up 3 cents to \$81.65 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 2 cents to \$81.62 on Monday.

Brent crude, the pricing benchmark for international trading, lost 10 cents to \$88.06 per barrel.

The dollar fell to 130.27 Japanese yen from 130.66 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0877 from \$1.0875.

## Oscar nominations Tuesday could give blockbusters a boost

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A year after a streaming service won Hollywood's top honor for the first time, big-screen spectacles are poised to dominate nominations to the 95th Academy Awards on Tuesday.

Nominations will be announced 8:30am EST from the academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California. They will air live on ABC's "Good Morning America" and be livestreamed on Oscars.org, Oscars.com and on several of the academy's social media platforms. Riz Ahmed ("Sound of Metal") and Allison Williams ("M3gan") will read the nominees.

If things go as expected, "Top Gun: Maverick," "Avatar: The Way of Water," "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" and "Elvis" could all rack up somewhere between six and nine nominations. If last year's Oscars were dominated by streaming — Apple TV+'s "CODA" won best picture and Netflix landed 27 nominations



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— movies that drew moviegoers to multiplexes make up many of this year's top contenders.

That includes "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the A24 sci-fi indie hit. Daniel Scheinert and Daniel Kwan's multiverse-skipping tale could walk away with the most nominations Tuesday, including nods for Michelle Yeoh and comeback kid Ke Huy Quan.

Also at the front of the pack is "The Banshees of Inisherin," Martin McDonagh's Ireland-set dark comedy, which is set to score as many as four acting nods, including nominations for Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson.

Steven Spielberg's "The Fabelmans" struggled to catch on with audiences, but the director's autobiographical coming-of-age tale is set to land Spielberg his 20th Oscar nomination and eighth nod for best-director. John Williams, his longtime composer, should extend his record for the most Oscar nominations for a living person. Another nod for best score will give Williams his 53rd nomination, a number that trails only Walt Disney's 59.

Many questions remain, though, like whether the love for "Top Gun: Maverick" will go far enough to win Tom Cruise a best actor nomination. The year's other highest-grossing blockbuster, "Avatar: The Way of Water," should score well in the technical categories, though less certain is whether director James Cameron will make it into the best director field. After that category saw the first back-to-back wins for female filmmakers — Chloé Zhao ("Nomadland") in 2021, Jane Campion ("The Power of the Dog") last year — no women are expected to be nominated for best director.

The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences will surely celebrate a best picture field populated with blockbusters. Ratings for the telecast have typically been higher in years with much-watched films as favorites. Last year's awards had been looking like a comeback edition for the Oscars before "the slap" came to define the ceremony. In the aftermath, the academy banned Will Smith from attending for the next 10 years. Though he could have still been nominated, Smith's performance as a runaway slave in "Emancipation" didn't catch on.

Last year's broadcast drew 15.4 million viewers, according to Nielsen, up 56% from the record-low audience of 10.5 million for the pandemic-marred 2021 telecast. This year, ABC is bringing back Jimmy Kimmel to host the March 12 ceremony, one that will surely be seen as a return to the site of the slap.

But larger concerns are swirling around the movie business. Last year saw flashes of triumphant resurrection for theaters, like the success of "Top Gun: Maverick," after two years of pandemic. But partially due to a less steady stream of major releases, ticket sales for the year recovered only about 70% of pre-pandemic business. Regal Cinemas, the nation's second-largest chain, announced the closure of 39 cinemas this month.

At the same time, storm clouds swept into the streaming world after years of once-seemingly boundless growth. Stocks plunged as Wall Street looked to streaming services to earn profits, not just add subscribers. A retrenchment has followed, as the industry again enters an uncertain chapter.

In stark contrast to last year's Academy Awards, this year may see no streaming titles vying for the Oscars' most sought-after award — though the last spots in the 10-movie best-picture field remain up for grabs. Netflix's best shots instead are coming in other categories, notably with animated film favorite "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio" and the German submission, "All Quiet on the Western Front."

## Crypto firms acted like banks, then collapsed like dominoes

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Over the past few years, a number of companies have attempted to act as the cryptocurrency equivalent of a bank, promising lucrative returns to customers who deposited their bitcoin or other digital assets.

In a span of less than 12 months, nearly all of the biggest of those companies have failed spectacularly. Last week, Genesis filed Chapter 11, joining Voyager Digital, Celsius and BlockFi on the list of companies that have either filed for bankruptcy protection or gone out of business.

This subset of the industry grew as cryptocurrency enthusiasts were looking to build their own parallel

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world in finance untethered to traditional banking and government-issued currencies. But lacking safeguards, and without a government backstop, these companies failed in domino-like fashion. What started with one crypto company collapsing in May spilled over onto one crypto lending firm and then the next.

Further, government regulators started clamping down on crypto lending companies' ability to advertise their services, saying that their products should have been regulated by securities regulators.

The collapse is reminiscent of the 2008 financial crisis, but on a much smaller scale. There are no worries that the collapse of these crypto firms will impact the broader economy.

Crypto lending companies like Voyager, Genesis and BlockFi were trying to do what banks do in traditional finance: take in crypto deposits, give depositors a dividend on their stored crypto, and then make loans to earn a profit. It's what the banking industry has done for hundreds of years, but with government-sanctioned currencies.

The biggest drawback to crypto lending is the lack of safeguards. There is no deposit insurance, government stopgap, or even a privately run entity to protect depositors if their crypto bank were to fail. This was fine when crypto prices were moving higher because the collateral banks were accepting in exchange for the loans was increasing in value.

Demand for crypto deposits was so high, firms were willing to pay a yield of 10% or more on depositors' crypto holdings.

But then crypto prices started falling and kept falling. Bitcoin, for instance, plunged from over \$65,000 in November 2021 to below \$17,000 last November. As a result, much of the underlying collateral these firms were holding became worth less than the loans they had issued, effectively making several "crypto banks" insolvent.

The first two crypto lending firms to collapse were Celsius and Voyager Digital. The companies had been exposed to both falling crypto prices as well as risky loans made to crypto hedge funds like Three Arrows Capital, which was forced to liquidate and go out of business in June.

BlockFi, another crypto lender, turned to then-crypto giant FTX and its founder Sam Bankman-Fried for a rescue. Bankman-Fried gave BlockFi a financial lifeline, one of several moves that earned Bankman-Fried plaudits as a savior or financial backstop for the crypto industry.

But FTX's own bankruptcy in November, caused by high-risk lending to its affiliated hedge fund Alameda Research, caused BlockFi's financial lifeline to wither away. BlockFi's own bankruptcy became an inevitability. In a show of how intertwined these crypto lenders became, Genesis made billions in loans to Alameda.

Saddled with bad loans, many of these high-tech firms experienced a very old phenomenon: depositors wanted their money back, and a bank run started.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The tens of thousands of customers at these crypto lending firms are now waiting to see if their assets can be recovered or found in bankruptcy court, which could take months or even years. At Genesis, more than \$900 million in customer funds are now locked up in bankruptcy.

It's not clear whether crypto lending will see a return any time soon. After FTX failed, crypto exchange giant Binance announced it would start its own fund to provide rescue financing for a crypto firm in trouble, an idea that has its origins in government-sponsored central banking or deposit insurance.

Further, the crypto industry seems to be coming around to the idea of some sort of regulation, which would provide a minimum of safeguards to depositors or investors that does not exist at the moment. There were several bills pending in Congress last year, but with the change in control to the Republicans in the House of Representatives, it's not clear whether the broader GOP has an interest in regulating the crypto industry.

## Police: 2 students killed, man hurt in Des Moines shooting

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Two teenage students were killed Monday and a man was seriously injured in what police said was a targeted shooting at an alternative educational program designed to keep at-risk youth away from trouble. The injured man was identified as the program's founder — a rapper who left

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a life of gangs and violence and has been dedicated to helping youth in Des Moines.

Police said Monday that one man had been charged in the shooting, and two other people remained in custody. Preston Walls, 18, of Des Moines, was charged with two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder for the shooting at the Starts Right Here program. He was also charged with criminal gang participation.

Authorities said the shooting was the result of an ongoing gang dispute. Police said Walls was on supervised release for a weapons charge and had removed his ankle monitor 16 minutes before the shooting.

"The incident was definitely targeted. It was not random. There was nothing random about this," Sgt. Paul Parizek said.

Two Des Moines teens, an 18-year-old male and a 16-year-old male, were killed. William Holmes — a 49-year-old rapper who founded the program and goes by the stage name Will Keeps — was injured and was in surgery Monday evening.

Police said Walls and all three victims were at the school on Monday when Walls entered a common area where Holmes and the two students were. Walls had a 9mm handgun with an extended ammunition magazine in his possession, police said, though they did not specify if he was displaying the weapon.

Holmes tried to escort Walls away from the area, but Walls pulled away, "pulled the handgun and began to shoot both teenage victims," police said in a statement. Holmes was standing nearby and was also shot, then Walls ran away, police said.

Responding officers saw a suspicious vehicle leaving the area. Officers stopped the vehicle. But Walls ran away and was arrested a short time later. Police said a 9mm handgun was found nearby. The ammunition magazine — which has a capacity of 31 rounds — contained three.

Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie said the people in the vehicle with Walls are also teenagers.

"That brings a total of five families of teenagers affected by youth gun violence in a matter of minutes on a Monday afternoon, right here in our capital city," Cownie said at Monday's City Council meeting. "This is a growing and alarming phenomenon in our country, and one we've seen too often in the past and again today in the city of Des Moines."

Cownie held a moment of silence for the victims. He said he spoke to their family members. "But there is little one can say that will lessen their pain. Nothing that can be said to bring them back, those who were killed so senselessly," he said.

Walls has not yet made a court appearance. It was not immediately clear if he had an attorney to speak on his behalf.

Police said emergency crews were called to the school, which is in a business park, just before 1 p.m. Officers arrived to find two students critically injured, and they started CPR immediately, but the two students died at a hospital.

Starts Right Here is an educational program that helps at-risk youth in grades 9-12 and is affiliated with the Des Moines school district.

"The school is designed to pick up the slack and help the kids who need help the most," Parizek said.

The Greater Des Moines Partnership, the economic and community development organization for the region, says on its website that Keeps came to Des Moines about 20 years ago from Chicago, where he "lived in a world of gangs and violence" before finding healing through music.

The partnership said the Starts Right Here movement "seeks to encourage and educate young people living in disadvantaged and oppressive circumstances using the arts, entertainment, music, hip hop and other programs. It also teaches financial literacy and helps students prepare for job interviews and improve their communication skills. The ultimate goal is to break down barriers of fear, intimidation and other damaging factors leading to a sense of being disenfranchised, forgotten and rejected."

According to the program's website, one of Keeps' songs, "Wake Up Iowa," sends a message that "violence and hate are not the Iowa way, and instead, we need to learn from other cities' mistakes, so we don't end up being ravaged by violence and crime."

The school's website says 70% of the students it serves are minorities, and it has had 28 graduates

since it started in 2021. The school district said the program serves 40 to 50 students at any given time. The district said no district employees were on site at the time of the shooting.

Interim Superintendent Matt Smith said in a statement: "We are saddened to learn of another act of gun violence, especially one that impacts an organization that works closely with some of our students. We are still waiting to learn more details, but our thoughts are with any victims of this incident and their families and friends."

Gov. Kim Reynolds, who serves on an advisory board for Starts Right Here, said she was "shocked and saddened to hear about the shooting." Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wingert is on the Starts Right Here board, according to the program's website.

"I've seen first-hand how hard Will Keeps and his staff works to help at-risk kids through this alternative education program," Reynolds said in a statement. "My heart breaks for them, these kids and their families."

Nicole Krantz said her office near the school was put on lockdown immediately after the shooting, and she saw someone running from the building with police in pursuit on foot and in patrol cars.

"We just saw a lot of cop cars pouring in from everywhere," Krantz told the Des Moines Register. "It's terrifying. We're all worried. We went on lockdown, obviously. We were all told to stay away from the windows because we weren't sure if they caught the guy,"

The shooting was the sixth at a school in the U.S. this year in which someone was injured or killed, but the first with fatalities, according to Education Week, which tracks school shootings. The website said there were 51 school shootings last year involving injuries or deaths, and there have been 150 since 2018. In the worst school shooting last year, 21 people were killed in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

In a separate shooting outside a Des Moines high school last March, one student was killed and two other teens were badly injured. Ten people — who were all between the ages of 14 and 18 at the time of the shooting — were charged afterward. Five of them have pleaded guilty to various charges associated with the shooting.

## Sheriff seeking what drove 'mad man' to shoot up dance hall

By AMY TAXIN, STEFANIE DAZIO, TERRY TANG and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

MONTEREY PARK, Calif. (AP) — Investigators searching for a motive Monday in the worst mass shooting in Los Angeles County history said the gunman was previously arrested for illegally possessing a firearm, had a rifle at home, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and appeared to be manufacturing gun silencers.

Los Angeles Sheriff Robert Luna said investigators had not yet established why 72-year-old Huu Can Tran gunned down patrons Saturday night at a ballroom dance hall in Monterey Park, where tens of thousands attended Lunar New Year festivities earlier that evening. Tran later killed himself as police closed in on him.

"What drove a mad man to do this? We don't know, but we intend to find out," Luna said.

A man who said he had been a longtime friend of Tran told The Associated Press that the gunman once frequented the dance hall and another that he also targeted and griped about the way he thought people treated him there.

Tran fired 42 rounds at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio, killing 11 people and wounding nine. He then drove to another nearby dance hall where an employee wrestled a modified 9 mm submachine gun-style semi-automatic weapon away from him, Luna said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom met Monday with Brandon Tsay, who works part-time at the dance club founded by his grandparents, and said he was a true hero.

"This remarkable young man who without any hesitation — though with moments of fear — took it upon himself to save countless lives," Newsom said. "Who knows how many lives he saved."

Tsay said he was proud of his actions but did not want to discuss them so the focus would stay on the victims.

"Some of these people I know personally," Tsay said outside his family's home. "They come to our studio. It's a tight knit community and I hope they can heal from this tragic event"

Tran fatally shot himself Sunday as officers surrounded the van he was inside. A handgun was recovered

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from the van, which matched descriptions of the vehicle he used to get away from the dance studio.

Sheriff's deputies from Los Angeles County searched Tran's home in a gated senior community in the town of Hemet, a little over an hour's drive from the site of the massacre.

Luna said his officers found a .308-caliber rifle, an unknown amount of bullets and evidence he was making homemade firearm suppressors that muffle the sound of the weapons.

Tran had visited Hemet police twice this month to report he was the victim of fraud, theft and poisoning by family members a decade or two ago in the LA area, Hemet police spokesperson Alan Reyes told The Associated Press. Tran said he would return to the station with documentation but never did.

The death toll rose to 11 Monday after health officials announced that one of the 10 people wounded had died, officials said.

My Nhan, 65, Lilian Li, 63, and Xiujuan Yu, 57, were identified by the Los Angeles coroner's office as three of the six women killed. Two other women were in their 60s, and one was in her 70s. Valentino Alvero, 68, was the only man identified. Three men in their 70s and one in his 60s were also killed.

Nhan's family said in a statement that she was a loving person whose kindness was contagious, and loved to dance.

"Unfairly, Saturday was her last dance," the family said. "We are starting the Lunar New Year broken. We never imagined her life would end so suddenly."

Authorities have shared little about Tran, who owned a trucking company in Monterey Park from 2002 to 2004, according to California business records.

He was once arrested for unlawful possession of a firearm in 1990 and had a limited criminal history, Luna said. The sheriff could not immediately say if a gun arrest at a time when firearms laws were different would have barred him from owning weapons.

Tran's ex-wife told CNN they married soon after they met at Star Ballroom, where he offered her free lessons. She said he would become upset if she missed a step dancing, but was never violent toward her.

They divorced five years later, citing irreconcilable differences, Los Angeles Superior Court records show. The couple did not have children, said they had no community property and neither side had to pay alimony.

While she is named in court papers, she asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the case.

His ex-wife's story was echoed by a friend who told AP that Tran offered to teach new women at both clubs how to dance for free so that he would have a partner.

But Tran was perpetually distrustful and paranoid and would regularly complain that people at the clubs didn't like him, according to the former friend who requested anonymity to speak about Tran because he wanted to avoid the media spotlight.

"He always cast a dubious eye toward everything. He just didn't trust people at all," the friend said. "He always complained to me that the instructors ... kept distance from him, and according to what he said, many people spoke evil of him."

Tran eventually moved from the San Gabriel Valley, a melting pot for Asian immigrants, and settled in Hemet, a lower-income community of many retirees 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of Los Angeles in Riverside County.

Tran lived in The Lakes at Hemet West, a gated community off a busy road with a view of snow-covered mountains. The development has a par-3 golf course, shuffleboard court and a dance floor. Properties listed for sale ranged from \$45,000 to \$222,000.

A neighbor, Pat Roth, told KNBC-TV that Tran said he was a ballroom dance instructor in the past and would sometimes show up to dances at the senior community.

"Didn't seem like he'd harm a fly, you know. He wasn't a big guy," Roth said. "He'd pet your dog when you walked by."

Hemet police had no records of any incidents involving Tran in the community or calls for service at his home, Reyes said.

The shootings during Lunar New Year celebrations sent a wave of fear through Asian American communities, dealing another blow to a community that has been the target of high-profile violence in recent

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years and cast a shadow over festivities nationwide.

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

Tran is the second-oldest mass killer in the U.S. over the last nearly 20 years according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. The only older mass killer was a 73-year-old who murdered five people in Yuma County Arizona in 2011 before killing himself. The database tracks every mass killing — defined as four dead not including the offender — committed in the U.S. since 2006.

About 20 minutes after the first attack in Monterey Park, Tran entered the Lai Lai Ballroom in the nearby city of Alhambra.

Tsay, who was in the lobby, told ABC's "Good Morning America" that he thought he was going to die.

"Something came over me. I realized I needed to get the weapon away from him, I needed to take this weapon, disarm him or else everybody would have died," Tsay said. "When I got the courage, I lunged at him with both my hands, grabbed the weapon and we had a struggle."

Once Tsay seized the gun, he pointed it at the man and shouted: "Get the hell out of here, I'll shoot, get away, go!"

The assailant paused, but then headed back to his van, and Tsay called the police, the gun still in his hand.

"He saw that he had an opportunity," said his father, Tom Tsay, co-owner of the studio. "The person was cocking his gun. And he saw the opportunity and he just jumped."

## Jacinda Ardern makes final appearance as New Zealand leader

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Jacinda Ardern made her final public appearance as New Zealand's prime minister Tuesday, saying the thing she would miss most was the people, because they had been the "joy of the job."

Ardern, who has been a global icon of the left, shocked the nation Thursday when she said she was resigning as leader after more than five years because she had nothing left in the tank. Labour Party lawmakers voted unanimously Sunday for Chris Hipkins to take over as prime minister, and he will be sworn in Wednesday.

Ardern's final act as leader was to join Hipkins and other lawmakers attending celebrations at the Rātana meeting grounds, the home of an Indigenous Māori religious movement.

Ardern told reporters she'd been friends with Hipkins for nearly 20 years and spent two hours with him on the drive to the meeting grounds. She said the only real advice she could offer was, "You do you."

"This is for him now. It's for him to carve out his own space to be his own kind of leader," Ardern said. "Actually, there's no advice I can really impart. I can share information, I can share experiences, but this is now for him."

Ardern also addressed the wide discussion that has been going on since her announcement about the vitriolic and misogynistic attacks on her on social media — something she has said did not contribute to her decision to step down.

"Whilst there has been a bit of commentary in the aftermath of my departure, I would hate for anyone to view my departure as a negative commentary on New Zealand," Ardern said. "I have experienced such love, compassion, empathy and kindness when I've been in this job. That has been my predominant experience."

Hipkins told reporters the leadership transition was "bittersweet."

"Obviously, I'm really honored to be taking on the role, but as is well known, Jacinda's a very good friend of mine," he said.

At the meeting grounds, Ardern was greeted with embraces and songs. She told those attending she would leave the job with a greater love and affection for New Zealand and its people than when she started.

"I didn't think that was possible," she said.

She said her colleagues were exceptional people.

"I never did this job alone," Ardern said. "I did it alongside these wonderful servants to New Zealand. And I leave knowing that you are in the best of hands."

Ardern plans to stay on as a Member of Parliament until April to avoid triggering a special election ahead of the nation's general election in October. She said she was prepared for her new, relatively obscure role.

"I'm ready to be lots of things," Ardern told reporters. "I'm ready to be a backbench MP. I'm ready to be a sister, and a mom."

## Four Oath Keepers convicted of Jan. 6 seditious conspiracy

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Four members of the Oath Keepers were convicted Monday of seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack in the second major trial of far-right extremists accused of plotting to forcibly keep President Donald Trump in power.

The verdict against Joseph Hackett of Sarasota, Florida; Roberto Minuta of Prosper, Texas; David Moerschel of Punta Gorda, Florida; and Edward Vallejo of Phoenix comes weeks after a different jury convicted the group's leader, Stewart Rhodes, in the mob's attack that halted the certification of President Joe Biden's electoral victory.

It's another major victory for the Justice Department, which is also trying to secure sedition convictions against the former leader of the Proud Boys and four associates. The trial against Enrique Tarrío and his lieutenants opened earlier this month in Washington and is expected to last several weeks.

The Washington jury deliberated for about 12 hours over three days before delivering their guilty verdict on the rarely used charge, which carries up to 20 years in prison. The four were also convicted of two other conspiracy charges as well as obstructing an official proceeding: Congress' certification of the 2020 election. Minuta, Hackett and Moerschel were acquitted of lesser charges.

The judge didn't immediately set a date for sentencing. The judge denied prosecutors' bid to lock up the men while they await sentencing, finding them not to be a risk of flight. They were ordered to remain in home detention with electronic monitoring.

It was one of the most serious cases brought so far in the sweeping Jan. 6 investigation, which continues to grow two years after the riot. The Justice Department has charged nearly 1,000 people in the riot and the tally increases by the week.

Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters after the verdict that he is "grateful to the prosecutors, agents and staff for their outstanding work."

Oath Keepers leader Rhodes and Florida chapter leader Kelly Meggs were convicted of seditious conspiracy in the previous trial that ended in November. They were the first people in decades found guilty at trial of the Civil War-era charge. Three other Oath Keepers were cleared of the charge in that case but were found guilty of other serious crimes. They are all awaiting sentencing.

Lawyers for Moerschel and Minuta suggested after the verdict that their clients were hurt by not being able to stand trial alongside Rhodes because the judge split the case into two groups. Moerschel's lawyer, Scott Weinberg, said he could have pointed to Rhodes as the "real bad guy."

"I think it would be easier to be a low-level person in the same case as Stewart Rhodes, who is basically the figurehead of this organization," Weinberg said.

William Shipley Jr., Minuta's attorney, said he was disappointed and "somewhat puzzled" by the verdict. He said the government's witnesses didn't stand up to scrutiny and there were gaps in the evidence presented.

"We didn't really think that in the 15 days of trial testimony the government really had a good day," Shipley said.

Vallejo left the courthouse without speaking to reporters. Joseph Hackett's attorney, Angela Halim, declined to comment after the verdict.

Prosecutors told jurors that Rhodes and his band of extremists began shortly after the 2020 election to prepare an armed rebellion to keep Trump in power. Messages show Rhodes and the Oath Keepers

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discussing the prospect of a “bloody” civil war and the need to keep Biden out of the White House.

“Our democracy was under attack, but for the defendants it was everything they trained for and a moment to celebrate,” prosecutor Louis Manzo told jurors in his closing argument.

Prosecutors alleged that the Oath Keepers amassed weapons and stashed them at a Virginia hotel for so-called “quick reaction force” teams that could quickly shuttle guns into Washington to support their plot if they were needed. The weapons were never used.

Defense attorneys sought to downplay violent messages as mere bluster and said the Oath Keepers came to Washington to provide security at events before the riot. They seized on prosecutors’ lack of evidence that the Oath Keepers had an explicit plan to storm the Capitol before Jan. 6 and told jurors that the extremists who attacked the Capitol acted spontaneously like thousands of other rioters.

Prosecutors argued that while there is not evidence specifically spelling out a plan to attack the Capitol, the Oath Keepers saw the riot as a means to an end and sprung into action at an apparent opportunity to help keep Trump in power.

Hackett, Moerschel and other Oath Keepers approached the Capitol in a military-style stack formation before they entered the building, according to prosecutors. Minuta and his group from a second stack of Oath Keepers clashed with police after heeding Rhodes’ call to race to the Capitol, according to court documents.

Prosecutors said that Vallejo, a U.S. Army veteran and Rhodes ally, drove from Arizona to prepare with the “QRF” — the quick reaction force — at the hotel outside Washington. Jurors heard an audio recording of Vallejo talking about a “declaration of a guerilla war” on the morning of Jan. 6.

Three other Oath Keepers have pleaded guilty to seditious conspiracy and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in the hopes of getting a lighter sentence. They are among about 500 people who have pleaded guilty to riot-related charges.

## Legal, political strategy in letting FBI search Biden’s home

By ZEKE MILLER, ERIC TUCKER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden’s decision allowing the FBI to search his home in Delaware last week is laying him open to fresh negative attention and embarrassment following the earlier discoveries of classified documents at that home and a former office. But it’s a legal and political calculation that aides hope will pay off in the long run as he prepares to seek reelection.

The remarkable, nearly 13-hour search by FBI agents of the sitting president’s Wilmington home is the latest political black eye for Biden, who promised to restore propriety to the office after the tumultuous tenure of his predecessor, Donald Trump.

But with his actions, Biden is doing more than simply complying with federal investigators assigned to look into the discovery of the records. The president is aiming to show that, unlike Trump, he never intended to retain classified materials — a key distinction that experts say diminishes the risks of criminal liability.

White House spokesman Ian Sams said Monday that Biden’s own attorneys invited the FBI to conduct the search. “This was a voluntary proactive offer by the president’s personal lawyers to DOJ to have access to the home,” he said, adding that it reflected “how seriously” Biden is taking the issue.

Mary McCord, a former senior Justice Department national security official, said, “If I was a lawyer and I represented the president of the United States and I wanted to show, ‘I am being fully cooperative, and I do care to be projecting transparency to the American public, and I do take this seriously,’ I think this is the advice I would give as well.”

That’s not to say she approves of his handling of the documents.

“I think it’s wrong that he had those documents there,” she said. “It shows lapses at the end of the administration,” when Biden was completing his time as vice president under Barack Obama.

Biden’s personal attorneys first discovered classified materials on Nov. 2, a week before the midterm elections, as they were clearing out an office Biden had used at the Penn Biden Center in Washington. Since that initial discovery, Biden’s team has adopted an accommodating approach to the investigation,



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even if they haven't been completely transparent in public.

The White House has cited the "risk" of sharing information "that's not complete" potentially interfering with the probe to justify not revealing more information to the public.

They didn't acknowledge the first discovery before the elections, though they swiftly notified the National Archives, returned the documents the day after they were found and coordinated subsequent searches and discoveries with the Department of Justice.

They also are not standing in the way of interviews of staff, including Kathy Chung, Biden's executive assistant when he was vice president, who helped oversee the packing of boxes that were taken to the Penn Biden Center.

She feels some responsibility but had "absolutely" no knowledge of classified documents being packed, according to a person familiar with her thinking. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

Biden himself has said he was surprised the documents were in his possession. Last Thursday, frustrated at all the focus, he told reporters: "There's no there there."

It all fits a theme: Biden and his aides maintain the document mishandling was not intentional. As far as Biden's possible legal exposure goes, the question of intention is critical: Federal law does not allow anyone to store classified documents in an unauthorized location, but it's only a prosecutable crime when someone is found to have "knowingly" removed the documents from a proper place.

Still, welcoming the FBI search could backfire depending on what else might be found. Agents last week took possession of an additional round of items with classified markings, and some of Biden's handwritten notes and materials from his tenure as vice president and senator.

That's in addition to the documents already turned in by Biden's lawyers. Agents could also choose to search the Penn Biden Center and Biden's other home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, as the probe continues. Sams declined to say whether Biden would sign off on additional searches, referring the matter to the DOJ — which has asked the White House not to publicize searches in advance.

Criticism of Biden's handling of the matter has come from Democrats as well as Republicans. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said the president should be "embarrassed by the situation."

"I think he should have a lot of regrets," added Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va. Even Biden's own attorneys have called it a "mistake."

Republicans, meanwhile, have sought to use their new-found powers in the House, where they regained the majority this month, to investigate Biden's handling of the documents and hope to capitalize on the investigation, even as they have said investigating the documents retained by Trump is not a priority.

"It is troubling that classified documents have been improperly stored at the home of President Biden for at least six years, raising questions about who may have reviewed or had access to classified information," House Oversight Chairman James Comer, R-Ky., wrote in asking for visitor logs to Biden's residence.

Responding to Comer's requests for copies of the documents taken from Biden's home, the White House counsel's office on Monday said it no longer had possession of them. It said the White House would "accommodate legitimate oversight interests," while also "respecting the separation of powers and the constitutional and statutory obligations of the executive branch generally and the White House in particular."

"This is not 'legitimate' transparency from President Biden who once claimed he'd have the most transparent administration in history," said Oversight Committee spokesperson Jessica Collins, who added that the panels Republicans would use "all possible tools" to get answers.

Trump and some of his supporters have been outspoken, claiming Biden is guilty of worse mishandling of classified documents than the Democrats sanctimoniously accuse Trump of being. The former president is sure to press that accusation vigorously as he campaigns to regain the White House.

The investigation of Trump also centers on classified documents that ended up at a home. In that case, though, the Justice Department issued a subpoena for the return of documents that Trump had refused to give back, then obtained a warrant and seized more than 100 documents during a dramatic August search of his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago. Federal agents are investigating potential violations of three federal laws,

including one that governs gathering, transmitting or losing defense information under the Espionage Act.

In 2016, when the FBI recommended against criminal charges for Hillary Clinton over classified emails she sent and received via a private server when she was secretary of state, then-FBI Director James Comey said the Justice Department—in choosing which cases to bring over the past century—has looked for evidence of criminal intent, indications of disloyalty to the U.S., retention of vast quantities of classified documents or any effort to obstruct justice.

It's not clear whether agents in the Biden investigation have progressed beyond the question of intent. The White House has not answered key questions, including how classified information from his time as vice president could have ended up inside his Delaware home. But Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed a special counsel to head the probe given the sensitive politics around it.

Garland declared on Monday, in answer to a question: "We do not have different rules for Democrats or Republicans. ... We apply the facts under the law in each case in a neutral and nonpartisan manner. That is what we always do and that is what we are doing in the matters you are referring to."

One key test of the limits of Biden's strategy revolves around the question of whether the president will agree to an interview with federal investigators if he is asked. White House officials thus far have refused to say whether or under what terms he would do so.

## US proposes once-a-year COVID shots for most Americans

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials want to make COVID-19 vaccinations more like the annual flu shot.

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday proposed a simplified approach for future vaccination efforts, allowing most adults and children to get a once-a-year shot to protect against the mutating virus.

This means Americans would no longer have to keep track of how many shots they've received or how many months it's been since their last booster.

The proposal comes as boosters have become a hard sell. While more than 80% of the U.S. population has had at least one vaccine dose, only 16% of those eligible have received the latest boosters authorized in August.

The FDA will ask its panel of outside vaccine experts to weigh in at a meeting Thursday. The agency is expected to take their advice into consideration while deciding future vaccine requirements for manufacturers.

In documents posted online, FDA scientists say many Americans now have "sufficient preexisting immunity" against the coronavirus because of vaccination, infection or a combination of the two. That baseline of protection should be enough to move to an annual booster against the latest strains in circulation and make COVID-19 vaccinations more like the yearly flu shot, according to the agency.

For adults with weakened immune systems and very small children, a two-dose combination may be needed for protection. FDA scientists and vaccine companies would study vaccination, infection rates and other data to decide who should receive a single shot versus a two-dose series.

FDA will also ask its panel to vote on whether all vaccines should target the same strains. That step would be needed to make the shots interchangeable, doing away with the current complicated system of primary vaccinations and boosters.

The initial shots from Pfizer and Moderna — called the primary series — target the strain of the virus that first emerged in 2020 and quickly swept across the world. The updated boosters launched last fall were also tweaked to target omicron relatives that had been dominant.

Under FDA's proposal, the agency, independent experts and manufacturers would decide annually on which strains to target by the early summer, allowing several months to produce and launch updated shots before the fall. That's roughly the same approach long used to select the strains for the annual flu shot.

Ultimately, FDA officials say moving to an annual schedule would make it easier to promote future vaccination campaigns, which could ultimately boost vaccination rates nationwide.

The original two-dose COVID shots have offered strong protection against severe disease and death no matter the variant, but protection against mild infection wanes. Experts continue to debate whether the latest round of boosters significantly enhanced protection, particularly for younger, healthy Americans.

## Attorneys liken Tyre Nichols' arrest to Rodney King beating

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Memphis police officers beat motorist Tyre Nichols for three minutes, treating him like “a human piñata” in a “savage” encounter reminiscent of the infamous 1991 police beating of Los Angeles motorist Rodney King, attorneys for the family said Monday.

Attorney Ben Crump said police video viewed by the family on Monday showed that Nichols was shocked, pepper sprayed and restrained after the 29-year-old FedEx worker and father was pulled over Jan. 7 minutes from his home while returning from a suburban park where he had taken photos of the sunset. Another attorney, Antonio Romanucci, said that Nichols, who was Black, was kicked before Crump stopped him from saying more.

Crump said Nichols' family agreed to investigators' request to wait a week or two before making the video public to “make sure to give this family what they want most, and that is justice.” Shelby County District Attorney Steve Mulroy said in a statement Monday that investigators don't want to risk compromising the investigation.

Crump said the video shows the encounter was “violent” and “troublesome on every level.” Romanucci called it “savage” and out of proportion to the alleged offense.

The city has been on edge about the release of the police footage because of the possibility of unrest. Nichols' stepfather, Rodney Wells, asked that if there are protests, that they remain peaceful, saying violence “is not what Tyre wanted and won't bring him back.”

Nichols — described by family as a “good kid” who loved skateboarding, photography and his 4-year-old son — was arrested after officers stopped him for reckless driving. Police said in a statement the day after the encounter that “a confrontation occurred” as officers approached the vehicle and Nichols ran; they said officers caught up to him and that “another confrontation occurred” while they were taking him into custody. Police said Nichols complained of shortness of breath and was taken to a hospital, where he died three days later.

Relatives have accused the police of beating Nichols and causing him to have a heart attack and kidney failure. Authorities have only said that Nichols experienced a medical emergency. The U.S. Justice Department has opened a civil rights investigation into the arrest, and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is looking into whether excessive force was used.

Memphis police Director Cerelyn “CJ” Davis announced Friday that five officers involved in the arrest were fired after the police probe determined that they used excessive force or failed to intervene and render aid. The officers were identified as Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills, Jr. and Justin Smith.

All five officers are Black, though Crump said that was irrelevant and that Black and brown motorists often are treated differently than whites regardless of the officers' race, and that the pain of Nichols' death “is just the same.”

Nichols' stepfather Rodney Wells, who said the family wants the officers charged with first-degree murder, told reporters that his stepson had good reason to run from the officers.

“Our son ran because he was scared for his life,” Rodney Wells said. “And when you see the video, you'll see why he was scared for his life.”

Attorneys said Nichols can be heard on the video crying out for his mother.

RowVaughn Wells said that on the day of the arrest, her son was looking forward to a chicken she was going to cook for dinner that night.

“All my son was trying to do was come home,” said Wells, who sobbed during the news conference and told reporters Nichols was less than 80 yards (73 meters) from home when Memphis police officers

"murdered him."

"We're going to get justice for my son, Tyre, if that's the last breath I take," she said.

After the family's news conference about 10 activists walked into the lobby of Mulroy's office to demand answers to why the district attorney was withholding the video from the public for up to two more weeks and why he hadn't charged the officers.

"People want to see what happened to Tyre," activist Pamela Bures said. "And we're angry about it."

The Nichols case is the latest high-profile death to rattle the city. Since November 2021, Memphis has seen the fatal shooting of rapper Young Dolph in a daytime ambush at a bakery, a crime rampage in which a man has been charged with fatally shooting three people and wounding three others, the killing of a United Methodist Church pastor during a carjacking in her driveway and the early-morning kidnapping of a jogger whose body was later found near a house.

## Rep. Gallego announces bid for Sinema's Arizona Senate seat

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego, a liberal firebrand and prominent Latino lawmaker, announced Monday he'll challenge independent U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema in 2024, becoming the first candidate to jump into the race and setting up a potential three-way contest.

Gallego said he'd fight for normal people struggling to make ends meet and losing faith in politicians. He said he and Sinema both come from "modest to poor means" but have taken different paths in Congress.

"I'm better for this job than Kyrsten Sinema because I haven't forgotten where I came from," Gallego told The Associated Press. "I think she clearly has forgotten where she came from. Instead of meeting with the people that need help, she meets with the people that are already powerful."

Gallego, a 43-year-old military veteran first elected to Congress in 2014, had made no secret of his interest in challenging Sinema, a longtime rival in Arizona politics who has been a roadblock and irritant to Democrats during Joe Biden's presidency. She left the Democratic Party in December, registering as an independent and saying she doesn't "fit well into a traditional party system." She has not said whether she plans to run for a second term.

Although no Republican has entered the race, potential contenders include former gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, former U.S. Senate candidate Blake Masters and Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb — all of whom are closely aligned with former President Donald Trump. Karrin Taylor Robson, a housing developer who lost to Lake in last year's primary, and former Gov. Doug Ducey are also possible contenders.

A three-way race, coupled with the risk that Sinema and the eventual Democratic nominee will split the vote, would complicate the party's already uphill battle to maintain control of the Senate in 2024. Democrats will be forced to defend 23 seats, including Sinema's and two others held by independents, compared with just 10 seats for Republicans.

With tough and expensive races on the horizon, it remains unclear just how firmly the Democratic establishment and major donors will line up against Sinema, who has voted for most Democratic legislation even as she's stood in the way of major priorities for the White House, congressional leaders and the progressive movement.

"I'm assuming that they will be with us because we are going to run the winning campaign, and because at the end of the day, if you look at where Arizonans are going to be, they're going to be with us and not with her," Gallego told the AP.

A spokesperson for Sinema, Hannah Hurley, declined to comment on Gallego's announcement.

Gallego, an acerbic presence on social media who is quick to take down rivals from both parties, floated the idea of challenging Sinema to raise money last year and has for weeks been publicly assembling a team of advisers, hiring Democratic campaign veterans with experience working on tough swing-state Senate races in Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania.

He announced his campaign with an online video that shows him talking to veterans at an American Legion post in Guadalupe, a Latino and Indigenous community just outside Phoenix. He said his path from humble roots, beating the odds by getting accepted to Harvard University, motivates him to fight to

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preserve the American dream, first in the military and now in politics.

The son of immigrants from Mexico and Colombia, Gallego was raised in Chicago by a single mother, after his father was imprisoned for dealing drugs. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Reserves while he was on a break from Harvard, where he struggled with culture shock. He wrote in a 2021 book, "They Called Us Lucky," that he was asked to leave during his sophomore year, when he partied too much, his grades slipped and he broke unspecified rules. He was later allowed to return.

He fought in Iraq in 2005 in a unit that sustained heavy casualties, including the death of his best friend, and he struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder after returning. He moved to Arizona to join his Harvard girlfriend, who had become active in Democratic politics in the state. The couple married in 2010 and divorced in 2017, a month before their son was born. His ex-wife, Kate Gallego, is now the mayor of Phoenix.

Gallego was elected in 2010 to the state Legislature, where Sinema also served for one of his two terms. In 2014, he won a bitter congressional primary, toppling a dynastic figure in the Phoenix Latino community. He's giving up a safe Democratic seat in Congress, a district that includes the Black and Latino neighborhoods of south and west Phoenix.

In Congress, he has focused on veterans and military issues.

Sinema has modeled her political approach on the maverick style of the late Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who alienated the grassroots of his party by sometimes crossing the aisle to work with Democrats. She's become a fierce advocate of bipartisan compromise in an era when extreme partisanship has made it much more difficult.

She has been at the center of many of the biggest congressional deals of Biden's presidency, from a big, bipartisan infrastructure package to a landmark bill to legally protect same-sex marriages. But she's also become estranged from many Democrats, who blame her for voting down progressive priorities like a minimum wage hike and watering down others, like Biden's big social spending initiatives. She single-handedly thwarted Democrats' longtime goal of raising taxes on wealthy investors.

Her support for maintaining the filibuster, a Senate rule requiring 60 of 100 votes to pass most legislation, has made her a pariah among Democrats, who need Republican support to pass most bills despite controlling a majority of seats. The tension reached a head in 2021, when Democrats tried and failed to pass voting rights legislation.

Sinema doubled down on her position last week, telling global elites in Davos, Switzerland, that democracy didn't collapse in the 2022 election despite her support for the filibuster.

## **US: Ex-FBI counterintelligence agent aided Russian oligarch**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A former high-ranking FBI counterintelligence official who investigated Russian oligarchs has been indicted on charges he secretly worked for one, in violation of U.S. sanctions. The official was also charged, in a separate indictment, with taking cash from a former foreign security officer.

Charles McGonigal, the special agent in charge of the FBI's counterintelligence division in New York from 2016 to 2018, is accused in an indictment unsealed Monday of working with a former Soviet diplomat-turned-Russian interpreter on behalf of Oleg Deripaska, a Russian billionaire they purportedly referred to in code as "the big guy" and "the client."

McGonigal, who had supervised and participated in investigations of Russian oligarchs, including Deripaska, worked to have Deripaska's sanctions lifted in 2019 and took money from him in 2021 to investigate a rival oligarch, the Justice Department said.

The FBI investigated McGonigal, showing a willingness to go after one of its own. Nonetheless, the indictment is an unwelcome headline for the FBI at a time when the bureau is entangled in separate, politically charged investigations — the handling of classified documents by President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump — as newly ascendant Republicans in Congress pledge to investigate high-profile FBI and Justice Department decisions.

McGonigal and the interpreter, Sergey Shestakov were arrested Saturday — McGonigal after landing at

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John F. Kennedy International Airport and Shestakov at his home in Morris, Connecticut — and held at a federal jail in Brooklyn. They both pleaded not guilty Monday and were released on bail.

McGonigal, 54, and Shestakov, 69, are charged with violating and conspiring to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, conspiring to commit money laundering and money laundering. Shestakov is also charged with making material misstatements to the FBI.

McGonigal “has had a long, distinguished career with the FBI,” his lawyer, Seth DuCharme, told reporters when he left court with McGonigal following his arraignment.

“This is obviously a distressing day for Mr. McGonigal and his family, but we’ll review the evidence, we’ll closely scrutinize it and we have a lot of confidence in Mr. McGonigal,” said DuCharme, the former top federal prosecutor in Brooklyn.

Messages seeking comment were left for lawyers for Shestakov and Deripaska.

McGonigal was separately charged in federal court in Washington, D.C. with concealing at least \$225,000 in cash he allegedly received from a former Albanian intelligence official while working for the FBI.

The indictment does not charge or characterize the payment to McGonigal as a bribe, but federal prosecutors say that, while hiding the payment from the FBI, he took actions as an FBI supervisor that were aimed at the ex-intelligence official’s financial benefit.

They included proposing that a pharmaceutical company pay the man’s company \$500,000 in exchange for scheduling a business meeting involving a representative from the U.S. delegation to the United Nations.

In a bureau-wide email Monday, FBI Director Christopher Wray said McGonigal’s alleged conduct “is entirely inconsistent with what I see from the men and women of the FBI who demonstrate every day through their actions that they’re worthy of the public’s trust.”

The U.S. Treasury Department added Deripaska to its sanctions list in 2018 for purported ties to the Russian government and Russia’s energy sector amid Russia’s ongoing threats to Ukraine.

In September, federal prosecutors in Manhattan charged Deripaska and three associates with conspiring to violate U.S. sanctions by plotting to ensure his child was born in the United States.

Shestakov, who worked as an interpreter for federal courts and prosecutors in New York City after retiring as a diplomat in 1993, helped connect McGonigal to Deripaska, according to the indictment.

In 2018, while McGonigal was still working for the FBI, Shestakov introduced him to a former Soviet and Russian diplomat who functioned as an agent for Deripaska, the indictment said. That person is not named in court papers but the Justice Department says he was “rumored in public media reports to be a Russian intelligence officer.”

According to the indictment, Shestakov asked McGonigal for help getting the agent’s daughter an internship in the New York Police Department’s counterterrorism and intelligence units. McGonigal agreed, prosecutors say, and told a police department contact that, “I have an interest in her father for a number of reasons.”

According to the indictment, a police sergeant subsequently reported to the NYPD and FBI that the woman claimed to have an “unusually close relationship” with an FBI agent whom, she said, had given her access to confidential FBI files. The sergeant felt it was “unusual for a college student to receive such special treatment from the NYPD and FBI,” the indictment said.

After retiring from the FBI, according to the indictment, McGonigal went to work in 2019 as a consultant and investigator for an international law firm seeking to reverse Deripaska’s sanctions, a process known as “delisting.”

The law firm paid McGonigal \$25,000 through a Shestakov-owned corporation, prosecutors say, though the work was ultimately interrupted by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, according to the indictment, Deripaska’s agent enlisted McGonigal and Shestakov to dig up dirt on a rival oligarch, whom Deripaska was fighting for control of a large Russian corporation, in exchange for \$51,280 up front and \$41,790 per month paid via a Russian bank to a New Jersey company owned by McGonigal’s friend. McGonigal kept his friend in the dark about the true nature of the payments, prosecutors say.

McGonigal is also accused of hiding from the FBI key details of a 2017 trip he took to Albania with the former Albanian intelligence official who is alleged to have given him at least \$225,000.

Once there, according to the Justice Department, McGonigal met with Albania's prime minister and urged caution in awarding oil field drilling licenses in the country to Russian front companies. McGonigal's Albanian contacts had a financial interest in those decisions.

In an example of how McGonigal allegedly blurred personal gain with professional responsibilities, prosecutors in Washington say he "caused" the FBI's New York office to open a criminal lobbying investigation in which the former Albanian intelligence official was to serve as a confidential human source.

McGonigal did so, prosecutors allege, without revealing to the FBI or Justice Department his financial connections to the man.

## Elon Musk: Tweets about taking Tesla private weren't fraud

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Elon Musk returned to federal court Monday in San Francisco, testifying that he believed he had locked up financial backing to take Tesla private during 2018 meetings with representatives from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund — although no specific funding amount or price was discussed.

The 51-year-old billionaire Tesla CEO and Twitter owner is facing a class action lawsuit filed by Tesla investors alleging he misled them with a tweet saying funding was secured to take his electric car company private — for \$420 per share.

But the deal never came close to happening, and the tweet resulted in a \$40 million settlement with securities regulators.

The trial hinges on the question of whether a pair of tweets that Musk posted on Aug. 7, 2018, damaged Tesla shareholders during a 10-day period leading up to Musk's admission that the buyout he had envisioned wasn't going to happen.

Speaking in a soft halting tone, Musk said Monday he "had trouble sleeping last night and unfortunately I am not at my best." He added that it was important for jurors to know that he "felt that funding was secured" due to his ownership of "SpaceX stock alone."

"Just as I sold stock in Tesla to buy Twitter. ... I didn't want to sell Tesla stock but I did sell Tesla stock," he said of the sale to make up for lack of funding from other sources for his \$44 billion deal to take Twitter private. Musk sold nearly \$23 billion worth of his car company's shares between last April, when he started building a position in Twitter, and December.

"My SpaceX shares alone would have meant that funding was secured," Musk said of the 2018 tweets.

Even before Musk first took the stand on Friday, U.S. District Judge Edward Chen had declared that jurors can consider those two tweets to be false, leaving them to decide whether Musk deliberately deceived investors and whether his statements saddled them with losses.

Musk has previously contended he entered into the Securities and Exchange Commission settlement under duress and maintained he believed he had locked up financial backing for a Tesla buyout during meetings with representatives from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

At a July 31, 2018 meeting, the Saudi Public Investment Fund's Yasir Al-Rumayyan "confirmed unequivocally that they would support Tesla going private. That was part of what 'funding secure' meant," Musk said Monday. "But in addition there was SpaceX stock, which could also be used."

In the first of the 2018 tweets, Musk stated "funding secured" for what would have been a \$72 billion — or \$420 per share — buyout of Tesla at a time when the electric automaker was still grappling with production problems and was worth far less than it is now. Musk followed up a few hours later with another tweet suggesting a deal was imminent.

Nicholas Porritt, a lawyer representing Tesla shareholders, asked Musk if he "went with 420 because it was a joke your girlfriend enjoys." Musk replied he thinks there is "some karma" around the number 420 — which is also a slang reference to marijuana — although he added he doesn't know "if it's good karma or bad karma at this point."

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He then said the number was a "coincidence" and it represented a 20% premium of Tesla's share price at the time.

After it became apparent that the money wasn't in place to take Tesla private, Musk stepped down as Tesla's chairman while remaining CEO as part of the SEC settlement, without acknowledging wrongdoing.

On Friday, Musk had testified he thinks it is possible to be "absolutely truthful" on Twitter. "But can you be comprehensive? Of course not."

On Monday, he again emphasized: "My tweet was truthful, absolutely truthful."

Asked by his lawyer, Alex Spiro, if he understood the charges against him, Musk said he's being "accused of fraud. It's outrageous."

Shares of Tesla climbed \$8.76, or 6.6%, to \$142.18 on Monday. He said he never deceived investors.

## Florida's rejection of Black history course stirs debate

By TERRY SPENCER and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis reiterated Monday the state's rejection of a proposed nationwide advanced African American studies course, saying it pushes a political agenda — something three authors cited in the state's criticism accused him of doing in return.

DeSantis said his administration rejected the College Board's Advanced Placement African American Studies course because "we want education, not indoctrination." It was revealed last week that the Florida Department of Education recently told the College Board it would bar the course unless changes are made.

The state then issued a chart late Friday that says the course promotes the idea that modern American society oppresses Black people, other minorities and women, includes a chapter on "Black Queer Studies" that the administration finds inappropriate, and uses articles by critics of capitalism.

The governor said the course violates legislation dubbed the Stop WOKE Act he signed last year. It bars instruction that defines people as necessarily oppressed or privileged based on their race. At least some writers the course cites believe modern U.S. society endorses white supremacy while oppressing racial minorities, gays and women.

"This course on Black history, what's one of the lessons about? Queer theory. Now who would say that an important part of Black history is queer theory? That is somebody pushing an agenda," said DeSantis, a possible Republican presidential candidate in 2024.

Florida House Democratic Leader Fentrice Driskell called the administration's rejection of the course "cowardly" and said it "sends a clear message that Black Americans' history does not count in Florida."

"Imagine how boring and closed minded we'd all be if we only met ideas that we agreed with," she said Monday.

The College Board, after a decade of development, is testing the African American Studies course at 60 high schools nationwide. No school or state would be required to offer it after its scheduled rollout.

The organization offers AP courses across the academic spectrum, including math, science, social studies, foreign languages and fine arts. Taught at a college level, students who score high enough on the course's final exam usually earn course credit at their university.

The College Board hasn't responded to emails and calls since Friday. It issued a statement last week saying it encourages feedback and will consider changes.

The state, in its Friday chart, criticized five living authors. The Associated Press emailed them and three responded.

— The section on "Black Queer Studies" includes readings by Roderick Ferguson, a Yale University professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies. The state says he "exclaims, 'We have to encourage and develop practices whereby queerness isn't a surrender to the status quo of race, class, gender and sexuality.'"

Ferguson said that quote comes from an interview he did about his book, "One-Dimensional Queer." The book, he said, is a discussion of "employment discrimination, laws against LGBTQ+ people, the suppression of progressive movements in the U.S., police violence against minority communities, restrictions on



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immigration (and) anti-black racism.”

“These are real histories. The arguments about them are based on scholarly investigation and research — as are the arguments from the other scholars on this list,” Ferguson said. “Unfortunately, we are in a moment in which right-wing forces are mobilizing to suppress the free discussion of those realities. If we need an example of that mobilization, we could probably just turn to the forces that came together to reject this course.”

— The state calls out the course for including “Black Study, Black Struggle,” a 2016 piece by UCLA history professor Robin D.G. Kelley, saying he “argues that activism, rather than the university system, is the catalyst for social transformation.” Kelley called that description oversimplified.

His piece challenges student activists to move their efforts beyond campus and decries racism, inequality, capitalism, militarism and police brutality. But he also said activists must love everyone, “even those who may once have been our oppressors,” and read and understand Western literature if they are to criticize it.

He said one point is “that we should not pay so much emphasis on trauma and victimization, but instead understand how we have fought for justice not just for Black people but for the whole nation (yes including struggling white people), despite the violence and oppression we have experienced.”

The state also points out Kelley wrote the 1990 book “Hammer and Hoe,” a history of communism in Alabama during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

“It won several awards and accolades, including from a few conservative anti-Communist historians, because it is based on thorough research — something DeSantis’s people are not familiar with,” Kelley said.

— The state criticized the inclusion of a section about “Movement for Black Lives,” a coalition of more than 50 groups including Black Lives Matter and the National Conference of Black Lawyers. It says the group wants to abolish prisons and that it alleges there is a “war” against gay and transsexual Black people.

The state criticizes the section’s inclusion of a reading by Leslie Kay Jones, an assistant sociology professor at Rutgers University. It cites her quote, “Black people produce an unquantifiable amount of content for the same social media corporations that reproduce the white supremacist superstructure that suppresses us.”

Jones said she found no indication that the Movement for Black Lives has ever advocated for prison abolition. She is surprised DeSantis’ staff attacked her for criticizing social media companies, as he does the same.

She said this is why students should have the ability “to come to their own conclusions through an evaluation of primary and secondary texts.”

“Is Ron DeSantis claiming that Florida students are unable to formulate their own opinions?” she said. \_\_\_\_ Izaguirre reported from Tallahassee, Florida.

## A look at Leopard 2 tanks that could soon be sent to Ukraine

By JAMEY KEATEN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Following intense pressure from its allies, Germany appears to be inching toward approving deliveries of high-tech Leopard 2 main battle tanks that Ukraine and its biggest Western backers hope will boost Kyiv’s fight against Russian invaders.

Over the weekend, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Berlin would not get in the way if Poland — arguably Ukraine’s most vocal supporter among European Union neighbors — wants to ship Leopard 2 tanks from its arsenal across the border into Ukraine. And Germany is not ruling out supplying such tanks to Ukraine itself, cautioning however that the implications of such a step need to be carefully weighed.

Here’s a look at what those tanks might mean for Ukraine’s defense against Russian forces — and hopes for driving them out.

### WHAT IS THE LEOPARD 2?

Germany’s Krauss-Maffei Wegmann, the manufacturer of the Leopard 2, touts it as “the world’s leading battle tank” that for nearly a half-century has combined aspects of firepower, protection, speed and maneuverability, making it adaptable to many types of combat situations.

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The 55-ton tank has a crew of four and a range of about 500 kilometers (310 miles), and top speeds of about 68 kilometers per hour (about 42 mph). Now with four main variants, its earliest version first came into service in 1979. Its main weapon is a 120mm smooth bore gun, and it has a fully-digital fire-control system.

## HOW MANY COULD BE SENT TO UKRAINE?

One big appeal of the German-made tanks are their sheer number: More than 2,000 have been deployed in over a dozen European countries and Canada. Overall, Krauss-Maffei Wegmann says over 3,500 units have been supplied to 19 countries.

Rheinmetall AG, a German defense contractor that makes the 120mm smoothbore gun on the Leopard 2, says the tank has been deployed by "more nations than any other."

According to a recent analysis by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London-based global think tank, some 350 Leopard 2s — in different versions — have been sent to Greece, and Poland has about 250 of varying types. Finland has 200 in operation or in storage.

For Ukraine's war against Russia, "it is believed that for the Leopard 2 tanks to have any significant effect on the fighting, around 100 tanks would be required," the International Institute for Strategic Studies analysts wrote.

Ukraine's defense minister wants 300 tanks, and some European Union leaders support him on that.

"We need a fleet of 300 tanks," Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said Monday in Brussels, alluding to the wide deployment of Leopards across Europe and the need for "synchronous" weaponry — that can operate smoothly together.

Getting Leopards into Ukrainian hands isn't as easy as rolling them across the border from friends farther West in Europe. The International Institute for Strategic Studies estimates that three to six weeks of training would be needed for operating crews and support staff to reach basic proficiency.

Ralf Raths, director of the Panzer Museum in Munster, Germany, said experienced Ukrainian tank crews would likely be able to learn to use the Leopard 2 fairly quickly, and training could be shortened to focus on essential knowledge.

"Do you really have to exploit 100% of the potential or is it enough to utilize 80% in half the time? Ukrainians will certainly vote for option B," he said.

## WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE TO THE WAR?

Yohann Michel, a research analyst for defense and military affairs at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said such tanks could allow Ukraine to go onto the offensive in the 11-month-old conflict that has been stalemated for months following two key Ukrainian counteroffensives that recaptured areas occupied by Russian forces for months in the northeast and south.

"In this type of conflict, it's just not possible to carry out large-scale offensives without the full variety of armored combat equipment and armored vehicles, and tanks are a part of that," he said. In addition to Main Battle Tanks, or MBTs, like the Leopard 2, others include infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers.

Western deliveries of Leopard 2s could help equip Ukraine with needed high-caliber munitions to replace its own dwindling Soviet-era stockpiles, opening a new avenue for supplies of Western firepower to get to Ukraine, he said.

Raths noted that the Leopard 2 and similar Western tanks are more agile than T-models used by Russia, which can't reverse at speed, for example.

"Imagine a boxer who cannot move freely in the ring, but only in one direction," he said. "The other boxer, who can move in all directions, has a big advantage and that it is the case with the Leopards."

Still, even Western MBTs are vulnerable to aerial attacks, or anti-tank infantry while in forests and urban areas, highlighting the importance of anti-aircraft and reconnaissance support, said Raths.

With similar numbers of tanks on both sides, Leopards 2 and similar tanks could give Ukraine the upper hand, especially given the poor tactical performance of Russian troops during the war, he said.

"The Ukrainians shine through creative, dynamic and often very clean warfare," Raths said. "So it could well be that if Ukraine's operational offensive were to begin, the Russians would have real problems

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countering it.”

Niklas Masuhr, a researcher at the Center for Security Studies at Switzerland’s federal polytechnic university ETHZ, based in Zurich, cautioned that the addition of Leopards to the battlefield alone wouldn’t be “a game changer or a war-winning technology, anything like that.”

“You can’t just deploy a bunch of main battle tanks and assume they will win,” he said. “They’re very valuable, but you still need to use them in the correct way and integrate them with all the other military tools that you have at your disposal,” such as infantry, artillery, air defense, combat engineers and helicopters.

**WHY DOESN’T UKRAINE HAVE LEOPARDS ALREADY?**

Germany has final say about whether Leopard 2s can be delivered — even from other countries’ arsenals — and has been reticent about anyone shipping them to Ukraine.

More-hawkish Western allies have been stepping up the pressure on Germany, but the United States has also refused to send its powerful M1 Abrams tanks.

The United States announced an upcoming new package of military aid that is expected to include nearly 100 Stryker combat vehicles and at least 50 Bradley armored vehicles — but not the Abrams, which U.S. officials say has complex maintenance needs and may not be the best fit.

Allies and military analysts say the Leopard 2 is diesel-powered — not driven by jet fuel that powers the M1 Abrams — and is easier to operate than the big U.S. tanks, and thus has shorter training times.

Britain this month announced it will send Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, and the Czech Republic and Poland have provided Soviet-era T-72 tanks to Ukrainian forces. French President Emmanuel Macron 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.

Even if modern western MBTs are superior to their Russian counterparts, donor countries supplying them need to prepare for losses, Rath said.

The Leopard 2 “is an offensive weapon that will be thrown into high-intensity battles,” he said. “Vehicles will be destroyed, and people will die in these tanks.”

## **Poland pushes for more tanks for Kyiv, will seek German OK**

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland said Monday it would ask Berlin for permission to send German-built Leopard tanks to Ukraine as its Western allies move to supply Kyiv with more powerful military hardware to thwart Russia’s invasion.

Germany has hesitated to approve sending tanks to Ukraine. But Polish officials took heart from remarks Sunday by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock that Berlin wouldn’t seek to stop Poland from providing Leopard 2 battle tanks.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki didn’t specify when the request to Germany 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 Germany doesn’t grant permission, Warsaw will make its own decisions, Morawiecki said at a news conference.

Ukraine says tanks -- and especially the Leopards -- are vital to its war effort. Both sides’ battlefield positions are mostly deadlocked during winter, with new ground offensives expected in the spring. Russia’s forces are much larger than Ukraine’s, so Kyiv wants to gain an advantage in weaponry and fuller backing from its Western allies.

Poland has become a leading advocate in the European Union for giving military aid to help Ukraine prevail 11 months after the Kremlin’s forces invaded. Germany’s hesitation has drawn criticism, particularly from Poland and the Baltic countries on NATO’s eastern flank that feel especially threatened by Russia.

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

German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said it was important for Germany not to take a

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"reckless" step it might regret, adding that a decision will not be rushed.

"These are hard questions of life and death," he added. "We have to ask what this means for the defense of our own country."

Pressed on how long a decision on sending tanks might take, Hebestreit said: "I assume that it's not a question of months now."

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 Challenger tanks. French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday he asked his defense minister to "work on" the possibility of sending Leclerc battle tanks to Ukraine.

But Macron said a decision hinged on three criteria that have also weighed on the minds of other Western leaders: that sharing the equipment doesn't 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 his own military.

Morawiecki said that while Poland intends to ask Germany for permission to send Leopard tanks to Ukraine, the request is "a secondary matter" as a group of EU countries look at how to help Kyiv.

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

Baerbock, Germany's top diplomat, told French television channel LCI on Sunday that Poland hasn't formally asked for Berlin's approval to share some of its 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.

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 brigade size.

Berlin has shown caution at each step of increasing its aid to Ukraine, a hesitancy seen as rooted in its history and political culture.

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

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

In Brussels, EU foreign ministers gave the green light Monday to a further 500 million euro (\$543 million) package of military support for Ukraine, as well as funds to help pay for a training mission for the bloc has set up for the country's troops.

The money would be used to reimburse EU countries for weapons and ammunition they supply Ukraine. Another 45 million euros (\$49 million) will pay for the 27-nation bloc's military training mission this year.

It brings the total amount of money provided to Ukraine from the EU fund to about 3.6 billion euros.

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

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

The Kremlin's forces have kept up their bombardments of Ukrainian areas.

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

Neither side shows signs of backing down as the war heads for a second year.

The Kremlin appears to be keeping its options open on mobilizing more soldiers. Russian authorities declared that the mobilization of an additional 300,000 reservists in late October is complete. However,

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some Russian lawyers and rights groups pointed out that Russian President Vladimir Putin's mobilization decree remains in effect until another presidential decree is issued to formally end the action.

Peskov said Monday although the assigned number of reservists have been mobilized, the decree remains in force because it also includes "other measures needed to ensure the fulfillment of tasks by the military." He didn't elaborate.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly warned that Russia' plans to continue mobilizing more troops.

## **Purdue back at No. 1 in AP Top 25, Alabama right behind**

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Basketball Writer

Purdue is back at No. 1 in the AP Top 25. Alabama is right behind the Boilermakers.

Purdue returned to the top spot in The Associated Press men's college basketball poll on Monday, moving up two spots after Temple knocked off No. 1 Houston over the weekend. The Boilermakers received 39 first-place votes from a 62-person media panel after a volatile week where just two teams kept the same spot from a week ago.

Alabama climbed two spots to No. 2, picking up 23 first-place votes for its highest ranking since reaching No. 1 in 2002-03. Houston, Tennessee and Kansas State round out the top five.

Purdue (19-1, 8-1 Big Ten) had dropped to No. 3 after four weeks at No. 1 following a loss to Rutgers on Jan. 3, but has since won six straight.

Alabama (17-2, 7-0 SEC) has made a steady climb since being ranked No. 20 in the preseason AP Top 25, moving into the top 10 in early December. The Crimson Tide had lopsided wins over Missouri and Vanderbilt after Darius Miles was dismissed from the team as he faces a murder charge in a fatal shooting near campus.

Alabama coach Nate Oats reached out to Ray Lewis before the Crimson Tide played Vanderbilt last week, sharing a Bible verse suggested by the Hall of Fame linebacker. Alabama ended up beating Vandy by 12 and rolled over Missouri by 21.

"I did see some guys break down postgame," Oats said. "I think they've been bottling some stuff up. We've got a job to do. We've got to get to the game. We got to the game and took care of business, and then it's almost like a big relief. The game's over, and we can let out a sigh of relief."

### **COUGARS FALL**

Houston moved atop the AP Top 25 for the first time since the Phi Slama Jama of the 1980s earlier this season before a loss to Alabama dropped it back to No. 5.

The Cougars returned to No. 1 on Jan. 9, but their run ended after two weeks with Sunday's 56-55 loss to Temple. The win was the Owls' first over a No. 1 team since 2000.

### **BEATING KU**

Kansas State moved up eight spots to No. 5 after outlasting rival Kansas 83-82 at Bramlage Coliseum last week. It's the Wildcats' highest ranking since reaching No. 3 in 2010-11.

TCU gave Kansas consecutive losses in the state for the first time since 1989 with a 23-point beatdown at Allen Fieldhouse on Saturday. It was one of Bill Self's worst losses in 20 years as Kansas' coach and ended the Jayhawks' 16-game home winning streak.

The No. 14 Horned Frogs moved up three spots in this week's poll after the win. Kansas, the defending national champion, dropped seven spots to No. 9.

### **BIG TEN BUMMER**

While Purdue has remained near the top of the poll most of the season, the rest of the Big Ten has fallen off. With Rutgers dropping out, the Big Ten has just one AP Top 25 team for the first time since the Feb. 16, 2004, when No. 12 Wisconsin was the conference's lone ranked team, according to Sportradar.

### **RISING/FALLING**

Kansas State had the week's biggest jump, followed by No. 4 Tennessee and No. 6 Arizona each climbing five spots. No. 21 Baylor moved up four spots with wins over Texas Tech and Oklahoma.

Gonzaga had the biggest fall, losing eight places to No. 14 after Loyola Marymount ended the Zags'

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75-game home winning streak on Thursday. No. 13 Xavier dropped five spots after a one-point road loss to DePaul.

## IN AND OUT

No. 22 Saint Mary's is ranked for the first time this season after rolling over Pepperdine and Santa Clara last week. No. 25 New Mexico is back in the poll after beating San Jose State and outlasting Boise State in overtime.

A three-point loss to Michigan State knocked Rutgers out of the poll from No. 23. Arkansas dropped out from No. 25 following a loss to Missouri.

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

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Most of Pakistan was left without power Monday 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.

It all started when electricity was turned off 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 Pakistan's power generation and distribution system.

Many major cities, including the capital of Islamabad, and remote towns and villages across Pakistan were without electricity for more than 12 hours. As the electricity failure continued into Monday night, authorities deployed additional police at markets around the country to provide security.

Officials announced late Monday that power was restored in many cities, 15 hours after the outage was reported.

Earlier, the nationwide electricity breakdown left many in this country of some 220 million people without drinking water as pumps powered by electricity failed to work. Schools, hospitals, factories and shops were without power amid the harsh winter weather.

Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir told local media that engineers were working to restore power across the country and tried to reassure the nation that power would be fully restored within the next 12 hours.

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

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

Dastgir insisted the outage did not constitute 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.

By late afternoon Monday, Dastgir told reporters at another press conference that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif ordered a probe into the outage.

"We are hoping that the supply of electricity will be fully restored tonight," he said.

Before midnight, power was back in Karachi, the country's largest city and economic hub, and in many other major cities including Rawalpindi, Quetta, Peshawar and Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province.

In Lahore, a closing notice was posted on the 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 restored.

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

Internet-access advocacy group NetBlocks.org said network data showed a significant decline in internet access in Pakistan that was attributed to the power outage. It said metrics indicated that connectivity was at 60% of ordinary levels as many users struggled to get online Monday.

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. That has compelled the government to order shopping malls and markets closed by 8:30 p.m. to conserve energy.

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

## In '20 Days in Mariupol' doc, the horrors of war illuminated

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — Associated Press video journalist Mstyslav Chernov had just broken out of Mariupol after covering the first 20 days of the Russian invasion of the Ukrainian city and was feeling guilty about leaving. He and his colleagues, photographer Evgeniy Maloletka and producer Vasilisa Stepanenko, had been the last journalists there, sending crucial dispatches from a city under a full-scale assault.

The day after, a theater with hundreds of people sheltering inside was bombed and he knew no one was there to document it. That's when Chernov decided he wanted to do something bigger. He'd filmed some 30 hours of footage over his days in Mariupol. But poor and sometimes no internet connections made it extremely difficult to export anything. All told, he estimates only about 40 minutes of that successfully made it out to the world.

"Those shots which went out were very important. They went on the AP and then to thousands of news outlets," Chernov said. "However, I had much more. ... I thought I should do something more. I should do something more with that 30 hours of footage to tell a bigger story and more context to show the audience of the scale."

Chernov decided then that he wanted to make a documentary. That film, "20 Days in Mariupol," a joint project between The Associated Press and PBS "Frontline," premiered Friday at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, where it is playing in competition.

There were, he knew, many ways to tell this story. But he decided early on to keep it contained to those harrowing first 20 days that he and his colleagues were on the ground, to evoke the claustrophobic feeling of being trapped. He also chose to narrate it himself and tell the story as a journalist would.

"It's just a lens through which we see the stories of Mariupol's residents, the death, their suffering the destruction of their homes," he said. "At the same time, I felt that I can do it. I'm allowed to do it because I'm part of the community. I was born in eastern Ukraine and (a) photographer who worked with me was born in the city which is right next to Mariupol, which got occupied. So this is our story too."

As an AP employee, Chernov was extremely aware of maintaining neutrality and being unbiased.

"It's OK to tell the audiences about your emotions," he said. "It's just important to not let those emotions dictate what you show and don't show ... While narrated by me, I still tried to keep it fair."

He encounters quite a few different reactions to him and his colleagues being on the ground. Some thanked them for doing their jobs. Some called them prostitutes. Some doctors urged them to film graphic scenes of injured and dead children to show the world what had been done.

After Chernov left Mariupol and was finally able to catch up with the news reports around the world, he was stunned by the effect their footage seemed to have had. They followed up with people they'd met during their time there, some of whom got out, some who didn't, and asked whether or not they'd affected their lives.

Some said relatives had found them because of the footage, or that they'd been able to get help. Doctors and officials said it made it easier to negotiate the green corridor to safety.

"I don't know how much of that is our footage, how much of that is just what happens," Chernov said. "But I really would like to believe that we did make a difference, because I guess that's what journalism is about, to inform people so they make certain decisions."

Another mission for him was to provide historical evidence for potential war crimes. Chernov is keenly aware that the war is not even history yet. It is a painful reality that is ongoing.

At Sundance he's been able to watch the film, edited by "Frontline's" Michelle Mizner, with an audience two times. The film got a standing ovation at the premiere. And a subsequent screening he met several audience members who said they were from Mariupol and that their relatives were escaping the sieged city at the same time he was. The theaters, had counselors on standby in case anyone needed support.

"I hoped they will have emotional responses and they did. But at the same time to watch people crying, it's hard," he said. "When you place an audience for 90 minutes into this chaos and this mess and this violence, there is a risk of people getting too overwhelmed or even pushed back by the amount of this violence.

"You just really want to show how it really was," he added. "That was the main challenge of making choices while assembling the film. How do you show the gravity but at the same time not push the audience away? ... We had already two screenings and audience responses are very strong. People are crying, people are depressed and they express a wide range of feelings, from anger, to sadness, to grief. That is what I as a filmmaker intended to do. But at the same time, I realize that probably that's not easy for everyone"

Now Chernov just wants to get back to work.

"I just want to go back," he said. "After Sundance we will go back and go to the front line."

## Scandals highlight lack of women coaches at top of US soccer

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

Twila Kilgore knew her career path when she was just 12 years old, thanks to a youth soccer coach who used to drive her to practice.

During those rides, she got to hear "all the behind-the-scene things that were happening" and was "exposed to what a coach actually does," she said. "I pretty much knew then that when I was done playing, I would coach."

Now she's an assistant for the U.S. women's national team and one of just four women in the United States who hold the U.S. Soccer Federation's elite pro license.

Kilgore's path makes her a rarity. American soccer offers limited coaching opportunities for women at the top of the sport, and the cost to obtain the requisite licenses can be a barrier.

The issue has drawn FIFA's attention. A 2019 study by soccer's international governing body found that more than 13 million girls and women played organized soccer, but only 7% of coaches worldwide were women.

The shortage of qualified women was highlighted by a glut of vacancies created by men who were pushed out of the nation's top professional league.

When scandal rocked the National Women's Soccer League in 2021, five male coaches were dismissed or forced to resign because of misconduct, harassment or abuse. Earlier this month, four of those men were banned from ever coaching in the NWSL again following an investigation by the league and the players' union.

Today, just three women hold head coaching jobs in the 12-team league, all on the West Coast: OL Reign's Laura Harvey, San Diego's Casey Stoney and Angel City's Freya Coombe. Five coaches, all men, are embarking on their first season with their teams this year.

For women trying to break into such elite circles, money is a glaring obstacle.

Top coaching licenses are expensive to obtain — the USSF pro license costs \$10,000 — and the process is both lengthy and labor intensive. Male coaches often have teams and leagues behind them willing to foot the bill and provide the time to complete the courses.

Kilgore, who worked for the Houston Dash before joining Vlatko Andonovski's staff on the national team, got her pro license with financial help from the Dash, a scholarship fund set up by former national team coach Jill Ellis and from FIFA.



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"I can tell you it's a huge blessing because every other step along the way with licensing up to this point, I've paid for myself with a little bit offset from the universities I've worked at," Kilgore said. "It is a major barrier for a lot of people."

Professional players — the logical pool from which to draw future coaches — usually don't make enough to pay for the higher-level courses. The average salary in the NWSL is \$54,000. Players are also busy with the rigors of a pro career.

"There are players that are interested in coaching education, but with just how our schedule works, it's tough to get into any of the normal coaching programming, and it's also pretty pricey," said Washington Spirit goalkeeper Nicole Barnhart, who has also played for the United States. She has two lower-level coaching licenses.

The NWSL Players Association was so concerned about the costs and available coaching pathways that the collective bargaining agreement struck last year includes a provision to help players fund enrollment costs.

U.S. Soccer provides financial aid through the Jill Ellis Scholarship Fund, which honors the legacy of the two-time Women's World Cup championship coach. Announced in 2020, the program seeks to double the number of elite women in coaching by 2024.

FIFA also offers scholarships and last year introduced a mentorship program that had 80 applications. The participants met in August at the under-20 Women's World Cup in Costa Rica.

FIFA's push to get more women into coaching has also been tailored for individual member associations. For instance, Trinidad and Tobago didn't have coaches who would benefit from upper-level courses, but there was a need for a lower licensing course — and 20 women applied.

"We talk about how important it is to have female players being seen on TV, on ads, just for little girls and boys to see 'OK, this is possible. This is something that I can do.' They always say if you don't see it, you don't believe it. But I do think for coaches, it is the same," said Arijana Demirovic, head of Women's Football Development at FIFA.

Another result of drawing more women into coaching is the prospect that female players' concerns will be addressed in a more thoughtful way.

The upheaval in the NWSL led to a pair of investigations into misconduct in the league. One probe conducted by former acting U.S. Attorney General Sally Q. Yates was done at the behest of U.S. Soccer. The investigation revealed "a league in which abuse and misconduct — verbal and emotional abuse and sexual misconduct — had become systemic, spanning multiple teams, coaches, and victims."

Two of the now-former coaches investigated by Yates — Racing Louisville's Christy Holly and Rory Dames of the Chicago Red Stars — did not hold the requisite A-level license to coach in the NWSL.

The Yates report recommended that all NWSL coaches be required to have A-level licenses — one step below a pro license — and to turn the licensing process into an accreditation program that requires background screening and annual recertification.

U.S. women's team general manager Kate Markgraf pointed to another hurdle for coaches once they are licensed: finding jobs and advancement possibilities. Because there are fewer women's leagues, the jobs aren't as plentiful, and the men have a big head start in the industry.

For example, data collected by the University of Minnesota's Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport revealed that 70.9% of Division I women's soccer teams are coached by men.

"It's part of an overall strategy: How do we make sure that women get into the pipeline, stay in it and aren't on a glass cliff? Retention is hard and attrition is common," Markgraf said. "We have to be intentional about how we support every single female hired in a male-dominated industry."

## **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

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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.

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

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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 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."

## **New this week: Jennifer Lopez, Sam Smith and 'You People'**

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music and video game platforms this week.

### MOVIES

— Jennifer Lopez, rom-com queen, returns to the genre she's most identified with in "Shotgun Wedding," premiering Friday on Amazon's Prime Video. Lopez stars with Josh Duhamel as a couple whose Philippines beach-resort destination wedding goes awry when the wedding party is taken hostage. For Lopez, who last year wed Ben Affleck in a Las Vegas drive-thru chapel, it's her second wedding-themed romantic comedy in the last year, following 2022's "Marry Me." This one, at least, features "White Lotus" star Jennifer Coolidge (it's now Hollywood law that she must star in all exotically located tales).

— "black-ish" creator Kenya Barris and Jonah Hill co-wrote "You People," a new Netflix comedy about a Los Angeles interracial couple and the culture clash of their families. Lauren London and Hill star as the couple, with Eddie Murphy and Nia Long playing her Muslim parents, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus and David Duchovny playing his Jewish parents. Barris directs the film, streaming Friday.

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— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

## MUSIC

— Singer-songwriter Sam Smith is releasing "Gloria," an album the singer-songwriter calls a "coming of age." Early singles include the epically sexy arena pop "Unholy" featuring Kim Petras, and the intimate, self-affirming ballad "Love Me More" with the lyrics: "Every day I'm trying not to hate myself/But lately it's not hurting like it did before." Smith recorded the album in Jamaica, Los Angeles and London, and says: "It feels like emotional, sexual and spiritual liberation. It was beautiful, with this album, to sing freely again. Oddly, it feels like my first-ever record. And it feels like a coming of age."

— Celebrate Roberta Flack, one of music's best voices, in the feature-length documentary, "Roberta," airing Tuesday as part of PBS "American Masters" series. The movie "explores the depth and complexity of her lyrical and thematic choices as well as the sophisticated mix of classical and soul influences on her style." This year marks the 50th anniversary of the release of Flack's landmark fourth album, "Killing Me Softly" and she has a new children's book that tells of her musical beginnings, "The Green Piano: How Little Me Found Music."

— For a sardonic look at life go no further than Elle King, whose spiky album "Come Get Your Wife" will be a welcome addition to 2023. The country collection celebrates all sides of the artist, from "being a hot mess, a glorious excess and a woman coming into her own." There are the tongue-in-cheek singles "Tulsa" and "Try Jesus," the latter of which finds King looking to a higher sort of relationship since men in her life are letting her down. It's accompanied by a hysterical video of her dressed as all the bad guys as she shops in a dollar store.

— Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

## TELEVISION

— The new Fox series "Accused" has an interesting premise. Each episode features a new cast, with a person on trial for a crime. The series then explains what happened — from the perspective of the defendant, leading up to the result of the trial. Cast members include Michael Chiklis, Jill Hennessy and Malcom-Jamal Warner. Howard Gordon, who created "24" and "Homeland" is an executive producer. "Accused," which debuted Sunday is based on a BBC program of the same name.

— "Knives Out" and "Glass Onion" writer, director Rian Johnson describes his new show "Poker Face," starring Natasha Lyonne, as a "how done it" and not a "who done it." Lyonne plays Charlie, a wise-cracking, friendly drifter who has an uncanny ability to immediately know if someone is lying. Charlie is on the run from a casino mobster, working odd jobs and encountering new people. She also often finds herself with a front-row seat to mysteries, setting off her internal lie detector, when she suspects someone is not telling the truth. If critics are correct, "Poker Face" could be Peacock's first hit. Its first three episodes drop Monday and the rest of season one will be doled out one-by-one on a weekly basis.

— Alicia Rancilio

## VIDEO GAMES

— New York, New York: If you can make it there, you'll make it anywhere. Which is good for Frey Holland, the heroine of Square Enix's Forspoken, who finds herself yanked out of the Big Apple and dropped into a dazzling but blighted world called Athia that's ruled by a trio of wicked sorceresses. Fortunately, Frey picks up a few spells and some mad parkour skills, and she's equipped with a chatty, sarcastic bracelet that's eager to help her find her way home. Forspoken's designers worked on 2016's Final Fantasy XV, and while their new game may not be as epic, it might hold fans over until Final Fantasy XVI arrives this summer. Frey's adventure begins Tuesday on PlayStation 5 and PC.

## 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 a party that has struggled to move past a disappointing midterm ahead of a critical race for the White House.

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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.

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. She 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.

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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 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."

## **EXPLAINER: Why Macron, French unions at odds over pensions**

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The French government is presenting a bill on Monday that foresees broad changes to the pension system that will notably push back the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Unions aren't happy, and more than 1 million people took to the streets last week to reject the measure. More strikes and protest action are planned Jan. 31, and probably beyond.

What does President Emmanuel Macron's government want to change and why, and what does it mean

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for workers, and why are so many people opposed?

## THE PENSION SYSTEM

All French retirees receive a state pension. The system's funding is based on the redistribution of a specific tax from those who are working to those who are retired.

The system is projected to dive into deficit in the coming decade amid France's aging population.

The average French pension this year stands at 1,400 euros per month (\$1,500 per month) once taxes are deducted.

The system is complex, with differences depending on professions, and the private and public sectors. Some are allowed to take early retirement, including the military, police officers and people with physically demanding jobs.

## THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN

The government says the changes will make the system financially sustainable.

Workers who were born in 1961 and were supposed to retire this year will need to work three additional months. Those born in 1968 and after will need to be at least 64 and have worked for 43 years to be entitled to a full pension.

Those who don't fulfill the conditions, like many women who interrupted their careers to raise children or those who undertook a long period of study and started working late, will have to wait until the age of 67 to get a full pension — unchanged from the current system.

Those who started working from the age of 14 to 19 will be allowed to get early retirement, as will people with major health issues.

The government argues that the changes will also allow for the increase of the minimum pension by 100 euros, to reach about 1,200 euros for a full career.

## OPPOSITION TO THE PLANNED CHANGES

Opinion polls show a majority of French are opposed to the plan. Thursday's protests, the first public show of resistance toward the measures, gathered larger crowds than in past years.

France's eight main workers' unions are calling on the government to abandon the age measure altogether. It is the first time since 2010 that all the unions joined forces against a planned reform.

Opponents argue that there are other ways to get financing for the pensions — for instance via a tax on the wealthy or an increase in payroll contributions paid by employers.

Most opposition parties, including the hard-left France Unbowed, the Greens and the Socialist party, as well as the far-right National Rally, vowed to wage a harsh battle against the bill at parliament.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The changes are included in a budget amendment bill that has been formally presented at a Cabinet meeting on Monday. They will start being debated at parliament on Feb. 6.

Macron's centrist alliance lost its parliamentary majority last year, yet still has the most important group at the National Assembly, where it has hopes of being able to join up with the conservative The Republicans party to pass the measure.

Otherwise, the government may use a special power to force the law through parliament without a vote — but such a move will come at the price of heavy criticism.

The bill will then need to be voted on by the Senate, where The Republicans have the majority.

The government aims at passing the bill by summer so that changes can take effect in September. Yet its plans may be disrupted depending on the scale and duration of protests and strikes.

## **New pill treats diabetic cats without daily insulin shots**

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

When Mark Winternheimer's 12-year-old tabby cat was diagnosed with diabetes last year, the treatment was daunting: twice-daily injections of insulin, an implanted monitor and frequent visits to the vet.

Despite their qualms, Winternheimer and his wife, Courtnee, of New Albany, Indiana, learned to give Oliver his shots.

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"For us, they're part of the family," Winternheimer said of Oliver and their two other cats, Ella and Theo. "You wouldn't deny another family member care if it's available."

Now, a new, once-daily pill promises to make treating feline diabetes easier in newly diagnosed animals, without the shots.

"A pill is a huge step forward from a needle," said Dr. Audrey Cook, a cat veterinarian at Texas A&M University.

One caveat: The pill called Bexacat can't be used in cats like Oliver, who had previously received insulin.

The biggest benefit may be the ease of use, experts said. While many cat owners successfully treat their cats with twice-daily insulin, often for years, others struggle. Research shows that owners put down 1 in 10 cats with a new diabetes diagnosis. Another 10% are euthanized within a year, in part because of the difficulties of treatment.

"Some people are afraid of giving insulin injections. Some people don't have the time to dedicate to the care of their cats," said Dr. Catharine Scott-Moncrieff, a Purdue University veterinarian who consulted with the makers of Bexacat on the product testing.

Made by Elanco Animal Health Inc., Bexacat was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in December and is expected to be available in the U.S. in the next several weeks. It's the first drug of its type approved for animals; similar drugs have been approved for people for about a decade.

Diabetes, whether in people or pets, is caused when too much glucose, or sugar, builds up in the bloodstream because the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin, a hormone, or use it properly. Bexacat lowers blood sugar by causing it to be excreted in urine. Symptoms of feline diabetes include increased thirst and urination, increased appetite and weight loss.

About a quarter of U.S. households include one or more cats, totaling more than 58 million felines. Between 1 in 100 and 1 in 500 cats in the U.S. are diagnosed with diabetes, which is rising as obesity rates in the species approach 50%, said Dr. Bruce Kornreich, director of the Cornell Feline Health Center at Cornell University.

In studies involving more than 300 diabetic cats, Bexacat improved glucose control and decreased at least one symptom of diabetes in more than 80% of newly diagnosed, healthy animals, company documents show. But several cats in the studies also died or had to be euthanized after taking the drug, prompting a so-called black box warning about possible side effects, including diabetic ketoacidosis, a life-threatening complication.

Because of those concerns, the drug can't be used in cats previously treated with insulin and animals must be carefully screened for liver, kidney and pancreatic disease and to ensure that they're otherwise healthy, said Scott-Moncrieff.

"It will be life-changing for some cats and some owners, but it's not for every cat," Scott-Moncrieff said.

The list price for the drug is about \$53 a month, according to Elanco. Most vets will double or triple the cost of the drug, charging pet owners about \$100 to \$150 a month, said Cook.

Depending on the source, that may be higher than the costs for insulin and the syringes or pens to give it, she said. Cats taking insulin need to be monitored frequently, but cats taking Bexacat will need to be watched, too.

"I think costs will be broadly similar, but there are a lot of variables here," Cook said.

In Oliver's case, the cat tolerated the injections -- and a glucose monitor that had to be inserted underneath his skin, Winternheimer said. His owners did OK, too, but they were relieved when Oliver's diabetes went into remission last fall.

No question, the idea of giving Oliver a pill instead would have been appealing, Winternheimer said. "I would have definitely preferred that if it were available."

## Today in History: JAN 24, Ted Bundy executed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History



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Today is Tuesday, Jan. 24, the 24th day of 2023. There are 341 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 24, 1984, Apple Computer began selling its first Macintosh model, which boasted a built-in 9-inch monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM.

On this date:

In 1848, James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill concluded a wartime conference in Casablanca, Morocco.

In 1945, Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton was among a group of captives executed by the Germans at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria.

In 1965, British statesman Winston Churchill died in London at age 90.

In 1978, a nuclear-powered Soviet satellite, Cosmos 954, plunged through Earth's atmosphere and disintegrated, scattering radioactive debris over parts of northern Canada.

In 1985, the space shuttle Discovery was launched from Cape Canaveral on the first secret, all-military shuttle mission.

In 1989, confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair.

In 2003, former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was sworn as the first secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security.

In 2011, a suicide bomber attacked Moscow's busiest airport, killing 37 people; Chechen separatists claimed responsibility.

In 2020, Fifteen-year-old Coco Gauff upset defending champ Naomi Osaka in the third round of the Australian Open.

Ten years ago: Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced the lifting of a ban on women serving in combat. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened a hearing into President Barack Obama's nomination of Sen. John Kerry to be secretary of state. In Chicago, David Coleman Headley, an American drug dealer who had faced life in prison, was sentenced instead to 35 years for helping plan the deadly 2008 attacks on Mumbai, India - a punishment prosecutors said reflected his broad cooperation with U.S. investigators. New Orleans Hornets owner Tom Benson announced he was changing his team's nickname to the Pelicans for the start of next season.

Five years ago: Former sports doctor Larry Nassar, who had admitted molesting some of the nation's top gymnasts for years under the guise of medical treatment, was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison. Chipper Jones, Jim Thome, Vladimir Guerrero and Trevor Hoffman were elected to the baseball Hall of Fame. Scientists in China announced that they had used the cloning technique that produced Dolly the sheep to create healthy monkeys; it was the first such achievement in primates.

One year ago: The Pentagon ordered 8,500 troops on higher alert to potentially deploy to Europe as part of a NATO "response force" amid growing concern that Russia could soon make a military move on Ukraine. Judges approved a request for a special grand jury by the Georgia prosecutor investigating whether former President Donald Trump and others broke the law by trying to pressure Georgia officials to throw out Joe Biden's presidential election victory. An analysis found that high school graduation rates dipped in at least 20 states after the first full school year disrupted by the pandemic.

Today's birthdays: Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 87. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 84. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 82. Singer Aaron Neville is 82. Actor Michael Ontkean is 77. Actor Daniel Auteuil is 73. Country singer-songwriter Becky Hobbs is 73. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 72. Former South Korean President Moon Jae-in is 69. Actor William Allen Young is 69. Bandleader-musician Jools Holland is 65. Actor Nastassja Kinski is 62. R&B singer Theo Peoples is 62. Country musician Keech Rainwater (Lonestar) is 60. Comedian Phil LaMarr is 56. Olympic gold medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton is 55. R&B singer Sleepy Brown (Society of Soul) is 53. Actor Matthew Lillard is 53. Actor Merrilee McCommas is 52. Blues/rock singer Beth Hart is 51. Actor Ed Helms is 49. Actor Mark Hildreth is 45. Actor Christina Moses is 45. Actor Tatyana Ali is 44. Actor Carrie Coon is 42. Actor Daveed Diggs is 41. Actor Justin Baldoni is 39. Actor Mischa Barton is 37.