

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 1 of 84

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Gov. Noem Announces Plan to Restrict Foreign Purchases of Ag Land](#)
- [3- School Board Agenda](#)
- [4- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [4- GPD Help Wanted](#)
- [5- Boys Basketball beats Langford](#)
- [5- GDILIVE.COM JV sponsors needed](#)
- [6- Two motivational speakers coming to Groton](#)
- [7- GDILIVE.COM - BB DH - Deuel](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Committee will draft censure recommendation against state senator](#)
- [9- SD Searchlight: South Dakota set to scrutinize its approach to court-appointed attorneys](#)
- [10- SD Searchlight: House surprises bill sponsor, rejects higher campaign contribution limits](#)
- [11- SD Searchlight: Of more than 7,500 threats against members of Congress in 2022, just 22 prosecuted](#)
- [13- SD Searchlight: Committee approves bigger tax cut than Noem's food tax repeal](#)
- [14- SD Searchlight: House sends Medicaid work requirement ballot measure to Senate](#)
- [14- SD Searchlight: Ban on youth transgender care passes committee after impassioned debate](#)
- [16- SD Searchlight: Judge: Iowa pipeline trespassing case against SD man should go to trial](#)
- [16- SD Searchlight: Minnesota lawmaker seeks authority over mergers in response to Sanford-Fairview plan](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [22- Daily Devotional](#)
- [23- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

Groton Community Calendar

Wednesday, Feb. 1

Senior Menu: Breaded cod, parsley buttered potatoes, squash, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Hashbrown pizza.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

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

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



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

United Methodist Church: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Book Study with Lindsey Tietz, 4 p.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton Chamber Board Meeting, noon, at City Hall
Groton Lions Dress Consignment, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Groton Community Center

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 2

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, sherbet.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.

Basketball Doubleheader with Deuel in Groton. (Girls JV at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity)

Groton Lions Dress Consignment, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Groton Community Center

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

Gov. Noem Announces Plan to Restrict Foreign Purchases of Ag Land

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and legislators announced proposed legislation to restrict foreign purchases of agricultural land in South Dakota. The plan creates a new board, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States – South Dakota (CFIUS-SD), which will investigate proposed purchases of ag land by foreign interests and recommend either approval or denial to the Governor.

“With this new process, we will be able to prevent nations who hate us – like Communist China – from buying up our state’s agriculture land,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “We cannot allow the Chinese Communist Party to continue to buy up our nation’s food supply, so South Dakota will lead the charge on this vital national security issue.”

The prime sponsors of the legislation will be Senator Erin Tobin (R-Winner) and Representative-elect Gary Cammack (R-Union Center).

“For those of us who have lived and worked on the land, we know that it’s our past, but also our future,” said Senator Erin Tobin. “We grow the world’s food, and we need to protect the security of that food supply for our kids.”

The CFIUS-SD board would be made up of three ex officio members: the Governor’s General Counsel (who would serve as board chair), the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Director of the South Dakota Office of Homeland Security (part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety). The board would also include two governor’s appointees: an agricultural industry expert who owns at least 160 acres of agricultural land in SD, and a national and/or state security or foreign policy expert.

“With vital national security resources like Ellsworth Air Force Base, we cannot afford for our enemies to purchase land in South Dakota,” said Representative-elect Gary Cammack. “We want to keep this land in the hands of South Dakota agriculture producers. I look forward to working with Governor Noem and my colleagues to guarantee the continued security of our state and nation.”

The jurisdiction of CFIUS-SD would cover transactions on or after July 1, 2023, including:
Any transaction of any number of acres – including a land transfer, purchase, grant, devise, descent, or inheritance of agricultural land – involving a “foreign entity” (any foreign person, foreign government, foreign business, or any organization controlled by a foreign person, government, or business);
Any lease of agricultural land to a foreign entity for a period of one year or longer; and,
Any transaction previously considered by the federal CFIUS board.

Currently, South Dakota has a law on the books limiting aggregate foreign ownership of agricultural land to 160 acres.

Two weeks ago, Governor Noem signed an Executive Order banning TikTok for South Dakota state government. Since then, the number of states banning TikTok for state governments has risen to eight.

Last week, Governor Noem called on the South Dakota Investment Council (SDIC) to immediately review all state investments for potential ties to nations that hate America, like Communist China. The SDIC has already divested from multiple Chinese holdings as a result of that call.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

Special School Board Meeting

February 1, 2023 – 5:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Second Reading and approval of job description amendments for Business Manager and 6-12 Principal.
2. Executive Session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) for Business Manager Interviews and SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations.
 - a. Brittany Eddy
 - b. Kaitlyn Lundebrek
 - c. Becky Hubsch
3. Any necessary action arising out of executive session.

ADJOURN

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 4 of 84

The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

- George Santos has recused himself from two House committees pending an ongoing ethics investigation, yet Democrats are asking what it will take for him to leave Congress entirely. Santos could face legal implications after his campaign's treasurer resigned, legal experts said.
- Some countries have already begun threatening to boycott the 2024 Paris Olympics just days after the International Olympic Committee allowed Russian and Belarusian athletes to be able to compete in the Olympic quads.
- The Justice Department has prosecuted at least two former federal employees for unlawfully retaining classified documents since President Joe Biden took office two years ago.
- A coin-sized radioactive capsule has been found in Western Australia following an extensive search covering an 870-mile route of the highway. The capsule was lost while being transported by a mining company.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Russian Defense Ministry may be looking to supersede Wagner Group forces with its own troops as the allies continue to make competing claims over Russia's advancements in Ukraine, the Institute for the Study of War said. Meanwhile, Iran and Russia have established direct links between their countries' banks, strengthening ties between the heavily sanctioned nations.

- Donald Trump has hired a high-profile criminal lawyer to represent him in E. Jean Carroll's battery and defamation lawsuit, replacing attorney Alina Habba amid his numerous legal woes.

- Funeral services will be held today in Memphis for Tyre Nichols, who was beaten by five former officers and died days later. Vice President Kamala Harris is expected to attend. Former Memphis police officer Brandon Williams has blasted the officers along with those at the scene who failed to intervene, likening them to a lynch mob.

H E L P
W A N T E D

Position available for full-time Police Officer. Experience and SD Certification preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445. This position is open until filled. Applications may be found at <https://www.city.grotonsd.gov/forms/Application-ForCityEmployeePO.pdf>. For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 5 of 84

Boys hoop teams beat Langford Area

The Groton Area boys basketball teams posted a double win Tuesday at Langford.

The varsity team won its game, 74-22, leading at the quarterstops at 32-8, 51-17 and 70-20.

Four players hit double figures for the Tigers with Lane Tietz having 13 points, one rebounds, two assists and three steals. Cole Simon had 13 points, one rebound, three assists and one steal. Taylor Diegel had 12 points, two rebounds, two assists and one steal. Jacob Zak had 10 points, two rebounds, two assists and two steals. Tate Larson had seven points, two rebounds, three assists and three steals. Ryder Johnson had five points, five rebounds, one assist and one block shot. Logan Ringgenberg had five points, three rebounds and two steals. Keegan Tracy had three points, four rebounds, two assists and two steals. Cade Larson had two points, three rebounds and one assist. Colby Dunker had two points and three assists. Braxton Imrie had two points. Gage Sippel had three rebounds.

Groton Area made 24 of 30 two-pointers for 80 percent, five of 15 three-pointers for 33 percent, 11 of 15 free throws for 73 percent, 26 rebounds, 12 turnovers, 19 assists, 14 steals, 17 fouls and one block shot.

Kassen Keough led Langford Area w with 16 points and Jesse Keough had six. The Lions made seven of 25 field goals for 28 percent, six of nine free throws for 67 percent, had 15 team fouls and 23 turnovers.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 48-19, leading at the quarters tops at 18-3, 29-8 and 37-12.

Scoring for Groton Area: Logan Ringgenberg 9, Taylor Diegel 6, Dillon Abeln 6, Braxton Imrie 5, Ryder Johnson 5, Keegan Tracy 5, Carter Simon 4, Gage Sippel 4, Holden Sippel 2 and Caden McInerney 2.

Ethen Olson led Langford Area with seven points followed by Jacob Samson with six, Rennan Bruns four and Kalen Godel added two points.

Both games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The junior varsity game was sponsored by Kent and Darcy Muller. The varsity game was 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.

Groton Area is now 8-2 on the season and will host Deuel on Thursday. Langford falls to 3-11.

- Paul Kosel

GDILIVE.COM

Looking for sponsors for these final games.

Junior High Boys Games - Ab Christian in Groton 2-6

Boys JV - Redfield

Boys Roncalli JV

Boys Roncalli C

Britton-Hecla Boys JV

Florence/Henry Boys JV

Florence/Henry Boys C

Aberdeen Christian Boys JV

Aberdeen Christian Boys C

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 6 of 84

Higher Power Sports



➤ **FREE Event**

➤ **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!**

Groton Fellowship of Christian Students
presents **TWO** motivational speakers,

Tim Weidenbach & Deb Hadley

➤ **Sunday,
February 5th
3:16pm**
➤ **at the Groton
Methodist
Church**



Tim's Character Coaching & Be Kind Talk:

Higher Power Sports supports & serves HS & College athletes, coaches & families throughout the Midwest. He focuses on leadership, perseverance, opportunity, integrity, loyalty & making an impact on the teams he serves. Tim shares a fun & inspiring message on how kindness is contagious & encourages acceptance.

Deb's Overcoming Adversity Presentation:

Adversity is inevitable. Deb has had more than her share of loss. Often our students are caught off guard & lack the skill set to cope with hardships that come their way. Broken relationships, setbacks from COVID, bullying, lack of playing time, academic struggles, poor body image & low self-esteem, struggles at home &/or the death of loved ones, are some of the possibilities that can send the life of a student spiraling out of control. The goal of this seminar is to equip today's youth with the tools to help prepare them to handle the hardships that come their way & inspire them to turn their setbacks into opportunities to better their lives!

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 7 of 84

Thursday Night

Military Recognition Night

Girls Senior Parent's Night

GDILIVE.COM

Double Header - Deuel at Groton Area

Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023

Starts at 4 p.m. with Girls JV followed by Boys JV
Both JV games sponsor by Kent & Darcy Muller

followed by Varsity Games

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

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>

Committee will draft censure recommendation against state senator

Frye-Mueller allegedly made inappropriate comments to legislative staffer

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 31, 2023 9:58 PM

PIERRE – A committee of nine state senators unanimously voted to draft a censure recommendation against a fellow senator who allegedly made inappropriate comments to a legislative employee.

The committee, which met for several hours Tuesday evening at the Capitol, also voted to include in the draft recommendation a lifting of the suspension against Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller, R-Rapid City, and limits on her interactions with legislative staff.

If the recommendations gain final adoption from the committee, they'll go to the full Senate. The chamber's rules say the adoption of a select committee recommendation to censure a senator requires a three-fifths majority vote. A vote to discipline Frye-Mueller would also require a three-fifths majority, while a vote to expel her would require a two-thirds majority and a vote to exonerate requires a simple majority.

The committee hearing kicked off with Sen. Sydney Davis, R-Burbank, reading the written complaint from the accuser, a Legislative Research Council staffer whose name has been withheld from the public. The complaint was lodged Jan. 25 about an incident that happened Jan. 24.

The complaint says Frye-Mueller criticized the staffer's decision to have her baby vaccinated. Frye-Mueller allegedly said, among other things, that vaccines would harm or even kill the baby. Frye-Mueller also allegedly made lewd suggestions about how the staffer could produce breast milk with the assistance of the staffer's husband.

Frye-Mueller responds

Frye-Mueller testified during the hearing that she was offering private advice to the staffer. She denied the allegations about her vaccine-related comments.

"I don't talk about any issues that are personal issues," Frye-Mueller said. "My children have gotten vaccines."

Frye-Mueller said the Senate has treated her unfairly because she's not favored by Republican leaders. "It just looks like you guys are looking for something that's not there," Frye-Mueller said.

Mike Mueller, Frye-Mueller's husband, who was allegedly present during the interaction with the legislative staffer, also testified during the hearing. He does not believe "there was any ill-intent" during the conversation.

"This was a couple gals talking," Mike Mueller said.

Frye-Mueller has filed a lawsuit against Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, in federal court, alleging her right to free speech has been violated. Former South Dakota lawmaker Steven Haugaard is her attorney.

During Tuesday's committee hearing at the Capitol, Haugaard said the procedure is out of line and the investigation would be incomplete without more time for additional evidence and testimony.

"There is no justice in a proceeding where we were given notice about a day ago and we are told a decision would be made today," Haugaard said.

Haugaard and Frye-Mueller said they plan to fight the decision and will use all legal means at their disposal to challenge the findings of the committee.

Committee member Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, called the committee's proposed recommendation a necessary step to maintain the integrity of the legislative body.

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.

South Dakota set to scrutinize its approach to court-appointed attorneys

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 31, 2023 6:19 PM

The state of South Dakota may soon form a team to examine the way it assigns and pays its court-appointed lawyers.

Lawmakers on the Senate Judiciary Committee signed off Tuesday on a bill that would create a public defense task force in South Dakota, adding an emergency clause that would allow work to begin immediately after Gov. Kristi Noem's signature rather than in July when regular bills take effect.

The 6-0 vote for House Bill 1064 in that committee also came with a recommendation that the proposal appear on the Senate's consent calendar, clearing the way for final passage without debate on the Senate floor. The bill passed the House of Representatives 67-2 on Jan. 19.

The idea came to the Legislature from South Dakota Supreme Court Justice Steven Jensen, who told lawmakers during his State of the Judiciary speech that the cost of indigent defense in the state weighs heavily on the minds and budgets of county commissioners all across the state.

During Tuesday's Judiciary Committee meeting, State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn relayed the same message, noting that the cost of court-appointed attorneys is among the more difficult budgetary dilemmas for the state.

"It's a very expensive endeavor for the counties to provide indigent services to those in need, as well as it's constitutionally required, so it's not an option," Sattizahn said.

The 13-member task force would include members appointed by Jensen, as well as county representatives, lawyers with experience in public defense, two lawmakers, one prosecutor and one representative from the Attorney General's Office.

Funding questions

The budget for public defense in South Dakota is borne almost entirely by counties. A dedicated public defender's office can be the most cost-effective way to manage the constitutional obligation, but just three counties in the state have one: Minnehaha, Pennington and Lawrence.

The remainder farm out public defense work to private attorneys who typically bill at an hourly rate. Even counties with public defense offices must appoint private lawyers for abuse and neglect cases, as well as in "conflict" cases with multiple defendants, where the legal interests of a client with a public defender would clash with those of a co-defendant.

The price tag is high, particularly in counties with few lawyers that need to seek help from afar and pay mileage.

The annual cost to counties for indigent defense adds up to \$20 million, Sattizahn told the committee. The only available outside funding source barely makes a dent.

Every criminal offense committed in the state carries a \$50 surcharge, of which \$7.50 is directed to counties to offset the cost of indigent defense. That \$7.50 per crime subsidy added up to \$730,000 in Fiscal Year 2022, Sattizahn said, and "that's divided amongst all the counties."

"Financially, this is a difficult thing for the counties," he said.

South Dakota is one of two states in the U.S. that does not use state funds to reimburse counties for the cost of indigent defense, he said.

The task force will need to look at what a more sustainable system might look like, Sattizahn said.

Lawyer shortage complicates issue

Many states have state-level public defense offices, but South Dakota does not. Sattizahn told the com-

mittee that it's getting more difficult to find private lawyers to take cases in smaller counties.

Potentially lower hourly rates and sub-par mileage reimbursements discourage those attorneys from accepting the work, but the concentration of lawyers in large cities is also a factor.

"There are wide areas of the state where crimes are still committed and people are appointed attorneys, but there are really no lawyers in the area, or there are very few," said Eric Whitcher, who runs the Pennington County Public Defender's Office.

Even in the cities, Whitcher said, it's difficult to staff for indigent defense. Whitcher runs an office of 19 lawyers that's been two short for months. One attorney will join soon, but the other position remains open.

The office's budget, set at \$3.5 million for 2023, used to be enough to let Whitcher pay "competitive" salaries. That's no longer the case.

"You need people with servant's hearts to do this work," Whitcher said.

Having a public defender's office may offer counties the most bang for their legal buck, but it doesn't spare them the price of private attorney appointments.

In Rapid City, about 20% of the cases the public defender gets initially assigned are conflict cases. Murder cases are usually conflict cases, as well, Whitcher said. Most conflict cases go to Dakota Plains Legal Services, a small office contracted with the county, but the murder cases go to private lawyers with more time to devote to deep investigations.

There are also times when Whitcher files a motion with the court to signal that his staff are overbooked, which directs even more cases to Dakota Plains or private offices.

Minnehaha County deals with some of the same issues, according to Public Defender Traci Smith. Sioux Falls is home to her office, but also to a county-funded Public Advocate's Office for conflict cases. The county still struggles with its conflict budget.

"I know from speaking with leaders in other jurisdictions that have dug into all the different hodgepodge of options that taking a hard look at the data will be beneficial," Smith said. "There will be challenges having 66 different counties with very different needs."

Whitcher and Smith are both pleased that the task force has received wide support. Each area has its own struggles that need exploring before decisions on how to rework the state's approach can be made.

"There are a lot of important questions here, and I'm glad it's going to get the attention it deserves," Whitcher said.

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

House surprises bill sponsor, rejects higher campaign contribution limits

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 31, 2023 5:00 PM

PIERRE – To the surprise of its Republican sponsor, a bill aimed at raising the maximum amount that individuals and entities can contribute to political campaigns in South Dakota has failed to pass in the state's House of Representatives.

The bill, which was introduced during South Dakota's 38-day legislative session in Pierre, would have raised two limits. The limit on contributions from a person or entity to a statewide candidate would have risen from \$4,000 to \$5,000, and the limit on contributions from a person or entity to a legislative or county candidate would have risen from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

The bill, backed by Republican leadership, faced opposition from other Republicans.

Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, argued that such an increase would give too much influence to wealthy donors and special interest groups.

"You know what people really do not like in politics?" Hansen asked fellow members of the House. "Big corporations and big money that comes in and buys influence."

Rep. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, said he voted against the bill because he believes there should be no limit on campaign contributions.

Democrats also opposed the bill. Rep. Oren Lesmeister, D-Parade, rhetorically asked his fellow legislators, "Did anybody in this body not get reelected because they didn't get enough money?"

Laughter erupted in response.

"Nope. So, I think it's pretty simple," Lesmeister said.

But supporters of the measure said the increases are overdue.

Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, is the prime sponsor of the bill. He said it's a common sense adjustment to a limit that hasn't been adjusted for 22 years, and he was surprised to receive pushback from his Republican colleagues.

"I didn't think we would have a whole lot of debate on this," Chase said.

The vote against the bill was 37-31.

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.

Of more than 7,500 threats against members of Congress in 2022, just 22 prosecuted

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 31, 2023 4:46 PM

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress receive thousands of threats a year, though just a fraction of the people who call, mail or email will ever be prosecuted — a situation that's of great concern to the police who guard members.

Just 22 of the 7,501 threats lobbed at members during 2022 led to prosecution, the U.S. Capitol Police confirmed to States Newsroom on Tuesday. It's a statistic the chief of police has said needs to change.

"Recognizing that threat cases are difficult to prosecute, it is disheartening to me that our prosecution rate remains low," USCP Chief Thomas Manger said during a recent congressional hearing while talking about the 2021 numbers.

In 2022, the USCP presented 313 cases to U.S. attorney offices after determining that they represented criminal threats against members of Congress, according to a USCP spokesperson.

Twenty-two of those cases were prosecuted, though it wasn't immediately clear how many resulted in plea deals or convictions.

The goal in many cases is to get mental health treatment, according to the USCP. Sending people who threaten members of Congress to prison "is not always the best route," the spokesperson said.

'Huge caseload'

The USCP referred 458 threat cases for prosecution during 2021, with 40 of those leading to a court case, according to Minnesota Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar, chair of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, which held the hearing at which Manger testified.

"The FBI and the U.S. attorney's office are very helpful, but they have a huge caseload and for us, a threat against a member of Congress is our highest priority. It's not always their highest priority," Manger said.

"So if we have our own folks to make sure these things get prosecuted, I think it's a big step in the right direction for us."

Manger said USCP has made "significant inroads" on prosecutions by getting three U.S. attorneys dedicated to prosecuting threat cases against members of Congress.

He argued that prosecutions have a "deterrent effect" and said he's working with the U.S. Department of Justice to allow the U.S. attorneys to work across state lines as needed.

"It would be nice to be able to send them where we need to send them so we can get more of those cases prosecuted," Manger said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 12 of 84

The number of threats made against members has fluctuated in recent years, reaching a peak of 9,625 threats in 2021 — an average of slightly more than 26 per day.

That number was up from the 8,613 threats made in 2020, the 6,955 threats in 2019, a total of 5,206 in 2018 and 3,939 in 2017, according to USCP.

Paul Pelosi attack

Threats against members of Congress have become an unsettling reality of the everyday lives of lawmakers and staff, as has deciphering which people are likely to follow through on those threats.

The security of members and their families came to the forefront, once again, in October when a man broke into the home that former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi shares with her husband, Paul. The man then allegedly attacked Paul Pelosi with a hammer while searching for the longtime Democratic lawmaker.

The man, who was quickly arrested by police inside the San Francisco home, told investigators during an interview that after he found Speaker Pelosi, if she told the "truth," he planned to let her go, but that if she "lied," he was planning to break "her kneecaps."

The incident took place about three months after a man attacked New York Republican Rep. Lee Zeldin during a campaign event near Rochester while he was running in a bid for governor.

The man later told law enforcement he had been drinking, didn't know who Zeldin was or that he was a politician, and said he "must have checked out" after watching a video of the incident, according to The Associated Press.

Kansas Republican Rep. Jake LaTurner testified in January against a man who was later convicted of calling in a threat to one of the congressman's offices.

Prosecutors played a voicemail during the trial, showing the man threatened to kill LaTurner and all other members of Congress after he had declared he was the "son of God" and "Messiah," according to The Kansas City Star.

In April 2022, a Florida man pleaded guilty to one count of threatening a federal official for sending an email to Minnesota Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar in July 2019 threatening to kill her.

The 67-year-old man sent an email with the subject line, "(You're) dead, you radical Muslim," after watching a press conference on television that Omar attended along with Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

In the email, the man referred to Omar and the other lawmakers as "radical rats," and claimed he was going to shoot them in the head, according to a press release from the U.S. Justice Department.

"Threatening to kill our elected officials, especially because of their race, ethnicity or religious beliefs, is offensive to our nation's fundamental values," Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said in a written statement at the time.

"The Justice Department will not hesitate to prosecute individuals who violate federal laws that prohibit violent, hate-motivated threats. All elected officials, regardless of their background, should be able to represent their communities and serve the public free from hate-motivated threats and violence."

The man was later sentenced to three years probation and fined \$7,000, according to The Tampa Bay Times.

Enhancing security

Manger said during the hearing that the USCP hopes to enhance security for lawmakers' homes and district offices as well as for members of leadership.

"As a result of the number of threats that are coming in and the number of credible threats that we have some concern about, I believe that we need to strongly expand the number of protection agents that we have," he said.

Manger noted that at the moment, the USCP doesn't "provide the level of protection to some of the leadership that perhaps we should."

"It's certainly not on par with what is done in the executive branch," Manger added.

He also told the panel he's asked the USCP board "to do for the entire Congress what the House has begun to do for their members."

"Every member of Congress would have a security system in their home, in their district offices; so that it would add a layer of protection for not only the member but their family and their staff as well," Manger said.

Part of that process, he said, would include setting up a protection operations center where civilian employees working for the USCP would monitor the security systems as well as employees for the security system company.

"To have that redundancy and to have that instant recognition if there's a problem and the instant response if there's a problem, I think, provides exactly what we need in terms of enhancing the protection," Manger said.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Committee approves bigger tax cut than Noem's food tax repeal

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 31, 2023 4:19 PM

A bill that would reduce the state sales and use tax by half a percentage point unanimously passed the House Taxation Committee and will head to House Appropriations.

House Bill 1137 is one of many this session proposing to reduce taxes, including one backed by Gov. Noem to eliminate the food sales tax.

Noem touted the controversial proposal as the largest tax cut in state history, cutting about \$120 million from the state budget annually.

Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said Tuesday during a committee hearing that his bill, HB 1137, would cut \$168 million in taxes.

The Noem administration's Bureau of Finance and Management was the only opponent to testify at the committee meeting, though the bureau's representative encouraged the committee to send it forward to House Appropriations for further debate.

"At the end of the day, we can't afford to do all these proposals without doing substantial budget cuts," said the bureau's Derek Johnson.

Karr said his bill is easier to modify and implement, especially for retailers to adjust tax calculations in their payment software.

"This applies to all goods and services, including food," Karr said. "Less tax creates more discretionary dollars. This is good for retailers in our state; this is good for our citizens."

The bill would reduce the state sales and use tax from 4.5% to 4%, returning the tax to what it was before 2016 when the half-percentage tax was implemented to support raising teacher salaries in the state.

South Dakota is facing a worse teacher shortage than in 2015, experts say, with 176 statewide teacher openings at the end of December 2022, compared to 111 at the end of December 2021. South Dakota's average teacher salary ranks 50th in the nation, according to the National Education Association.

Lobbyists for the state's largest school districts and School Administrators of South Dakota oppose the bill but did not testify during the committee meeting.

Karr said there was a plan in place to reduce the sales tax incrementally as the state saw more remote, online sales. But that has not happened since the increase was implemented.

"Now we are fully realizing tax collection, and this bill will live up to the promise in the statute," Karr said. "This is a realistic and more responsible way to look at surplus dollars and tax relief."

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.

House sends Medicaid work requirement ballot measure to Senate

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 31, 2023 4:06 PM

A resolution that would put Medicaid back on the ballot in 2024 passed the House of Representatives and will head to the Senate.

The House passed HJR 5004 with a 60-8 vote. The resolution would ask South Dakota voters to amend the state constitution to let the state impose work requirements on "able-bodied" people eligible for expanded Medicaid.

South Dakota voters approved a constitutional amendment during the 2022 general election with a 56% majority to expand Medicaid eligibility. South Dakota is the 39th state to expand the program, which is a federal-state partnership providing health care insurance for low-income people.

Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, and Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, proposed the joint resolution.

The resolution would add an exception to the voter-approved amendment, which currently prohibits the state from imposing "greater or additional burdens or restrictions" on eligibility. The exception says the state "may impose a work requirement on any person, eligible under this section, who is able-bodied."

Representatives who opposed the resolution questioned what able-bodied would mean and cautioned against suggesting an amendment so recently after the voters approved Medicaid expansion. Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, said many of her constituents might be considered able-bodied, but don't work for a variety of reasons.

"I spoke to so many mothers and fathers where one was staying home because they couldn't afford to go to work and pay for child care," Duba said. "Or they were not on insurance because they couldn't afford it or their employer didn't offer insurance. For these people, Medicaid expansion is critically important."

Venhuizen said a work requirement is possible in other states, and the resolution would allow South Dakota to consider the same thing.

"If we pass this and put it on the ballots and then it passes, that's where we come back in the future and say if this is the right thing for South Dakota," Venhuizen said. "Those are things we can talk about at that point. This would remove the prohibition that prevents us from even having that conversation."

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.

Ban on youth transgender care passes committee after impassioned debate

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 31, 2023 12:53 PM

PIERRE – A bill that would ban some forms of health care for transgender youth passed its first committee today at the Capitol, sparking a passionate debate among supporters and opponents.

The bill has been met with resistance from LGBTQ advocacy groups, medical professionals and concerned citizens. They argue the bill violates the rights of transgender children and their parents.

"This bill violates the United States Constitution," said Samantha Chapman, of the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota. "If passed, HB 1080 could set off a public health crisis for transgender youth and their families, and open the door to governmental intrusions into the doctor-patient relationship as well as the parent-child relationship."

If the legislation becomes law, health care professionals treating transgender children would be banned from prescribing drugs such as puberty blockers and prohibited from performing some types of surgeries.

Supporters of the bill argue those types of treatments – often referred to as gender-affirming care – are not appropriate for minors. They say minors are not capable of making informed decisions about their own medical care and that such treatments can have permanent physical and psychological effects.

Rep. Bethany Soye, R-Sioux Falls, introduced the "Help Not Harm Bill" and said Gov. Kristi Noem supports it. Soye said some types of transgender health care harm children to make a profit for providers.

"In the guise of medical treatment, children are being sterilized and turned into permanent medical

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 15 of 84

patients," Soye said. "This bill subjects doctors to review by their governing board if they engage in the prohibited practices."

The bill not only says health care providers could lose their license if caught providing the banned services, but could also be held liable in lawsuits.

Proponent testimony included three people from out-of-state who said they received gender-affirming care but said they later regretted the decision. One was Billy Burleigh, a 56-year-old from Louisiana, who began transitioning at 27.

"In hindsight, I see that I had several underlying problems that reinforced the false thought that I was a girl," Burleigh said. "Transitioning didn't help my mental health issues. I still had to deal with all of those after I transitioned."

Michael Laidlaw, an endocrinologist from California, said there are risks associated with gender-affirming care.

"Opposite sex hormones are given in very high doses," Laidlaw said. "Complications include increased risk of heart attacks and death, to cardiovascular disease, infertility and sexual dysfunction for females."

An opponent of the bill, South Dakota-certified gender specialist Dr. Anne Dilenschneider, said gender-affirming surgeries are rare, and that drugs are only administered after years of therapy to analyze the condition of the child.

Dilenschneider told South Dakota Searchlight after the hearing that insurance providers in the state do not cover costs for transgender surgeries for minors, and that surgeries happen only in rare circumstances in South Dakota – for example, when a transgender child's life is at immediate risk from suicide or self-harm, such as when a child tries to remove their own breasts.

A South Dakota transgender 16-year-old, Elliot Morehead, told the committee that care is not administered on a whim.

"I am transgender and I'm proud," Morehead said. "I'm in a body that has a couple more steps to being a hundred percent me."

Morehead said the bill would negate six months of work with a therapist that led to a recommendation to start hormone therapy. Morehead said the recommendation allows for an appointment to start testing and possibly receive gender-affirming treatment in the future.

Other critics of the bill, including the ACLU of South Dakota and the South Dakota Medical Association, argued the bill is harmful to the well-being and health of transgender minors. They said access to gender-affirming care is crucial for the mental and physical health of transgender people, and denying them access to treatments can lead to long-term consequences including depression, anxiety and suicide.

The ACLU and South Dakota Medical Association expect the bill to spark litigation if passed into law, resulting in potentially costly legal fees for the state.

The bill passed the committee on partisan lines, with two Democrats opposing it and 11 Republicans supporting it.

Rep. Kameron Nelson, D-Sioux Falls, called the bill unconstitutional and "an egregious misuse of taxpayer dollars," given the lawsuits the legislation could cause.

"And please don't sit here in committee stating that you are fiscally responsible," Nelson said.

The bill now goes to the full House of Representatives. Similar bills have been adopted in other states, including recently in Utah, or are under consideration in states including Montana.

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.

Judge: Iowa pipeline trespassing case against SD man should go to trial

BY: JARED STRONG - JANUARY 31, 2023 12:35 PM

A district court judge has rejected a request to dismiss the trespassing charge against a land surveyor who attempted to evaluate a northwest Iowa property in August for Summit Carbon Solutions, according to court records.

A tenant of the property had previously turned away another Summit survey crew in April 2022 and told them not to return. The surveyor who was charged with trespassing, Stephen James Larsen, 28, of Arlington, South Dakota, was not part of that first crew and went to the rural Spirit Lake property after the company had attempted to notify the landowner and tenant of the survey, as required by Iowa law.

Summit intends to lay about 680 miles of pipe in Iowa to carry captured carbon dioxide from ethanol plants for underground sequestration in North Dakota.

State law allows the land surveys after hazardous liquid pipeline companies hold informational meetings and send notices via certified mail and specifically says that such work is not trespassing. The surveys help determine the path and depth of the pipelines.

The Dickinson County attorney who is prosecuting the trespassing charge has argued that the company should have obtained a court-ordered injunction to facilitate the survey, which is also allowed by Iowa law when landowners object.

In a ruling on the motion to dismiss late last week, District Associate Judge Shawna Ditsworth said court precedent gives deference to the prosecution and that "a motion to dismiss is not proper to evaluate the merits of the case and a possible defense."

"The court, at this early state of the proceeding, is unable to conclude, based on the record, that the facts alleged by the state do not constitute the offense of trespass," Ditsworth wrote.

Ditsworth scheduled a non-jury trial for the case for March 23.

The constitutionality of the law that allows the land surveys is being challenged in separate cases by several landowners — who assert that it violates their land rights — and an Iowa Senate bill that would bar the surveys without landowner permission is pending.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

Minnesota lawmaker seeks authority over mergers in response to Sanford-Fairview plan

BY: MICHELLE GRIFFITH - JANUARY 31, 2023 10:33 AM

Minnesota House Democrats on Monday warned a merger between Fairview Health Services and Sanford Health could increase health care costs or lead to hospital and clinic closures.

In November, Fairview and Sanford announced their intention to merge into one health care system run by Sanford's current CEO Bill Gassen. The target date to complete the deal is March 31, which DFL lawmakers and health care advocates have repeatedly said was too soon.

Rep. Robert Bierman, DFL-Apple Valley, proposed a bill on Monday to the joint House Commerce and Health Finance and Policy committees that would require health care providers to get approval from the state health commissioner before mergers.

"Because of the rush to close the deal, this issue has become paramount now," Bierman said. "This is not simply a case where speed of a deal getting done will enhance public health policy. Our central focus

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 17 of 84

... should be the improvement of delivering quality health care for Minnesotans across the state while improving access and affordability.”

Sioux Falls-based Sanford and Minneapolis-based Fairview said they will remain nonprofits and retain their own leadership and regional boards. Attorney General Keith Ellison is investigating the merger and has held public hearings on whether Minnesota residents believe the merger would be beneficial. Earlier this month, he asked the health care providers to delay the March 31 deadline.

One of the major concerns among lawmakers is about the University of Minnesota Medical Center, which Fairview owns and is the university’s primary teaching hospital.

Medical School Dean Dr. Jakub Tolar told the committee the merger has proceeded without the health care providers considering its potential impact on the university. In a previous statement to the Reformer, a Fairview spokesperson said the university has been an “active participant” in merger discussions and to imply the university hasn’t been fully involved is “false and disingenuous.”

Myron Frans, the university’s senior vice president of finance and operations, asked lawmakers to delay the merger and require the university’s involvement in any agreement between Sanford and Fairview.

Sanford CEO Gassen and Fairview CEO James Hereford told House members that “at this time” they would not delay the date of the merger.

Gassen said they could delay the merger, however, based on the feedback they receive from stakeholders and the Attorney General’s Office.

Rep. Zack Stephenson, DFL-Coon Rapids, told Gassen his answer was “disappointing.”

“All of the stakeholders ... seem to be pretty united in asking you to allow more time for this,” said Stephenson, who chairs the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee.

Rep. Tina Liebling, DFL-Rochester, asked the CEOs, “What is the rush?”

Hereford said it was in the public’s interest to get the merger completed quickly.

“Health care delivery has fundamentally changed and it is imperative upon us in our role to serve Minnesotans to make sure that we adapt, we innovate and we continue to progress,” Hereford said.

Republican House members appeared more open to the merger, emphasizing that Sanford has many clinics in rural Minnesota and a merger could bolster these facilities.

In 2013, Sanford and Fairview announced a similar deal, but state lawmakers and then-Attorney General Lori Swanson squashed it. Swanson said her main concern at the time was that Sanford, an out-of-state organization, would be running the Fairview-owned University of Minnesota hospital and could use Minnesota taxpayer dollars to expand into other states.

Fairview employs more than 31,000 employees across 11 hospitals, and Sanford has 47 medical centers employing 2,800 physicians and providers across the Dakotas and in greater Minnesota.

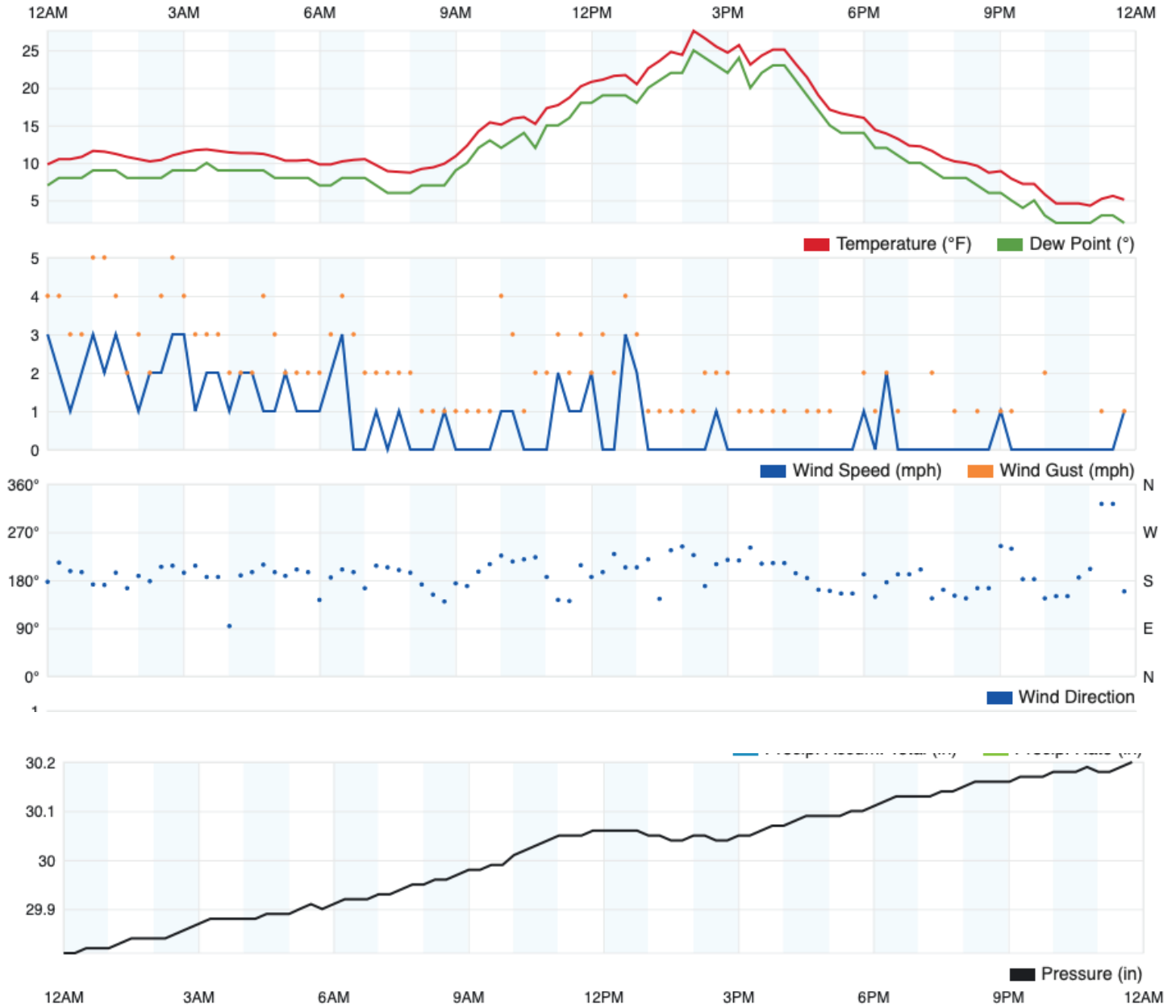
The House committees will discuss the bill again on Wednesday.

Michelle Griffith covers Minnesota politics and policy for the Minnesota Reformer, with a focus on marginalized communities. Most recently she was a reporter with The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead in North Dakota where she covered state and local government and Indigenous issues. For two years she was also a corps member with Report for America, a national nonprofit that places journalists in local newsrooms and news deserts. She lives in St. Paul and likes to knit and watch documentaries in her free time.

Groton Daily Independent








Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 18 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








Groton Daily Independent


Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 19 of 84


Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Mostly Sunny	Slight Chance Flurries	Cold	Increasing Clouds	Cold	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 20 °F	Low: 0 °F	High: 6 °F↓	Low: -13 °F	High: 10 °F	Low: 2 °F	High: 38 °F

Warmer This Weekend

Today Feb 1 th , 2022	Thursday Groundhog's Day	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				
Warmer with clear skies	Colder again, clouds west river	Cloudy but warmer	Sunny and continuing to warm	Clouds building from the west
HI: 16-33 °F LO: -3-13 °F	HI: 3-19 °F LO: -17-5 °F	HI: 4-31 °F LO: -1-19 °F	HI: 34-44 °F LO: 19-23 °F	HI: 29-43 °F LO: 21-29 °F

February 1, 2023 3:11 AM





Happy February! Temperatures today will be a little bit of a reprieve from the cold we've had the last few days. Unfortunately, that cold will return tomorrow. After that, temperatures start the up hill climb for the weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 20 of 84

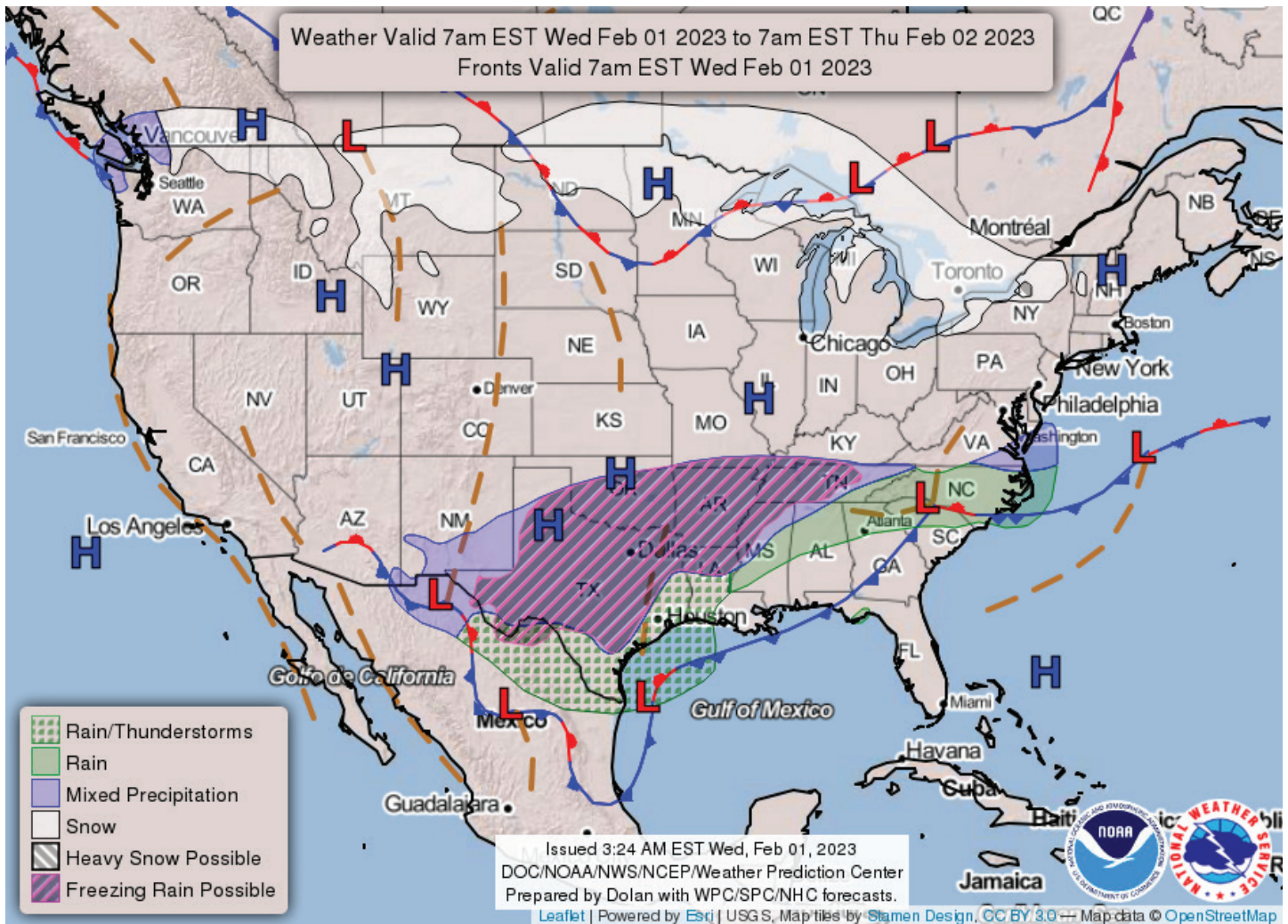
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 8 °F at 3:47 PM
Low Temp: -10 °F at 8:20 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 12:09 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 48 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1931
Record Low: -42 in 1893
Average High: 25
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.02
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.57
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:40:25 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:50:17 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 21 of 84

Today in Weather History

February 1, 1969: Across central and eastern South Dakota, February 1969 contained a variety of winter weather causing many difficulties. Glazing due to dense fog and drizzle periodically formed on utility lines creating numerous broken power lines. Strong winds caused widespread blowing and drifting snow resulting in many closed roads. Snowplows would open the streets, and often drifting snow would close the roads again. Frequent uses of pusher-type snowplows piled banks of snow 20 to 30 feet along the roads, and it became impractical to open routes with this type of snowplow. Several rotary snowplows were flown in from military airbases outside the state to open some of the roads in the eastern part of the state. Many school closings occurred during the month due to snow blocked roads.

February 1, 1989: Four to eight inches of snow fell across western and northern South Dakota. Winds of 25 mph and subzero temperature produced wind chills in the 50 to 80 below zero range. Several schools were closed across the area due to the dangerous wind chills. The storm continued into the 2nd.

1893 - Thunder and lightning accompanied sleet and snow at Saint Louis MO during the evening hours, even though the temperature was just 13 degrees above zero. (The Weather Channel)

1916: Seattle, Washington, was buried under 21.5 inches of snow, their most significant 24-hour snowfall. A total of 32.5 inches of wet snow accumulated over three days. The Seattle cathedral dome collapsed under the snow's weight.

1947: January 30th through February 8th, a great blizzard occurred in Saskatchewan, Canada. All highways into Regina were blocked. Railway officials declared the worst conditions in Canadian rail history. One train was buried in a snowdrift over a half-mile long and 36.7 feet deep.

1951 - The greatest ice storm of record in the U.S. produced glaze up to four inches thick from Texas to Pennsylvania causing twenty-five deaths, 500 serious injuries, and 100 million dollars damage. Tennessee was hardest hit by the storm. Communications and utilities were interrupted for a week to ten days. (David Ludlum)

1951 - The temperature at Taylor Park Dam plunged to 60 degrees below zero, a record for the state of Colorado. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955: Seen first as a "well-defined cone-shaped funnel" over the Mississippi River, this F3 tornado cut a path from Commerce Landing to Clark in northeastern Mississippi. This tornado killed 20 and injured at least 141 individuals. Most of the deaths were in a plantation school. The following is from Thomas Grazulis, "Significant Tornadoes 1680-1991" book: "Despite the fact that a funnel was seen, that heavy objects were thrown long distances, and that the tornado was in a forecast box, the event was not officially called a tornado. A survey team state that since all debris was thrown in one direction, the event should not be listed as a tornado."

1985 - Snow, sleet and ice glazed southern Tennessee and northern sections of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The winter storm produced up to eleven inches of sleet and ice in Lauderdale County AL, one of the worst storms of record for the state. All streets in Florence AL were closed for the first time of record. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the Pacific Northwest produced wind gusts to 100 mph at Cape Blanco OR, and up to six inches of rain in the northern coastal mountain ranges. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - While arctic cold continued to invade the central U.S., fifty-four cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Russell KS, the hot spot in the nation with a high of 84 degrees the previous day, reported a morning low of 12 above. Tioga ND reported a wind chill reading of 90 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

2011: One of the most significant events of the 2010-2011 winter season affected a widespread region from Texas to the Midwest and Northeast from February 1st to 3rd 2011. The system produced widespread heavy snow with blizzard conditions and significant freezing rain and sleet to other locations. Snowfall amounts of 10 to 20 inches were common from northeast Oklahoma to lower Michigan. The storm produced 20.2 inches at Chicago, the third heaviest snowfall in the city since their records began in 1886, along with a peak wind of 61 mph. Kansas City received just under 9 inches of snow. The high temp was 17 degrees.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE PEACE OF A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

"God's gonna get you for that!"

Every time someone did something that Brenda thought was "unChristian" by her standards, she would wag her finger and repeat her warning that was known by everyone on campus. Ever since she arrived with her freshman class, and now about to graduate with honors, she served with distinction as the "campus conscience."

Perhaps our lives would be more Christlike if we each had our own personal "conscience cop" - one who would sit on our shoulder or go before us and alert or warn us before we did something sinful. Most of us can quote Paul's wise words about "no temptation without God's spirit giving us a way out." Most of us, however, think of that after we have "gone astray" or are overwhelmed by and submit to the temptation and then plead for "grace and mercy" because we are only "too human and still growing in Christ." Unfortunately, that excuse works far too well!

Solomon knew the "peace that can come from a clean conscience." No doubt he had a few "skeletons" in his closet, as we all do and wanted to share some of his "self-help" wisdom and insight on "worry-free" living. So he provides us with a warning that will work for all of us all of the time: "The righteous are as bold as a lion."

The "key" is being righteous. Though easier said than done, we can free our minds from guilt and fear by living by and through the Word of God and in the power of Christ. We all have a past to remind us of Satan's power. We also have "Christ in us" who can make us "bold as a lion."

Prayer: Father, Your Word is available to us but will do no good until it is within us. Fill our lives with truths which enable us to be righteous and live free from sin. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The righteous are as bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1b



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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 23 of 84

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 24 of 84

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul





WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.31.23

7 9 18 29 39 13

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 2
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

GAME DETAILS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.30.23

2 16 28 32 38 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,520,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 2 Mins 40
DRAW: Secs

GAME DETAILS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.31.23

2 3 10 15 22 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins
DRAW: 40 Secs

GAME DETAILS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.28.23

7 8 15 16 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 2 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

GAME DETAILS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.30.23

3 25 28 42 61 17

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

GAME DETAILS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.30.23

1 4 12 36 49 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$653,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

GAME DETAILS

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 26 of 84

News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 51, Yankton 35

Avon 62, Menno 29

Bison 59, Oelrichs 33

Castlewood 63, Waubay/Summit 31

Centerville 50, Alcester-Hudson 36

Colman-Egan 49, Bridgewater-Emery 18

Corsica/Stickney 63, Burke 56

Crow Creek 74, Lower Brule 72

Custer 49, Douglas 40

Dell Rapids St. Mary 69, Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 46

Deubrook 65, Madison 38

Dupree 50, Timber Lake 42

Edgemont 47, Guernsey-Sunrise, Wyo. 10

Elkton-Lake Benton 56, Deuel 30

Estelline/Hendricks 56, Waverly-South Shore 17

Ethan 64, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 27

Harding County 49, Lemmon 34

Herreid/Selby Area 58, Faith 49

Highmore-Harrold 55, Sunshine Bible Academy 23

Howard 60, Irene-Wakonda 41

Huron 45, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 33

James Valley Christian 52, Hitchcock-Tulare 19

Lennox 56, Elk Point-Jefferson 53, OT

Leola/Frederick 40, Ipswich 17

Marty Indian 55, Freeman Academy/Marion 26

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 57, Gregory 52

North Central Co-Op 42, Aberdeen Christian 35

Parker 49, Chester 48

Parkston 55, McCook Central/Montrose 36

Pierre 40, Harrisburg 30

Platte-Geddes 62, Chamberlain 35

Potter County 56, Redfield 47

Red Cloud 61, Belle Fourche 46

Scotland 35, Freeman 33

Sioux Falls Christian 65, Canton 37

Sioux Falls Jefferson 56, Mitchell 47

Sioux Falls Lincoln 53, Watertown 50

Sioux Falls Washington 52, Brookings 40

Sisseton 56, Britton-Hecla 19

Spearfish 47, Lead-Deadwood 9

St. Thomas More 58, Rapid City Christian 28

Sully Buttes 47, Jones County 44

Tea Area 71, Western Christian, Iowa 55

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 27 of 84

Todd County 52, Stanley County 43
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 40, Gayville-Volin 31
Vermillion 50, Beresford 26
Viborg-Hurley 61, Canistota 48
Wagner 62, Hanson 46
Warner 48, Faulkton 40
Webster 49, Wilmot 31
Wessington Springs 71, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 65, OT
West Central 53, Tri-Valley 46
Winner 41, Miller 22
Wolsey-Wessington 57, Kimball/White Lake 48

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 73, North Central Co-Op 30
Aberdeen Roncalli 56, Potter County 32
Avon 47, Menno 26
Baltic 60, Garretson 36
Beresford 48, Vermillion 45
Britton-Hecla 39, Sisseton 33
Castlewood 70, Waubay/Summit 43
Centerville 56, Alcester-Hudson 54, OT
Dell Rapids 63, Flandreau 30
Douglas 62, Custer 58
Estelline/Hendricks 73, Waverly-South Shore 56
Ethan 57, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 38
Groton Area 74, Langford 20
Hanson 61, Wagner 46
Highmore-Harrold 57, Sunshine Bible Academy 28
Howard 50, Irene-Wakonda 38
James Valley Christian 68, Hitchcock-Tulare 34
Kadoka Area 66, Bennett County 33
Kimball/White Lake 55, Colome 51
Lennox 84, Elk Point-Jefferson 49
Little Wound 66, St. Francis Indian 42
Lower Brule 78, Crow Creek 42
Marty Indian 66, Freeman Academy/Marion 60
Mobridge-Pollock 60, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 48
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 66, Gregory 62
Parker 49, Chester 48
Parkston 62, McCook Central/Montrose 54
Philip 72, New Underwood 52
Platte-Geddes 71, Chamberlain 51
Red Cloud 67, Belle Fourche 59
Sioux Falls Christian 69, Canton 53
Sioux Falls Jefferson 61, Mitchell 54
Sioux Falls Lincoln 74, Watertown 60
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 63, Huron 53
Sioux Falls Washington 68, Brookings 33
Spearfish 70, Lead-Deadwood 33
St. Thomas More 46, Sturgis Brown 39

Sully Buttes 67, Jones County 54
Tea Area 64, Western Christian, Iowa 47
Tiospa Zina Tribal 79, Hankinson, N.D. 73
Todd County 75, Stanley County 71
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 72, Gayville-Volin 30
Viborg-Hurley 47, Canistota 45
Warner 53, Faulkton 38
Webster 66, Wilmot 47
Wessington Springs 60, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 46
West Central 55, Tri-Valley 45
Winner 64, Miller 50
Yankton 59, Aberdeen Central 47

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

Anti-abortion activists aim to sway GOP White House hopefuls

By SARA BURNETT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Emboldened anti-abortion activists are looking to the 2024 presidential election as an opportunity to solidify their influence over the Republican Party.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, the most influential group in the anti-abortion movement, is telling each potential GOP presidential hopeful that to win its backing — or avoid being a target of its opposition — they must support national restrictions on the procedure. Exceptions in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother are acceptable, the activists say, but leaving the question for states to decide is not.

“It is a level of protection that goes to every single state. That’s the baseline of what we’re looking to do,” said Frank Cannon, Susan B. Anthony’s chief political strategist. “Anything less than that will not be acceptable and will not be somebody that SBA can support. So, it’s that simple.”

That directive is creating an early litmus test for Republicans considering entering the first presidential election since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark decision that enshrined federal protections for abortion for roughly 50 years. While the hard-line stance could please anti-abortion activists who hold sway in GOP primaries, it could create problems for the party’s eventual nominee in the general election.

Voters protected abortion rights via ballot measures in six states in 2022, including Kansas, a state former President Donald Trump twice won by double-digit margins. AP VoteCast, a survey of the midterm electorate, showed the Supreme Court’s decision was broadly unpopular. About 6 in 10 said they were angry or dissatisfied by it, and roughly the same percentage said they favor a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

Supporters of abortion rights say the issue was a “game changer” that helped Democrats last year and that will motivate voters even more in 2024, after two years of seeing the effects of restrictions.

“We’re in a nation where 18 states have no access to abortion, and that number is not going down. It’s going to go up as additional court cases get decided,” said Jenny Lawson, vice president of organizing and engagement campaigns at Planned Parenthood Action Fund. She predicted people will see headlines “over and over again” about pregnant children forced to travel out of state for abortions or people unable to get proper miscarriage care because doctors are afraid of liability.

Pressure from the anti-abortion movement has put Trump, who announced his third run for the presidency last year, in perhaps the most complicated position.

He is arguably more responsible for the overturning of *Roe* than anyone else, having appointed three anti-abortion Supreme Court justices who backed last year’s ruling. But he has also made clear that he believes pushing any further will hurt Republicans, and he accused anti-abortion leaders of failing to do enough to help GOP candidates in the midterms.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 29 of 84

"I just didn't see them fighting during this last election, fighting for victory," Trump said in an interview with David Brody, a longtime commentator for the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Trump, who described himself as "very pro-choice" before entering politics, stressed that objecting to exceptions for rape, incest and the life of the mother makes it "much harder to win elections." He has criticized evangelical leaders who have been slow to endorse his latest run, blasting decisions by pastors like Robert Jeffress to wait to assess the rest of the field as "a sign of disloyalty."

Cannon called the notion that opposing abortion hurt the GOP last year "absolutely absurd," pointing to candidates like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis — a top potential GOP presidential candidate — who easily won reelection. DeSantis signed into law last year a ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The Republican candidates who got "clobbered," Cannon said, were those who tried to avoid the topic. "What you have to do is argue for protections that the American people see as reasonable versus the extremism of no exceptions, even late-term abortion," Cannon said. "And if you do that, it's a winning combination."

SBA Pro-Life America, which raised over \$60 million for 2020 campaigns along with its affiliated super PAC, is talking with each potential candidate, Cannon said. While records are being discussed, what matters in 2024 is what policies the candidates prioritize when they announce their bids. SBA's specific request is to support "at a minimum" a "heartbeat bill" or "pain-capable" bill, he said.

The heartbeat bill would make abortion illegal after cardiac activity is detected, which occurs at roughly six weeks of pregnancy — before some women know they're pregnant. Legislation that references the fetus feeling pain, such as a measure introduced last year by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., would ban the procedure at around 15 weeks. Graham's bill didn't advance in the Democratic-controlled chamber, and even some fellow Republicans distanced themselves from it ahead of the midterms.

Trump's stance has provided an opening on the right for potential rivals like former Vice President Mike Pence and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, both of whom are evangelical Christians with long-held anti-abortion stances.

Pence has spent months visiting so-called crisis pregnancy centers that counsel women against abortions. And he has embarked on a tour of megachurches, including Jeffress' First Baptist Church in Dallas, and spoken before major anti-abortion groups.

His advocacy group, Advancing American Freedom, has pushed for Congress to pass legislation including a national abortion ban beginning around six weeks of pregnancy and a bill that would establish legal personhood at conception. Marc Short, Pence's former chief of staff and longtime adviser, said that when it comes to declared and potential 2024 candidates, "I see him as the most comfortable explaining his pro-life convictions and the basis for them."

For Pence, he said, the issue is about much more than politics.

"Mike does it because this is core to the reason that he ran for office and won for the first time. It's always been for him a top issue and it's a priority," he said.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, is another potential candidate who signed abortion prohibitions into law in her state. The 2016 law bans abortion at 20 weeks of pregnancy and includes an exception if the mother's life is in jeopardy but not for cases of rape or incest.

After the Supreme Court's decision, Haley said states, and not "unelected justices," should control abortion policy. That position puts her at odds with SBA and other anti-abortion groups.

Others see abortion as a potential vulnerability for DeSantis. A spokesperson for South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who is also exploring a potential run, recently unloaded on DeSantis, questioning where he stands on the issue.

"Governor Noem was the only Governor in America on national television defending the Dobbs decision," Ian Fury wrote in an email to the National Review. "Where was Governor DeSantis? Hiding behind a 15-week ban. Does he believe that 14-week-old babies don't have a right to live?"

Cannon stressed that those in the anti-abortion movement are the "foot soldiers" of the Republican Party

during elections and comprise a huge percentage of primary voters.

"No Republican candidate can win the presidency without the backing of the pro-life movement," he said.

'Dances With Wolves' actor arrested in Nevada sex abuse case

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

NORTH LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas police on Tuesday arrested and raided the home of a former "Dances With Wolves" actor turned alleged cult leader accused of sexually assaulting young Indigenous girls during a period spanning two decades, according to police records obtained by The Associated Press.

Nathan Lee Chasing His Horse, who goes by Nathan Chasing Horse, was taken into custody in the afternoon near the North Las Vegas home he is said to share with his five wives. SWAT officers were seen outside the two-story home in the evening as detectives searched the property.

Known for his role as the young Sioux tribe member Smiles a Lot in the Oscar-winning Kevin Costner film, Chasing Horse gained a reputation among tribes across the United States and in Canada as a so-called medicine man who performed healing ceremonies and spiritual gatherings and, police allege, used his position to abuse young Native American girls.

His arrest is the culmination of a monthslong investigation that began after police received a tip in October 2022. According to a 50-page search warrant obtained by AP, Chasing Horse is believed to be the leader of a cult known as The Circle.

And it comes as state attorneys general and lawmakers around the U.S. are looking into creating specialized units to handle cases involving Native women.

In South Dakota, the attorney general's office has put a new focus on crimes against Native American people, including human trafficking and murders.

According to the document, Las Vegas police have identified at least six alleged victims and uncovered sexual allegations against Chasing Horse dating to the early 2000s in multiple states, including Montana, South Dakota and Nevada, where he has lived for about a decade.

There was no lawyer listed in court records for Chasing Horse who could comment on his behalf as of Tuesday evening.

Chasing Horse was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, which is home to the Sicangu Sioux, one of the seven tribes of the Lakota nation.

According to the warrant, he was banished in 2015 from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, amid allegations of human trafficking.

"Nathan Chasing Horse used spiritual traditions and their belief system as a tool to sexually assault young girls on numerous occasions," it reads, adding that his followers believed he could communicate with higher beings and referred to him as "Medicine Man" or "Holy Person."

Although the warrant includes details of crimes reported elsewhere, the arrest stems from crimes allegedly committed in Nevada's Clark County. They include sex trafficking, sexual assault of a child younger than 16 and child abuse.

Some of the alleged victims were as young as 13, according to the warrant. One of Chasing Horse's wives was allegedly offered to him as a "gift" when she was 15, while another became a wife after turning 16.

Chasing Horse also is accused of recording sexual assaults and arranging sex with the victims for other men who allegedly paid him.

S. Dakota lawmakers push bill to bar transgender youth care

By AMANCAI BIRABEN Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state House committee voted Tuesday to advance a bill that would ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth in South Dakota.

Supporters argued a bill barring youth from accessing puberty blockers, hormones and surgery would protect adolescents from irreversible damage, while opponents argued it only blocks them from becoming

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 31 of 84

their authentic selves.

Republican Rep. Bethany Soye's bill passed through a House committee on health and human services Tuesday morning with a dominant vote from Republicans. Despite testimonies from health care providers, legal advocates and transgender youth, the bill will move on to a vote in the Republican-dominated House. Soye said she had Gov. Kristi Noem's support for the bill, which targets transgender individuals below the age of 18.

After nearly two hours of discussion, all eight Republicans on the committee voted for the bill, while the only two Democrats opposed it, adding South Dakota to the list of at least 18 other states pushing legislation to block transgender youth health care this year.

Utah's Republican governor signed a ban on gender-affirming care last week, and similar bans have passed in Arkansas and Alabama, but they are being challenged in court.

Testifiers in support of the bill spoke from personal experience, either as patients who regretted decisions to undergo surgery as young adults experiencing gender dysphoria, or as doctors who argued "normal" puberty was a "cure" for gender dysphoria.

Don Oliver, a retired pediatrician from Rapid City, said he disagreed with guidance from leading medical associations — such as the American Medical Association — that support gender-affirming care as medically necessary.

"We as a profession have lost our way, lost our bearing, lost our anchor," Oliver said.

Opponents criticized the bill on the grounds of overreach into healthcare concerns between patients and doctors, and for infringing on civil rights.

"Gender-affirming care is part of comprehensive primary care," said Daniel Heinemann, chief officer of Sanford Health and chair of South Dakota's American Academy of Family Physicians. "Family physicians are deeply concerned by the growing trend of recent legislative efforts to criminalize care directed at specific patient hospitalizations."

Heinemann said gender diversity is a normal part of the human existence.

Samantha Chapman, a member of the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said, "It is impossible to discriminate against a person for being transgender without discriminating against that individual based on sex."

Soye raised this bill as a matter of consent. She compared a child's inability to consent to gender affirmation procedures to their inability to consent to purchasing cigarettes, drinking alcohol or joining the military. She also questioned the health care profession, saying, "the fact is the medical community can get things wrong."

Opponents to the bill noted that a young person's decision-making is heavily factored into the procedure of certifying treatment.

Dr. Anne Dilenschneider, a mental health care provider with New Idea Counseling, said gender dysphoria diagnoses take months. The process factors in a child's social skills, emotional skills, medical history and disabilities before addressing gender, and that involves reports from teachers and other certified adults close to the patient.

"This experience of gender dysphoria or gender incongruence has to be marked and sustained over time, and that means years. This wasn't a kid who was on TikTok and says, 'Hi, I'm trans,'" Dilenschneider said.

She added that the bill's misinformed language, such as "chemical castration," upset her most.

Other opponents included 16-year-old Elliot Morehead of Sioux Falls, who skipped their physics test to testify at the Capitol.

"I'm transgender and I'm proud," Morehead said.

Morehead told the committee it took six months of therapy to receive a referral to simply discuss hormone therapy and other affirming treatments. They said telling children to grow out of gender dysphoria is like telling someone struggling with depression to "just be happy."

Democratic Reps. Kameron Nelson and Erin Healy opposed the bill for sex-based discrimination. They cautioned fellow voters the bill would cost the state and taxpayers millions of dollars spent in litigating a complete ruling.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 32 of 84

Morehead was also disappointed in the committee's ruling but said they would remain optimistic. Despite having discussed leaving the state to pursue healthcare available to them, they want to keep up the fight. "If we leave, the next generation is left behind," Morehead said. "That's why I'm staying here and continuing to fight."

Russia focuses on eastern Ukraine for possible new offensive

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia is mustering its military might in the Luhansk region of Ukraine, local officials said Wednesday, in what Kyiv suspects is preparation for an offensive in the eastern area in coming weeks as the anniversary of Moscow's invasion approaches.

The Kremlin's forces are expelling local residents from their homes near the Russian-held parts of the front line so that they can't provide information about Russian troop deployments to Ukrainian artillery, Luhansk Gov. Serhii Haidai said.

"There is an active transfer of (Russian troops) to the region and they are definitely preparing for something on the eastern front in February," Haidai said.

Military analysts anticipate a new push soon by Moscow's forces, with the Institute for the Study of War saying in an assessment late Tuesday that "an imminent Russian offensive in the coming months is the most likely course of action."

A new offensive might also coincide with the invasion anniversary on Feb. 24.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported Wednesday that Russia is also concentrating its efforts in neighboring Donetsk province, especially in its bid to capture the key city of Bakhmut.

Donetsk and Luhansk provinces make up the Donbas, an industrial region bordering Russia that President Vladimir Putin identified as a goal from the war's outset and where Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian authorities since 2014.

The regional governor of Donetsk, Pavlo Kyrylenko, posted images of the aftermath of the shelling in Bakhmut, showing huge black holes in residential buildings in the embattled city.

He said that Russia is "actively deploying new military personnel to the region."

Donetsk was one of four provinces that Russia illegally annexed in the fall, but it controls only about half of it. To take the remaining half, Russian forces have no choice but to go through Bakhmut, which offers the only approach to bigger Ukrainian-held cities.

Russian forces have been trying for months to capture Bakhmut. Moscow-installed authorities in Donetsk claimed Russian troops are "closing the ring" around the city.

Russian shelling of Bakhmut, where most residents have fled and others spend much of their time in cellars, killed at least five civilians and wounded 10 others on Tuesday, Ukraine's presidential office said Wednesday.

Ukraine is keen to secure more Western military aid as it tries to fend off the much larger Russian forces. It has already won pledges of tanks and now wants more.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, tweeted Wednesday that talks are underway on securing longer-range missiles and fighter jets from Ukraine's allies.

Asked to comment on media reports about a new package of U.S. military assistance to Ukraine expected to be announced soon, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described it as "a direct path to inciting tensions and taking the escalation to a new level."

"It will require additional efforts on our part, but it won't change the course of events," he said in a conference call with reporters.

The Western allies are trying to broaden their coalition in support of Ukraine.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday in Tokyo that he sought stronger cooperation and more "friends" for the alliance in the Indo-Pacific region.

Peshawar, the city of flowers, becomes epicenter of violence

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 33 of 84

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan's Peshawar was once known as "the city of flowers," surrounded by orchards of pear, quince and pomegranate trees. It was a trading city, situated at the gates of a key mountain valley connecting South and Central Asia.

But for the past four decades, it has borne the brunt of rising militancy in the region, fueled by the conflicts in neighboring Afghanistan and the geopolitical games of great powers.

On Tuesday, the city with a population of about 2 million was reeling after one of Pakistan's most devastating militant attacks in years. A day earlier, a suicide bomber unleashed a blast in a mosque inside the city's main police compound, killing at least 101 people and wounding at least 225, mostly police.

Analysts say the carnage is the legacy of decades of flawed policies by Pakistan and the United States. "What you sow, so shall you reap," said Abdullah Khan, a senior security analyst.

Peshawar was a peaceful place, he said, until the early 1980s when Pakistan's then-dictator Ziaul Haq decided to become part of Washington's cold war with Moscow, joining the fight against the 1979 Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan.

Peshawar — less than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Afghan border — became the center where the American CIA and Pakistani military helped train, arm and fund the Afghan mujahedeen fighting the Soviets. The city was flooded by weapons and fighters, many of them hard-line Islamic militants, as well as with hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees.

Arab militants were also drawn there by the fight against the Soviets, including the scion of a wealthy Saudi family, Osama bin Laden. It was in Peshawar that bin Laden founded al-Qaida in the late 1980s, joining forces with veteran Egyptian militant Ayman al-Zawahri.

The Soviets finally withdrew in defeat from Afghanistan in 1989. But the legacy of militancy and armed resistance that the U.S. and Pakistan fueled against them remained.

"After the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1980s, Americans abandoned mujahedeen, Americans even abandoned us, and since then we are paying a price for it," said Mahmood Shah, a former Pakistani army brigadier and a senior security analyst.

The mujahedeen plunged Afghanistan into civil war in a bloody fight for power. Meanwhile, in Peshawar and another Pakistani city, Quetta, the Afghan Taliban began to organize, with backing from the Pakistani government. Eventually, the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, ruling until they were ousted by the 2001 American-led invasion following al-Qaida's 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

During the nearly 20-year U.S. war against the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, militant groups blossomed in the tribal regions of Pakistan along the border and around Peshawar. Like the Taliban, they found root among the ethnic Pashtuns who make up a majority in the region and in the city.

Some groups were encouraged by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. But others turned their guns against the government, angered by heavy security crackdowns and by frequent U.S. airstrikes in the border region targeting al-Qaida and other militants.

Chief among the anti-government groups was the Pakistani Taliban, or Tahreek-e Taliban-Pakistani, or TTP. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, it waged a brutal campaign of violence around the country. Peshawar was scene of one of the bloodiest TTP attacks in 2014, on an army-run public school that killed nearly 150 people, most of them schoolboys.

Peshawar's location has for centuries made it a key juncture between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. One of the oldest cities in Asia, it stands at the entrance to the Khyber Pass, the main route between the two regions. That was a source of its prosperity in trade and put it on the path of armies going both directions, from Moghul emperors to British imperialists.

A heavy military offensive largely put down the TTP for several years and the government and the militants eventually reached an uneasy truce. Peshawar came under heavy security control, with checkpoints dotting the main roads, and a heavy presence of police and paramilitary troops.

TTP attacks, however, have grown once more since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in Kabul in August 2021 amid the U.S. and NATO withdrawal from that country. The Pakistani Taliban are distinct from but allied to the Afghan group, and Pakistani officials regularly accuse the Afghan Taliban of giving

the TTP free rein to operate from Afghan territory.

On Wednesday, several police officers joined a peace march organized by the members of civil society groups in Peshawar, denouncing militant attacks and demanding peace in the country. Police said they made some arrest in connection with Monday's mosque bombing but did not provide details.

Ahead of Monday's suicide bombing, Peshawar had seen increasing small-scale attacks targeting police. In another spillover from Afghanistan's conflict, the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group attacked Peshawar's main Shiite mosque in March 2022, killing more than 60 people.

Shah, the former officer, warned that more TTP attacks could follow and said that Pakistan needs to engage the Afghan Taliban and pressure them to either evict the TTP or ensure it doesn't launch attacks from Afghan territory.

"If we are to have peace in Pakistan, we should talk to TTP from the position of strength with help from the Afghan Taliban," he said. "This is the best and viable solution to avoid more violence."

Before a crowd of 1 million, Pope urges Congolese to forgive

By NICOLE WINFIELD, CHRISTINA MALKIA and JEAN-YVES KAMALE Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Pope Francis urged Congo's people on Wednesday to forgive those who have harmed them as he presided over a Mass before an estimated 1 million people in a country wracked by decades of violence.

Many of the faithful spent the night on the vast airfields of the capital's Ndolo airport and passed the hours before Francis' arrival singing, dancing and getting jazzed up for the pontiff's first main event of his trip to Africa. His is the first papal visit to the country since St. John Paul II's in 1985.

The crowd cheered wildly when Francis began a languid loop around the airfields in his open-sided popemobile, as some people ran alongside or waved flags. Many of the women wore dresses and skirts made of pagne, a wax print fabric, featuring images of Francis or other religious symbols.

"Today I understand the enthusiasm of my grandmother when Pope John Paul II came," said Julie Mbuyi, a 45-year-old mother of two who was wearing a Francis-themed outfit. "She was so excited to see him and the night before she couldn't close her eyes!"

The crowd cheered again when the Argentine pope greeted them in Lingala, one of four national languages of Congo that is widely spoken in the capital, Kinshasa. And they listened attentively as he urged them in his homily to open their hearts to forgiveness, citing the example of Christ who forgave those who betrayed him.

"He showed them his wounds because forgiveness is born from wounds," Francis said. "It is born when our wounds do not leave scars of hatred, but become the means by which we make room for others and accept their weaknesses. Our weakness becomes an opportunity, and forgiveness becomes the path to peace."

Referring to the decades of violence especially in Congo's east that has forced millions to flee their homes, Francis stressed that forgiving doesn't mean pretending that nothing bad has happened. But he said the act of forgiveness creates an "amnesty of the heart."

"What great good it does us to cleanse our hearts of anger and remorse, of every trace of resentment and hostility!" he said.

The morning Mass was Francis' first big event in Congo after he arrived Tuesday. In his opening speech to government authorities, he condemned the centurieslong plundering of Africa's mineral and natural wealth by foreign powers.

Later Wednesday, Francis was to meet with victims of the fighting in Congo's east, where rebel groups have intensified attacks over the past year as they seek to expand their territory. At the meeting, people who have suffered unspeakable atrocities are expected to tell their stories.

Francis had originally planned to visit the eastern province of North Kivu but had to cancel the stop due to the fighting that has forced some 5.7 million people to flee their homes, exacerbating a humanitarian

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 35 of 84

crisis in Congo, where already some 26.4 million people face hunger, according to the World Food Program.

"When we heard that Pope Francis was no longer coming to our province of North Kivu, my husband and I decided to come all the way to Kinshasa to see and hear him," said Jeanne Kahota as she waited for the Mass to begin. She said she was old enough to remember John Paul's visit, but wasn't able to follow it closely.

"That's why we said to ourselves that this kind of appointment doesn't happen every day, it's exceptional and we didn't want to miss it again."

Roughly half of Congo's 105 million people are Catholic, according to Vatican statistics.

Fighting in eastern Congo, which has more than 120 armed groups, has simmered for years but spiked in late 2021 with the resurgence of the M23 group that had been largely dormant for nearly a decade. The rebels have captured swaths of land and are accused by the United Nations and rights groups of committing atrocities against civilians.

Francis on Tuesday condemned the fighting and planned to repeat his call for peace during his meeting with victims of the conflict. The victims were also expected to participate in a ceremony to forgive their assailants, according to Vatican organizers.

The Vatican estimated that 1 million people were on hand for Francis' Mass on Wednesday, citing local organizers. The airport's fields have a capacity of 1.5 million people and were not full by the time the Mass began.

Among the faithful was Clément Konde, who travelled from Kisantu, a town in the province of Central Kongo, more than 150 kilometers (95 miles) from Kinshasa. He planned to participate in all of Francis' events this week before the pontiff heads to South Sudan, the second leg of his African journey.

"To my children and to the children who stayed in my city, I will bring them the message of the Holy Father, the message of peace and reconciliation," Konde said.

Powell likely to stress Fed's inflation fight far from over

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation is cooling, and parts of the economy appear to be weakening. But Chair Jerome Powell is likely Wednesday to underscore that the Federal Reserve's primary focus remains the need to fight surging prices with still-higher interest rates.

With financial markets anticipating that the Fed will stop raising rates soon and possibly even cut them later this year, analysts say Powell will need to push back against such optimism. If financial markets expect lower rates than what the Fed plans to deliver, the central bank's already treacherous task can become even harder.

Powell's tough message will likely emerge at a news conference after the Fed's 19-member policy committee announces its latest action. The policymakers are set to raise their benchmark rate by a quarter-point to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%, its highest level in about 15 years. The move could further increase borrowing rates for consumers as well as companies, ranging from mortgages to auto and business loans.

In some ways, the Fed's challenge is trickier than it was last year, when inflation accelerated much faster than officials had expected. After being caught off guard — Powell had initially characterized high inflation as only a temporary phenomenon — officials developed a clear view of what was needed: An aggressive series of rate hikes to slow borrowing and spending, cool growth and curb high inflation.

Now, though, inflation has weakened since the fall. As a result, the risks that the Fed's rate hikes could send the economy into a painful recession, with waves of job losses, are rising. Consumer prices, by the Fed's preferred measure, have risen at just a 2.9% annual rate in the past three months. Yet Fed officials have said they would need to see further evidence that inflation was declining closer to its 2% target before they would consider suspending their rate hikes.

The latest sign that inflation is cooling came Tuesday in a report that showed wage growth slowed in the final three months of last year for a third straight quarter. That report could reassure Fed officials that rising paychecks are now less likely to fuel inflation.

Over the past year, with businesses offering healthy raises to try to attract and keep enough workers, Powell has expressed concern that hefty pay growth in the labor-intensive service sector would keep inflation too high. Businesses typically pass their increased labor costs on to their customers by charging higher prices, thereby perpetuating inflation pressures.

Some economists think the Fed doesn't need to push rates much higher — and that doing so would heighten the risk of a deep recession. Economists at Morgan Stanley suggest that as inflation continues to ease in the coming months, Wednesday's rate hike will end up being the last one this year.

The Fed could signal that a pause in rate hikes is on the horizon by changing some language in the statement it issues after each policy meeting.

Since March, the statement has said that "ongoing increases in the (interest rate) target range will be appropriate." Some economists expect officials to slightly alter that part of the statement to make it a less specific commitment and give the Fed more flexibility.

Still, Powell isn't likely to signal that a pause in rate increases will occur anytime soon, out of concern that such a message could touch off rallies in stocks and bonds. Those trends could boost the economy — and inflation — by giving consumers more money to spend and encouraging people and businesses to borrow more. That's just the opposite of what the Fed wants.

"He's got to put a hawkish tint to everything he says," said Vincent Reinhart, chief economist at Dreyfus and Mellon and a former top Fed staffer. (In Fed parlance, "hawks" typically favor higher rates to control inflation, while "doves" often lean toward lower rates to support employment.)

"Everybody is basically saying, 'Hey, Chair Powell, let's do your victory lap,'" Reinhart said. "And he's like, 'We're only where we are because of our vigilance, and we can't let it down now.'"

Financial markets have strengthened in anticipation of lower rates ahead. In December, Fed officials had forecast that they would raise their key rate above 5%. Investors, though, expect them to stop at a range of 4.75% to 5% and to end up cutting rates before the year is out. That's true even though Powell has gone out of his way to stress that the Fed doesn't expect to cut rates this year.

The divide between the Fed and financial markets is important because rate hikes need to work through markets to affect the economy. The Fed directly controls its key short-term rate. But it has only indirect control over the borrowing rates that people and businesses actually pay — for mortgages, corporate bonds, auto loans and many others.

The consequences can be seen in housing. The average fixed rate on a 30-year mortgage soared after the Fed first began hiking rates. Eventually, it topped 7%, more than twice where it had stood before the hiking began.

Yet since the fall, the average mortgage rate has eased to 6.13%, the lowest level since September. And while home sales fell further in December, a measure of signed contracts to buy homes actually rose. That suggested that lower rates might be luring some home buyers back to the market.

Broader measures of so-called "financial conditions," which include things like corporate borrowing costs, also show looser credit.

India's finance minister announces new clean energy funds

Associated Press undefined

BENGALURU, India (AP) — Indian finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced several new clean energy initiatives in the government's annual federal budget speech on Wednesday, saying "green growth" is a top priority for the country.

More than \$8 billion dollars were announced for projects like mangrove restoration which help suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, converting waste into biogas and speeding up renewable energy initiatives. But details of how the funds will be spent are yet to be disclosed.

The minister said the injection of 35,000 crore rupees (\$4.3 billion) into India's energy transition will be channeled through the ministry of petroleum and natural gas to help India reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2070. India is currently the world's third highest-emitting nation.

The new funds form part of the government's \$550 billion budget aimed at ramping up spending to spur economic growth and create jobs ahead of the general election next year. Sitharaman mentioned the scaling up of clean energy for the economy and jobs within the first few minutes of her speech.

Sitharaman also proposed government incentives for energy storage systems in India that would aid round-the-clock renewable energy use and announced a new framework for pumped storage systems for hydropower.

She set out an additional 20,700 crore rupees (\$ 2.5 billion) to facilitate new clean energy production in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, where electricity grid infrastructure remains a key sticking point.

Other programs to incentivize the use of alternative, less-polluting fertilizers and to cut down on chemical fertilizers were also announced, but details of how much will be spent were unclear.

Import taxes for components required to produce lithium-ion batteries, a key component in many electric vehicles, will be slashed, Sitharaman said. But no exemption was provided for protective taxes in the solar power sector.

The budget will now be debated by both houses of parliament before it can be enacted, which is likely to happen as Modi's party holds a strong majority.

The move toward clean energy and away from fossil fuels has increasingly become a priority for India and nations around the world as countries try and limit global warming.

India's government recently announced a green hydrogen initiative for clean fuel and a climate action program to encourage more sustainable lifestyles. But the country is still heavily dependent on planet-warming coal burning for its energy needs.

Family of Tyre Nichols prepares to lay him to rest

By AARON MORRISON and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The family of Tyre Nichols plans to lay him to rest on Wednesday, three weeks after he died following a brutal beating by Memphis police after a traffic stop.

In those three weeks, five police officers have been fired and charged with murder, and their specialized unit was disbanded. Two more officers have been suspended. Also fired: two Memphis Fire Department emergency medical workers and a lieutenant. And more discipline could be coming.

But Wednesday will be about Nichols, 29-year-old skateboarder and amateur photographer who worked making boxes at FedEx, made friends during morning visits to Starbucks, and always greeted his mother and step-father when he returned home with a sunny, "Hello, parents!"

Nichols was the baby of their family, born 12 years after his closest siblings. He had a 4-year-old son and worked hard to better himself as a father, his family said.

Nichols grew up in Sacramento, California, and loved the San Francisco 49ers. He came to Memphis just before the coronavirus pandemic and got stuck. But he was fine with it because he was with his mother, RowVaughn Wells, and they were incredibly close, she said. He even had her name tattooed on his arm.

Friends at a memorial service last week described him as joyful and kind, quick with a smile, often silly. "This man walked into a room, and everyone loved him," said Angelina Paxton, a friend who traveled to Memphis from California for the memorial service.

Nichols' funeral will be held at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, beginning at 10:30 a.m. CST. The Rev. Al Sharpton, founder and president of the National Action Network, will deliver the eulogy. Ben Crump, a national civil rights attorney who represents the Nichols family, will deliver a call to action.

Sharpton gathered Nichols' family and local activists on Tuesday evening at Mason Temple Church of God in Christ in Memphis. The historic landmark is where the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his final speech the night before he was assassinated nearly 55 years ago.

Sharpton said the family intended to have a "dignified funeral service, not a marathon."

"This is not about politics, it's about justice," the reverend said. "People are coming from all over the world, and we are coming because we're all Tyre, now."

Those expected to be in attendance include Vice President Kamala Harris; Tamika Palmer, the mother

of Breonna Taylor; and Philonise Floyd, the brother of George Floyd.

The deaths of Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, and Floyd in Minneapolis, at the hands of police sparked protests across the nation about racial injustice.

Radioactive capsule that fell off truck found in Australia

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Authorities in Western Australia on Wednesday recovered a tiny but dangerous radioactive capsule that fell off a truck while being transported along a 1,400-kilometer (870-mile) Outback highway last month in what an official said was like finding the needle in the haystack.

Officials said the capsule the size of a pea was found south of the mining town of Newman on the Great Northern Highway. It was detected by a search vehicle travelling at 70 kilometers (43 miles) per hour when specialist equipment picked up radiation emitting from the capsule.

Portable search equipment was then used to locate it 2 meters (6.5 feet) from the side of the road.

"This is an extraordinary result ... they have quite literally found the needle in the haystack," said Emergency Services Minister Stephen Dawson.

Chief Health Officer Andy Robertson said the capsule did not appear to have moved and no injuries had been reported.

It contains the caesium 137 ceramic source, commonly used in radiation gauges, which emits dangerous amounts of radiation, equivalent of receiving 10 X-rays in an hour. It could cause skin burns and prolonged exposure could cause cancer.

Search crews had spent six days scouring the entire length of the highway.

The capsule measures 8 millimeters by 6 millimeters (0.31 inches by 0.24 inches), and people have been warned it could have unknowingly become lodged in their car's tires.

A government investigation has been launched into how the capsule fell off the truck and a report will be provided to the health minister.

Defense officials were verifying the identification of the capsule, which has been placed into a lead container for safety. It will be stored in a secure location in Newman before being transported to a health facility in the city of Perth.

The capsule got lost while being transported between a desert mine site and Perth on Jan. 10. The truck transporting the capsule arrived at a Perth depot on Jan. 16. Emergency services were notified of the missing capsule on Jan. 25.

The chief executive of the mining giant Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Simon Trott, has apologized for the incident and expressed gratitude for the find.

"A pretty incredible recovery when you think of the distances involved, and also the remoteness of the terrain, and I think that really speaks to the tenacity of all those who were involved in the search," Trott said.

"The simple fact is this device should never have been lost. We're sorry that that has occurred and we're sorry for the concern that that has caused within the Western Australian community," Trott added.

Robertson said the investigation of the mishap could lead to a prosecution.

"We have the ability to prosecute under the Radiation Safety Act and we will certainly look at such prosecutions, and we've done that in the past," Robertson said.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said a 1,000 Australian dollar (\$708) fine was an inadequate maximum penalty for mishandling radioactive material.

"It shouldn't have been lost, that's the first thing. And second, yeah of course that figure is ridiculously low," Albanese said.

Dawson said the state government was reviewing the penalties under the Radiation Safety Act.

War's longest battle exacts high price in 'heart of Ukraine'

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 39 of 84

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — It used to be that visitors would browse through Bakhmut's late 19th century buildings, enjoy their walks in its rose-lined lakeside park and revel in the sparkling wines produced in historic underground caves. This city of salt and gypsum mines located around 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Russia's border was once a popular tourist destination in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province.

No more. The longest battle of the war in Ukraine has turned Bakhmut into a ghost city. Despite bombing, shelling and attempts to encircle the city for six months, Russia's forces have not conquered it. But their scorched-earth tactics have made it impossible for civilians to have any semblance of life there.

"It's hell on earth right now; I can't find enough words to describe it," said Ukrainian soldier Petro Voloschenko, whose military call-sign is Stone, his voice rising with emotion and resentment.

Voloschenko, who is originally from Kyiv, arrived in the area in August when the Russian assault started and has since celebrated his birthday, Christmas and New Year's there. The 44-year-old saw the city gradually turned into ruins, a wasteland of damaged buildings. Most of the houses are crushed, without roofs, ceilings, windows or doors, making them uninhabitable, he said.

Out of a prewar population of 80,000, a few thousand residents remain. They rarely see daylight because they spend most of their time in basements sheltering from the ferocious fighting around and above them. The city constantly shudders to the muffled sound of explosions, the whizzing of mortars and a constant sound track of artillery. Anywhere is a potential target.

The deterioration started during the summer after Russia took the last major city in neighboring Luhansk province. It then poured troops and equipment into capturing Bakhmut, and Ukraine did the same to defend it. For Russia, the city was one stepping stone toward its goal of seizing the remaining Ukrainian-held territory in Donetsk.

From trenches outside the city, the two sides dug in for what turned into an exhausting standoff as Ukraine clawed back territory to the north and south and Russian airstrikes across the country targeted power plants and other infrastructure.

The months of battle exhausted both armies. In the fall, Russia changed tactics and sent in foot soldiers instead of probing the front line mainly with artillery, according to Voloschenko.

Mykola Bielieskov, a research fellow at Ukraine's National Institute for Strategic Studies, said the least-trained Russians go first to force the Ukrainians to open fire and expose the strengths and weaknesses of their defense.

More trained units or mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a private Russian military company led by a rogue millionaire and known for its brutality, make up the rear guard, Bielieskov said.

The Institute for the Study of War recently reported that Wagner forces have sustained more than 4,100 dead and 10,000 wounded, including over 1,000 killed between late November and early December near Bakhmut. The numbers are impossible to verify.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in his recent address, described the situation in Bakhmut as "very tough."

"These are constant Russian assaults. Constant attempts to break through our defenses" he said, Bielieskov said that Ukraine compensates for its lack of heavy equipment with people who are ready to stand to the last.

"Lightly armed, without sufficient artillery support, which they cannot always be provided, they stand and hold off attacks as long as possible," he said.

The result is that the battle is believed to have produced horrific troop losses for both Ukraine and Russia. Quite how deadly isn't known: Neither side is saying.

"Manpower is less of a Russian problem and, in some ways, more of a Ukrainian problem, not only because the casualties are painful, but they're often ... Ukraine's best troops," said Lawrence Freedman, a professor emeritus of war studies at King's College London.

Like Mariupol — the port city in the same province that Russia eventually captured after an 82-day siege that eventually came down to a mammoth steel mill where determined Ukrainian fighters held out along with civilians — Bakhmut has taken on almost mythic importance to its defenders.

"Bakhmut has already become a symbol of Ukrainian invincibility," Voloschenko said. "Bakhmut is the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 40 of 84

heart of Ukraine, and the future peace of those cities that are no longer under occupation depends on the rhythm with which it beats.”

Donetsk was one of four provinces Russia illegally annexed in the fall, but it only controls about half of it. To take the remaining half, Russian forces have no choice but to go through Bakhmut, which offers the only approach to bigger Ukrainian-held cities since Ukrainian troops took back IZUM in Kharkiv province in September, according to Bielieskov.

“Without seizure of these cities, the Russian army won’t be able to accomplish the political task it was given,” Bielieskov said.

For now, Bakhmut remains completely under the control of the Ukrainian army, albeit more as a fortress than a place where people would visit, work or love. This month, the Russians seized the town of Soledar, located less than 20 kilometers (some 12 miles) away, but their advance is very slow, according to military analysts.

“These are rates of advancement that do not allow us to talk about serious offensive actions. It’s a slow pushing out at a very high price,” Bielieskov said.

Along the front line on the Ukrainian side, emergency medical units provide urgent care to battlefield casualties. From 50 to 170 wounded Ukrainian soldiers pass daily through just one of the several stabilization points along the Donetsk front line, according to Tetiana Ivanchenko, who has volunteered in eastern Ukraine since a Russia-backed separatist conflict started there in 2014.

After its setbacks in Kharkiv and Kherson province in the south, the Kremlin is hungry for any success, even if it is just seizing a town or two that have been pounded into rubble. Freedman, the King’s College London professor emeritus, said the loss of Bakhmut would be a blow for Ukraine and offer tactical advantages to Russian forces, but wouldn’t prove decisive to the outcome of the war.

There would have been more value for Russia if it could have captured a populated and intact Bakhmut early on in the war, but now the capture would just give its forces options on how to seize more of Donetsk, said Freedman.

A 22-year-old Ukrainian soldier who goes by the call-sign Desiatyi, or Tenth, joined the army on the day that Russia started the full-scale war in Ukraine. After months spent defending the Bakhmut area, losing many comrades, he said he has no regrets.

“It is not about comparing the price and losses on both sides. It’s about the fact that, yes, Ukrainians are dying, but they are dying because of a specific goal,” said Desiatyi, who did not give his real name for security reasons.

“Ukraine has no choice but to defend every inch of its land. The country must defend itself, especially now, so zealously, so firmly, and desperately. This is what will help us liberate our occupied territories in the future.”

Myanmar resistance steadfast against army rule 2 years later

By GRANT PECK and JERRY HARMER Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The prospects for peace in Myanmar, much less a return to democracy, seem dimmer than ever two years after the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, experts say.

On Wednesday, legions of opponents of military rule heeded a call by protest organizers to stay home in what they call a “silent strike” to show their strength and solidarity.

The opposition’s General Strike Coordination Body, formed soon after the 2021 takeover, urged people to stay inside in their homes or workplaces from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Photos posted on social media showed empty streets in the normally bustling downtown area of Yangon, the country’s largest city, with just a few vehicles on the roads, and there were reports of similar scenes elsewhere.

Small peaceful protests are an almost-daily occurrence throughout the country, but on the anniversary of the Feb. 1, 2021, seizure of power by the army, two points stand out: The level of violence, especially in the countryside, has reached the level of civil war; and the grassroots movement opposing military rule

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 41 of 84

has defied expectations by largely holding off the ruling generals.

The violence extends beyond the rural battlefields where the army is burning and bombing villages, displacing hundreds of thousands of people in what is a largely neglected humanitarian crisis. It also occurs in the cities, where activists are arrested and tortured and urban guerrillas retaliate with bombings and assassinations of targets linked to the military. The military, after closed trials, have also executed by hanging activists accused of "terrorism."

According to the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a watchdog group that tracks killings and arrests, 2,940 civilians have been killed by the authorities since the army takeover, and another 17,572 arrested — 13,763 of whom remain detained. The actual death toll is likely to be much higher since the group does not generally include deaths on the side of the military government and cannot easily verify cases in remote areas.

"The level of violence involving both armed combatants and civilians is alarming and unexpected," said Min Zaw Oo, a veteran political activist in exile who founded the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security.

"The scale of the killing and harm inflicted on civilians has been devastating, and unlike anything we have seen in the country in recent memory," he said.

When the army ousted Suu Kyi in 2021, it arrested her and top members of her governing National League for Democracy party, which had won a landslide victory for a second term in a November 2020 general election. The military claimed it acted because there had been massive electoral fraud, a claim not backed up by objective election observers. Suu Kyi, 77, is serving prison sentences totaling 33 years after being convicted in a series of politically tainted prosecutions brought by the military.

Shortly after the military seized power and quashed nonviolent protests with lethal force, thousands of young people slipped away to remote rural areas to become guerrilla fighters.

Operating in decentralized "People's Defense Forces," or PDFs, they are proving to be effective warriors, specializing in ambushes and occasionally overrunning isolated army and police posts. They have benefited greatly from supplies and training provided by the some of the country's ethnic minority rebels — Ethnic Armed Organizations, or EAOs — who have been fighting the army for decades for greater autonomy.

"That's not only a very brave thing to do. It's a very difficult thing to do," Richard Horsey, an independent analyst and adviser to the International Crisis Group, told The Associated Press. "It's a very challenging thing to do, to take on, you know, a military that's been fighting counter-insurgency warfare (for) basically its whole existence."

David Mathieson, another independent analyst with over 20 years' experience in Myanmar, says the opposition's combat capabilities are "a mixed picture in terms of battlefield performance, organization and unity amongst them."

"But it's also important to remember two years in that no one was predicting that they were actually going to be as effective as they are now. And in certain areas, the PDFs have been taking on the Myanmar military and, in many respects, besting them on the battlefield in terms of ambush and pitched battles, taking over bases."

He says the military's heavy weaponry and air power push the situation into a kind of a stalemate where the PDFs are not necessarily taking over large swaths of territory, but fighting back and prevailing.

"So no one's winning at the moment," Mathieson said.

The military government of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has an advantage — not just in arms and trained manpower, but also in geography. Myanmar's main neighbors — Thailand, China and India — have geopolitical and economic interests in Myanmar that leave them satisfied with the status quo, which largely secures its borders from becoming a major supply route for weapons and other supplies for the resistance. And while much of the world maintains sanctions against the generals and their government, they can rely on obtaining arms from Russia and China.

Min Aung Hlaing's government is also nominally pursuing a political solution to the crisis it caused, most notably in its promise to hold fresh elections this year. Suu Kyi's party has rejected taking part, deriding the polls as neither free nor fair, and other activists are employing more direct action, attacking teams

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 42 of 84

from the military government who are conducting surveys to compile voter rolls.

"The regime is pushing for an election which the opposition has vowed to derail," said Min Zaw Oo. "The election won't change the political status quo; instead, it will intensify violence."

The planned polls "are being run by a regime that overturned the popularly elected government. They are clearly being seen by the Myanmar people for what they are: a cynical effort to overwrite those previous election results that gave a landslide victory to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy so these are not elections in any meaningful sense of the word," Horsey said. "They have no legitimacy or credibility."

On the diplomatic front, the military government thumbs its nose at international efforts to defuse the crisis, even those from sympathetic fellow members in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose harshest response has been to not invite Myanmar's top military leaders to attend its meetings.

Myanmar's army government rejects virtually all efforts at peacemaking as interference in its internal affairs.

The resistance, by contrast, actively reaches out for international support. It won small, new diplomatic victories Tuesday as the United States, Australia, Britain and Canada announced new sanctions meant to squeeze the military's revenue and supply lines. The British and Canadian sanctions are especially noteworthy, as they target the supply of aviation fuel, a move activists have been pleading for to counter the increasing number of airstrikes the pro-democracy forces and their allies in ethnic minority rebel groups have been facing in the field.

"Currently, both sides are not ready to seek a political solution," warned Min Zaw Oo. "The military stalemate won't shift significantly this year, despite more deaths and violence."

Connecticut may exonerate accused witches centuries later

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Decades before the infamous Salem witch trials in Massachusetts, Alse Young was killed at the gallows in Connecticut, becoming the first person on record to be executed in the American colonies for witchcraft.

The Windsor town clerk registered the death on May 26, 1647, in a diary entry that read: "Alse Young was hanged." Young was the first of nine women and two men executed by the colony of Connecticut for witchcraft over 15 years, a period during which more than 40 people faced trial for having ties to Satan.

Now, more than 375 years later, amateur historians, researchers and descendants of the accused witches and their accusers hope Connecticut lawmakers will finally offer posthumous exonerations.

While such requests aren't new, they have become louder as many genealogy buffs discover they have distant relatives involved in the lesser-known Connecticut witch trials.

"They're talking about how this has followed their families from generation to generation and that they would love for someone just to say, 'Hey, this was wrong,'" said Connecticut state Rep. Jane Garibay, who proposed an exoneration resolution after receiving letters from eighth- and ninth-generation relatives of accused witches. "And to me, that's an easy thing to do if it gives people peace."

Other states and countries have attempted to atone for a history of persecuting people as witches. Last year, Scotland's prime minister issued a formal apology to the estimated 4,000 Scots, mostly women, who were accused of witchcraft up until 1736. Of the 4,000, about 2,500 were killed. A Scottish member of parliament last year called for posthumously pardoning them.

In 2022, Massachusetts lawmakers formally exonerated Elizabeth Johnson Jr., who was convicted of witchcraft in 1693 and sentenced to death at the height of the Salem Witch Trials. Johnson is believed to be the last accused Salem witch to have her conviction set aside by legislators.

In 2006, former Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine gave an informal pardon to Grace Sherwood, a widowed midwife who was blamed by neighbors for ruining crops, killing livestock and creating storms and subsequently accused of being a witch. With her hands bound, Sherwood was thrown into a river to see if she floated, which was purported to indicate guilt. She managed to set herself free and spent seven years in prison.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 43 of 84

Connecticut's witch trials were held in the mid-to-late 1600s. In each of the New England colonies, witchcraft was considered a capital offense. According to the earliest laws in the colony of Connecticut, "any man or women (to) bee a Witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall bee put to death."

Many historians believe fear and anxiety among the religiously strict English settlers led to the witch trials, noting how life was very difficult, given epidemics, floods, cold winters and starvation. Often, accusations started as a quarrel, or the death of a child or a cow, or even butter that couldn't be churned.

Many of the people executed as witches were poor, single mothers.

Such was the case of Mary Johnson, a servant in Wethersfield, Connecticut, who was accused of "familiarity with the Devil."

For years, she was tortured by a local minister who whipped her until she finally confessed to being a witch and admitted to "uncleanness with men," according to Bridgeport author Andy Piascik, who wrote an article for Connecticut Humanities, an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Johnson is believed to have been hanged after giving birth to the child of a man she was not married to.

"It's important to right the wrongs of the past so we learn from them and move on and not repeat those mistakes," said Joshua Hutchinson, of Prescott Valley, Arizona, who traced his ancestry to accused witches in Salem and is the host of the "Thou Shalt Not Suffer: The Witch Trial Podcast."

He noted that even in recent decades people have been killed in multiple countries because they were suspected of being witches or sorcerers.

Beth Caruso, an author, co-founded the CT Witch Trial Exoneration Project in 2005 to clear the names of the accused. The group is encouraging people who discovered through genealogy research that they are descendants of victims to contact Connecticut state legislators and urge them to support exoneration legislation.

Connecticut state Sen. Saud Anwar, who also proposed an exoneration bill, said he expects some people might laugh or scoff at the idea of the Legislature taking time to clear the records of accused witches. But he said the descendants are feeling some "serious stuff," including a constituent who requested the resolution.

"His wish was that if there was a way to give some kind of a closure to the families," Anwar said, "that would be one way for him to be able to say that he has done his share, even though his ancestors may have not done the right thing."

Palestinians face removal as far-right Israel vows expansion

By ISABEL DEBRE and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

KHAN AL-AHMAR, West Bank (AP) — Protesters streaming up the windswept hills east of Jerusalem interrupted Maha Ali's breakfast.

Palestinian chants of support for her West Bank Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar, at risk of demolition by the Israeli army since it lost its legal protection over four years ago, drowned out the singing birds and bleating sheep.

While intended to encourage the village, last week's solidarity rally unsettled Ali. Israeli politicians assembled on the opposite hill for a counter protest, calling for Khan al-Ahmar's immediate evacuation.

"Why are they all back here now? Did something happen?" Ali asked her sister, gazing toward a swarm of TV journalists. "Four years of quiet and now this chaos again."

The long-running dispute over Khan al-Ahmar has resurfaced as a focus of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a legal deadline looming and Israel's new far-right ministers pushing the government to fulfill a Supreme Court-sanctioned commitment from 2018 to wipe the village off the map. Israel contends that the hamlet, home to nearly 200 Palestinians and an EU-funded school, was built illegally on state land.

For Palestinians, Khan al-Ahmar is emblematic of the latest stage of the decades-long conflict, as thousands of Palestinians struggle for Israeli permission to build in the 60% of the occupied West Bank over which the Israeli military has full control.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 44 of 84

After a spasm of violence last week — including the deadliest Israeli raid in the West Bank for two decades and the deadliest Palestinian attack on civilians in Jerusalem since 2008 — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded Saturday with a vow to strengthen Jewish settlements in the Israeli-controlled part of the West Bank, where little land is allocated to Palestinians.

The competition for land is playing out in the southern Hebron hills — where the Supreme Court has ordered the expulsion of a thousand Palestinians in an area known as Masafer Yatta — and across the territory. In unauthorized Palestinian villages — without direct access to Israeli power, water or sewage infrastructure — residents watch helplessly as Israeli authorities demolish homes, issue evacuation orders and expand settlements, changing the landscape of territory they dream of calling their state.

Last year, Israeli authorities razed 784 Palestinian buildings in the West Bank because they lacked permits, Israeli rights group B'Tselem reported, the most since it started tracking those demolitions a decade ago. The army tears down homes gradually, the group says, loathe to risk the global censure that would come from leveling a whole village.

News of Khan al-Ahmar's impending mass eviction four years ago sparked widespread backlash. Since then, the government has stalled, asking the court for more time due to international pressure and Israel's repeatedly deadlocked elections.

"They say the bulldozers will come tomorrow, next month, next year," said Ali, 40, from her metal-topped shed, where she can see the red-roofed homes of the fast-growing Kfar Adumim settlement. "Our life is frozen."

On Wednesday, the Israeli government is expected to respond to a petition by a pro-settler group, Regavim, asking the Supreme Court why Khan al-Ahmar has not yet been razed. Residents fear the brakes may be off now that Israel has its most right-wing government in history.

Regavim's co-founder, Bezalel Smotrich, is now Israel's ultra-nationalist finance minister. In a contentious coalition deal, he was given control over an Israeli military body that oversees construction and demolition in Israeli-administered parts of the West Bank.

At a Cabinet meeting last week, Israel's national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, demanded that Khan al-Ahmar be demolished "just as the defense minister chose to destroy a Jewish outpost" built illegally in the West Bank.

"It's not just about Khan al-Ahmar, it's about the future of Judea and Samaria," Yuli Edelstein, chairman of the parliament's foreign and defense committee said during a visit to the village last week, using the biblical names for the West Bank.

Khan al-Ahmar's leader, 56-year-old Eid Abu Khamis, said anxiety has returned to his cluster of shacks. "They want to empty the land and give to settlers," he said.

Bedouins have made Khan al-Ahmar their home since at least the 1970s, though some, like Ali and Abu Khamis, say their parents lived there earlier. Israel has offered to resettle the villagers at another site several miles away. Palestinians fear Israel will use the strategic strip of land to slice Jerusalem off from Palestinian cities, making a future Palestinian state non-viable.

"We are trying to counter this in every way we can," said Ahmad Majdalani, the Palestinian Authority's minister of social development. "The new government will find itself in direct confrontation with us and the international community."

The U.S. government has raised concerns about planned evictions of Palestinians in the West Bank with the Israeli government, said the U.S. Office of Palestinian Affairs, referring to the cases of Khan al-Ahmar and Masafer Yatta in what is known as Area C.

The zone covers 60% of the West Bank designated as being under full Israeli control. This is in contrast to the remaining areas, including Palestinian population centers, where the Palestinian autonomy government exercises civil and partial security control.

This demarcation of different zones was part of the 1995 Oslo peace accords.

It was an interim agreement, meant to last five years pending a final peace deal.

"The intention was always that the lion's share of Area C will be part of the Palestinian state," said Yossi

Beilin, an architect of those peace accords. "Otherwise, it's like holding people in a prison, and eventually, there would be an explosion."

Nearly three decades later, Area C is home to some half-million Israelis in dozens of settlements considered illegal under international law. They live alongside between 180,000-300,000 Palestinians, the U.N. estimates, who are almost never granted permits to build. When they build homes without permits, military bulldozers level them.

Netanyahu's coalition partners have a radically different vision for Area C than the one drawn up in Oslo. They hope to boost the settler population, eliminate Palestinian construction and even annex the territory. The Cabinet announced a freeze on Palestinian building there as part of punitive measures against the PA last month.

Last May, Israel's Supreme Court approved the expulsion of some 1,000 Palestinians in Masafer Yatta, south of Hebron, because the Israeli army declared it a restricted firing zone in the early 1980s. There and in surrounding encampments, Palestinians describe an Israeli campaign to make life so miserable they're compelled to leave.

Last Wednesday, Luqba Jabari, 65, awoke to the rumble of bulldozers in Khirbet Ma'in, part of the Masafer Yatta area, where her grandparents were born. She and her 30 relatives rushed outside to watch the army reduce their home to rubble. The military toppled her family's three other shacks and water tanks.

That night, she said, they would sleep in their cars, beside the debris of their family's life together. For the past week, their neighbors have offered some spare rooms as a temporary refuge.

"This is our land," Jabari said. "There is no place to go."

Baldwin faces involuntary manslaughter charge in set death

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Prosecutors linked Alec Baldwin to an expansive list of alleged failures in firearms safety as they filed a felony involuntary manslaughter charge Tuesday against the actor in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on a New Mexico movie set.

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

Baldwin and film-set weapons supervisor Hannah Gutierrez-Reed face charges of involuntary manslaughter in the death of Hutchins on the set of the Western movie "Rust."

A manslaughter charge can be brought for a killing that occurs while a defendant is doing something lawful but dangerous and is acting negligently or without caution.

Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed maintain their innocence and have vowed to fight the charges.

In newly filed court documents, prosecutors say reckless safety failures accompanied the film production from the outset. They cite Baldwin's failure as an actor to appear for mandatory firearms training prior to filming and his decision as a producer to work with Gutierrez-Reed, who was an uncertified and inexperienced armorer.

A probable cause statement from investigators traces safety failures across a 10-day period from misfires on set and a camera crew walkout to the moments before Hutchins' death as a revolver was loaded with ammunition and Baldwin's finger came to rest on the pistol's trigger.

"Baldwin's deviation from known standards, practices and protocol directly caused the fatal death of Hutchins," Robert Shilling, a special investigator for the Santa Fe district attorney's office, said in the probable cause statement.

Baldwin's attorney Luke Nikas declined to comment Tuesday and referred to a previous statement in which he called the charges a "terrible miscarriage of justice" that he and his client would fight and win.

"Mr. Baldwin had no reason to believe there was a live bullet in the gun – or anywhere on the movie set," the statement said. "He relied on the professionals with whom he worked."

Gutierrez-Reed's attorney said they would release a statement later.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 46 of 84

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies told The Associated Press in a Jan. 19 interview that the set was "really being run pretty fast and loose" and Baldwin should have known there were previous misfires on the set and multiple people had brought up safety concerns. She also highlighted Baldwin as the person "that held the gun, that pointed the gun and that pulled the trigger."

With charges filed on Tuesday, Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed will be issued a summons to appear in court, possibly by remote webcast. Prosecutors will forgo a grand jury and rely on a judge to determine if there is sufficient evidence to move toward trial. A decision could take up to 60 days.

The manslaughter charges against Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed include two alternative standards and sanctions.

One version would require proof of negligence, which is punishable by up to 18 months in jail and a \$5,000 fine under New Mexico law.

The second alternative is reckless disregard of safety "without due caution and circumspection." It carries a higher threshold of wrongdoing and includes a "firearm enhancement" that could result in a mandatory five years in prison because the offense was committed with a gun.

A jury may decide which definition of manslaughter to pursue, prosecutors said.

Defense litigator Kate Mangels, whose work includes the entertainment sector, said prosecutors submitted a robust analysis of Baldwin's safety responsibilities as actor and producer on "Rust."

"The fact that they separated out Alec Baldwin the actor versus Alec Baldwin the producer shows to me that they're potentially foreseeing a challenge to his culpability as to either of those roles," said Mangels, who is based in Santa Monica, California. "So they want to differentiate ... and provide a robust analysis of both of those separately."

Investigators said reckless safety failures culminated when Baldwin drew a revolver from a holster, pointed it at Hutchins and fired the weapon when a plastic or replica gun should have been used by industry standards.

Photos and videos of the rehearsal, including moments before the deadly shooting, showed Baldwin with his finger inside the trigger guard and on the trigger while "manipulating" the pistol's hammer, investigators said, noting that an FBI analysis shows the pistol could not be fired without pressing the trigger.

Baldwin, who has described the killing as a tragic accident, said he was told the .45-caliber revolver was safe. The 64-year-old actor has sought to clear his name by suing people involved in handling and supplying the loaded gun.

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

Defense attorney Jason Bowles, who represents Gutierrez-Reed, said the charges are the result of a "flawed investigation" and an "inaccurate understanding of the full facts."

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

Prosecutors said a proposed plea agreement signed by assistant director David Halls, who oversaw safety on set, has not yet been approved by a judge and cannot be published.

Halls had agreed to plead guilty in the negligent use of a deadly weapon, explaining that he may have handled the gun improperly before it was given to Baldwin, prosecutors said.

Anti-abortion activists aim to sway GOP White House hopefuls

By SARA BURNETT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Emboldened anti-abortion activists are looking to the 2024 presidential election as an opportunity to solidify their influence over the Republican Party.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, the most influential group in the anti-abortion movement, is telling

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 47 of 84

each potential GOP presidential hopeful that to win its backing — or avoid being a target of its opposition — they must support national restrictions on the procedure. Exceptions in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother are acceptable, the activists say, but leaving the question for states to decide is not.

"It is a level of protection that goes to every single state. That's the baseline of what we're looking to do," said Frank Cannon, Susan B. Anthony's chief political strategist. "Anything less than that will not be acceptable and will not be somebody that SBA can support. So, it's that simple."

That directive is creating an early litmus test for Republicans considering entering the first presidential election since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark decision that enshrined federal protections for abortion for roughly 50 years. While the hard-line stance could please anti-abortion activists who hold sway in GOP primaries, it could create problems for the party's eventual nominee in the general election.

Voters protected abortion rights via ballot measures in six states in 2022, including Kansas, a state former President Donald Trump twice won by double-digit margins. AP VoteCast, a survey of the midterm electorate, showed the Supreme Court's decision was broadly unpopular. About 6 in 10 said they were angry or dissatisfied by it, and roughly the same percentage said they favor a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

Supporters of abortion rights say the issue was a "game changer" that helped Democrats last year and that will motivate voters even more in 2024, after two years of seeing the effects of restrictions.

"We're in a nation where 18 states have no access to abortion, and that number is not going down. It's going to go up as additional court cases get decided," said Jenny Lawson, vice president of organizing and engagement campaigns at Planned Parenthood Action Fund. She predicted people will see headlines "over and over again" about pregnant children forced to travel out of state for abortions or people unable to get proper miscarriage care because doctors are afraid of liability.

Pressure from the anti-abortion movement has put Trump, who announced his third run for the presidency last year, in perhaps the most complicated position.

He is arguably more responsible for the overturning of *Roe* than anyone else, having appointed three anti-abortion Supreme Court justices who backed last year's ruling. But he has also made clear that he believes pushing any further will hurt Republicans, and he accused anti-abortion leaders of failing to do enough to help GOP candidates in the midterms.

"I just didn't see them fighting during this last election, fighting for victory," Trump said in an interview with David Brody, a longtime commentator for the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Trump, who described himself as "very pro-choice" before entering politics, stressed that objecting to exceptions for rape, incest and the life of the mother makes it "much harder to win elections." He has criticized evangelical leaders who have been slow to endorse his latest run, blasting decisions by pastors like Robert Jeffress to wait to assess the rest of the field as "a sign of disloyalty."

Cannon called the notion that opposing abortion hurt the GOP last year "absolutely absurd," pointing to candidates like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis — a top potential GOP presidential candidate — who easily won reelection. DeSantis signed into law last year a ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The Republican candidates who got "clobbered," Cannon said, were those who tried to avoid the topic. "What you have to do is argue for protections that the American people see as reasonable versus the extremism of no exceptions, even late-term abortion," Cannon said. "And if you do that, it's a winning combination."

SBA Pro-Life America, which raised over \$60 million for 2020 campaigns along with its affiliated super PAC, is talking with each potential candidate, Cannon said. While records are being discussed, what matters in 2024 is what policies the candidates prioritize when they announce their bids. SBA's specific request is to support "at a minimum" a "heartbeat bill" or "pain-capable" bill, he said.

The heartbeat bill would make abortion illegal after cardiac activity is detected, which occurs at roughly six weeks of pregnancy — before some women know they're pregnant. Legislation that references the fetus feeling pain, such as a measure introduced last year by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., would ban the procedure at around 15 weeks. Graham's bill didn't advance in the Democratic-controlled chamber, and

even some fellow Republicans distanced themselves from it ahead of the midterms.

Trump's stance has provided an opening on the right for potential rivals like former Vice President Mike Pence and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, both of whom are evangelical Christians with long-held anti-abortion stances.

Pence has spent months visiting so-called crisis pregnancy centers that counsel women against abortions. And he has embarked on a tour of megachurches, including Jeffress' First Baptist Church in Dallas, and spoken before major anti-abortion groups.

His advocacy group, Advancing American Freedom, has pushed for Congress to pass legislation including a national abortion ban beginning around six weeks of pregnancy and a bill that would establish legal personhood at conception. Marc Short, Pence's former chief of staff and longtime adviser, said that when it comes to declared and potential 2024 candidates, "I see him as the most comfortable explaining his pro-life convictions and the basis for them."

For Pence, he said, the issue is about much more than politics.

"Mike does it because this is core to the reason that he ran for office and won for the first time. It's always been for him a top issue and it's a priority," he said.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, is another potential candidate who signed abortion prohibitions into law in her state. The 2016 law bans abortion at 20 weeks of pregnancy and includes an exception if the mother's life is in jeopardy but not for cases of rape or incest.

After the Supreme Court's decision, Haley said states, and not "unelected justices," should control abortion policy. That position puts her at odds with SBA and other anti-abortion groups.

Others see abortion as a potential vulnerability for DeSantis. A spokesperson for South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who is also exploring a potential run, recently unloaded on DeSantis, questioning where he stands on the issue.

"Governor Noem was the only Governor in America on national television defending the Dobbs decision," Ian Fury wrote in an email to the National Review. "Where was Governor DeSantis? Hiding behind a 15-week ban. Does he believe that 14-week-old babies don't have a right to live?"

Cannon stressed that those in the anti-abortion movement are the "foot soldiers" of the Republican Party during elections and comprise a huge percentage of primary voters.

"No Republican candidate can win the presidency without the backing of the pro-life movement," he said.

Republicans set to oust Rep. Omar from Foreign Affairs panel

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Newly empowered House Republicans are preparing to oust an African-born Black lawmaker, Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar, from the Foreign Affairs Committee over comments she has made critical of Israel — and as payback after Democrats booted far-right Republicans from panels for incendiary, violent remarks.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has been eager to flex Republican power to remove the Minnesota Democrat after he blocked two other Democrats, Rep. Adam Schiff and Rep. Eric Swalwell, from rejoining the House Intelligence Committee once the GOP took control of the chamber in the new Congress.

Votes could come as soon as Wednesday on the resolution against Omar, a Somali immigrant and Muslim lawmaker who has apologized for comments she has said she came to understand were viewed as antisemitic.

"This is about vengeance. This is about spite. This is about politics," said Rep. James McGovern of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Rules Committee, as Republicans called a hurried meeting late Tuesday to consider the resolution.

McGovern argued that Democrats had removed Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., and Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., for remarks that were far more extreme and violent against fellow lawmakers than those Omar had made and apologized for.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 49 of 84

The resolution against Omar was proposed by Rep. Max Miller, R-Ohio, a former official in the Trump administration. It says that "Omar's comments have brought dishonor to the House of Representatives" and she should be removed from the Foreign Affairs Committee.

McCarthy has strained to ensure he has enough support from his Republican ranks to oust Omar. Republicans command a slim majority and several GOP lawmakers have been reluctant to engage in tit-for-tat retribution against colleagues.

But GOP leaders moved ahead late Tuesday with the resolution against Omar after several holdouts signaled their support.

The action against Omar pushed ahead after embattled Republican Rep. George Santos announced earlier Tuesday he would be stepping aside from his own committee assignments as the House Ethics Committee investigates his actions. The New York Republican has acknowledged embellishments about his education, work experience and other aspects of his personal and professional life.

Several Republicans have been wary of taking action against Omar while they are also having to answer for the many questions emerging about Santos.

No vote has been set on the resolution against Omar, but it could come as soon as Wednesday, aides said. Republicans said they are waiting for Democrats to formally nominate Omar to the Foreign Affairs Committee, on which she served in the last Congress. Once the committee roster is approved by the whole House, the Republicans would move to strip her of the seat.

With his slim majority, McCarthy acknowledged at the start of the week that member absences were having an impact on his ability to schedule the vote.

Omar told CNN in an interview Sunday that the move against her is "politically motivated."

"It's motivated by the fact that many of these members don't believe a Muslim, a refugee, an African should even be in Congress, let alone have the opportunity to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee," she said.

Griner's return, free agency raises charter flight concerns

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Brittney Griner's return to the WNBA this summer after being traded in a dramatic prisoner swap in December with Russia has collided with free agency, creating potential travel complications for the league out of safety concerns for her.

If Griner, who is a free agent but has said she'll return to Phoenix, needs special travel accommodations — such as chartered flights — the league will have to come up with a plan for the 6-foot-9 star. Griner's safety when traveling will be a top priority for the team and the league.

"We are very cognizant of BG's unique situation," WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert told The Associated Press. "We've been planning and we've been thinking it through with security experts. BG's side, our side. We'll find the right time to comment on it when she signs with a team."

That could come Wednesday, when free agents can officially sign.

While the Griner situation is unique, other marquee players raised the issue of charter flights, which teams have deemed too costly.

The current collective bargaining agreement requires that all teams fly commercial and doesn't allow teams to charter flights. Any change in that would have to be approved by both the union and the league.

"No one wants to make this work more than me," Engelbert said. "That's why we're working so hard to transform the economic business model. We've had positive changes over the last couple years, but we're not going to jeopardize the financial viability of the league. We are on the cusp of something big here."

HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST THE WNBA TO CHARTER FLIGHTS?

Engelbert says it would cost the league about \$25 million each season for each of its 12 teams to charter flights to every game. That number has increased about \$5 million from previous estimates by the commissioner due the new 40-game WNBA schedule this season, fuel costs and other factors.

The estimated cost per franchise to charter flights would be approximately \$2 million. Air travel expenses currently for each team is about \$150,000, according to two people familiar with the costs. The people

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 50 of 84

spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly address the issue.

"We did it last year for the Finals and we have experience on how much it costs for routes we need to fly," Engelbert said. "We are monitoring and updating our analysis. We are going to try and get an economic model to fund this as soon as we can."

WHAT HAPPENS IF A TEAM CHARTERS FLIGHTS?

If teams violate the current CBA they could be fined.

The New York Liberty were fined a WNBA record \$500,000 in 2021 for chartering flights to away games during the second half of that season.

HAS THE WNBA CONSIDERED SUBSIDIZING FLIGHTS?

Coveted free agent Breanna Stewart, who has narrowed her choices to a few teams including New York, started a social media campaign to try to help get chartered flights for the league. She tweeted, "I would love to be part of a deal that helps subsidize charter travel for the entire WNBA. I would contribute my NIL, posts + production hrs to ensure we all travel in a way that prioritizes player health + safety, which ultimately results in a better product. Who's with me?"

Many current and former WNBA and NBA players offered their support. Though any change to travel restrictions would have to be voted on by the union and the league.

"We would need a commitment to it in perpetuity," Engelbert said. "That's 250-300 million dollars. Look at the gate and media deal and sponsorship dollars. We're not close to being able to afford \$250 million over the next decade."

DO WOMEN'S COLLEGE TEAMS CHARTER FLIGHTS?

WNBA players are used to flying charter flights. That's how they traveled in college.

Title IX legislation requires universities to have equal opportunities for their men's and women's athletic programs. The NCAA flies both the men's and women's teams on charter flights for the tournament if they are more than 400 miles from the site of their game.

That legislation doesn't apply to the pros so NBA teams chartering between cities has no effect on what WNBA teams do.

Tyre Nichols' family grieves 'on sacred ground' in Memphis

By ADRIAN SAINZ and AARON MORRISON Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — On the eve of the funeral for Tyre Nichols, who died days after a brutal beating by Memphis police officers just minutes from his home, his family was sharing remembrances and expressing grief.

Nichols' older brother, Jamal Dupree, lamented he was not there to save his brother from the attack he suffered at the fists and feet of the five officers, who have been charged with second-degree murder and other offenses.

"I've been fighting my whole life and the one fight I needed to be here for, I wasn't here," said Dupree, adding that violence was against his brother's nature.

"My brother was the most peaceful person I've ever met in life," he said. "If my brother was here today and he had to say something, he'd tell us to do this peacefully."

The family gathered Tuesday evening with the Rev. Al Sharpton at the historic Mason Temple Church of God in Christ in Memphis — where the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his final speech the night before he was assassinated — to speak about Nichols and the latest developments in the case. Sharpton, who will eulogize Nichols at the funeral Wednesday morning, said he wanted the family to stand where King stood before they lay Nichols to rest.

"They're standing on that ground because we will continue in Tyre's name to head up to Martin's mountaintop. That's why we wanted to start this right on this sacred ground. This is holy ground. And this family now is ours and they're in the hands of history," Sharpton said.

Among those expected in attendance Wednesday is Vice President Kamala Harris, who the White House said was invited by Nichols' mother and stepfather, RowVaughn Wells and Rodney Wells. Harris spoke by

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 51 of 84

phone with the Wells family on Tuesday, expressing her condolences and offering her support. President Joe Biden spoke by phone to Nichols' family last week.

Harris will be joined by former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, a senior adviser to the president for public engagement, and Mitch Landrieu, a White House senior advisor and infrastructure implementation coordinator, who is a former mayor of New Orleans, said Harris's press secretary, Kirsten Allen.

Five Black officers have been fired and charged in Nichols' Jan. 7 beating and subsequent death. Video of the beating, which was released publicly last week, shows that many more people failed to help Nichols, who was also Black, beyond the five officers charged in his death.

Two more Memphis police officers have been disciplined and three emergency responders fired in connection with Nichols' death, officials said Monday. Officer Preston Hemphill, who is white, and another officer whose name wasn't released, have been suspended, police said.

Six of the officers involved were part of the so-called Scorpion unit, which targeted violent criminals in high-crime areas. Police Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis said after the video's release that the unit has been disbanded.

"It's a step in the right direction, but due to the severity of the situation it's not enough," Damion Carrick said as he participated in a protest Monday evening at Shelby Farms Park. "You got a man dragged out of his car, beaten senseless, to a pulp and nobody doing nothing about it. It's heartbreaking."

Nichols' death was the latest in a string of early accounts by police about their use of force that were later shown to have minimized or omitted violent and sometimes deadly encounters.

Memphis Police Department officers used a stun gun, a baton and their fists as they pummeled Nichols during the nighttime arrest. Video shows Nichols running away from officers toward his house after he was pulled over on suspicion of reckless driving. The video footage released Friday shows the 29-year-old father calling for his mother and struggling with his injuries as he sits helpless on the pavement.

The five officers chatted and milled about for several minutes as Nichols remained on the ground, but other authorities were on the scene. Two Shelby County sheriff's deputies also have been suspended without pay while their conduct is investigated.

Nichols' sister, Keyana Dixon, was among more than 100 friends, family and supporters who gathered for a candlelight vigil Monday night at a skate park in Sacramento, where Nichols grew up, The Sacramento Bee reported.

"This was his favorite place to skate," she said at the vigil. "I just want to thank all of you for your continued support for our family, and making sure his name is never forgotten."

A childhood friend, Ryan Wilson, said he met Nichols at a skate park when he was 12 and they became fast friends, sharing their dreams for the future. Nichols had some struggles while young, but he focused on making others happy, Wilson said.

"I just feel like all he wanted to do was find his place in this world, and he just wanted to be happy," Wilson said.

Nichols' mother and step father have accepted an invitation to attend Biden's State of the Union address next week at the Capitol. They will attend with Rep. Steven Horsford, a Nevada Democrat and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, according to Vincent Evans, a spokesperson for the caucus.

Nichols' funeral will be held at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church in Memphis. After Sharpton's delivers the eulogy, Nichols' family attorney Ben Crump will issue a call to action. Others expected to be in attendance include Tamika Palmer, the mother of Breonna Taylor, and Philonise Floyd, the brother of George Floyd.

The deaths of Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, and Floyd in Minneapolis, at the hands of police sparked protests across the nation about racial injustice.

Nikki Haley planning Feb. 15 launch for 2024 White House bid

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Nikki Haley is moving closer to making her presidential campaign official.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 52 of 84

On Wednesday, supporters of the former South Carolina governor will get an email invitation to a Feb. 15 launch event in Charleston, at which she plans to announce her campaign, according to a person familiar with the plans but not authorized to speak publicly about them.

News of Haley's plans was first reported by The Post and Courier of Charleston.

Haley, 51, served as South Carolina's governor for six years before serving as President Donald Trump's ambassador to the United Nations. When she enters the race, Haley will be the first contender to join the contest against her former boss, who is currently the sole Republican seeking his party's 2024 nomination.

Trump was in South Carolina Saturday for the initial campaign swing of his 2024 campaign, standing alongside Gov. Henry McMaster — who served as Haley's lieutenant governor — and several GOP members of the state's delegation, part of his leadership team in the early-voting state.

During the Trump administration, Haley feuded at times with other White House officials while bolstering her own public persona. Her 2018 departure fueled speculation that she would challenge Trump in 2020, or replace Vice President Mike Pence on the ticket, but Haley did neither.

Instead, Haley returned to South Carolina, where she bought a home on Kiawah Island, joined the board of aircraft manufacturer Boeing Co. and launched herself on the speaking circuit, reportedly commanding fees as high as \$200,000. She penned two books, a step commonly taken by many on the road toward the White House.

After the Jan. 6 Capitol siege, Haley initially cast doubts on Trump's political future but said she wouldn't challenge him in 2024.

In 2021, Haley told The Associated Press that she "would not run if President Trump ran," but she has since shifted course, ramping up activity through her Stand for America nonprofit and political action committee, and endorsing dozens of candidates in the 2022 midterm elections.

Late last year, during a visit to her alma mater, Haley told an audience at Clemson University that she would be "taking the holidays" to consider a run.

Asked recently why she is now considering a run in spite of her 2021 comments, Haley told Fox News "a lot has changed," referencing, among other things, U.S. economic troubles.

She went on to say she felt she could be part of "new generational change," an indirect reference to Trump's advanced age.

In South Carolina on Saturday, Trump told WIS-TV that Haley had called him several days earlier to seek his opinion. Trump pointed out her earlier pledge not to run against him but said he made no attempts to stop her.

"She said she would never run against me because I was the greatest president, but people change their opinions, and they change what's in their hearts," Trump said. "So I said, if your heart wants to do it, you have to go do it."

'Dances With Wolves' actor arrested in Nevada sex abuse case

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

NORTH LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas police on Tuesday arrested and raided the home of a former "Dances With Wolves" actor turned alleged cult leader accused of sexually assaulting young Indigenous girls during a period spanning two decades, according to police records obtained by The Associated Press.

Nathan Lee Chasing His Horse, who goes by Nathan Chasing Horse, was taken into custody in the afternoon near the North Las Vegas home he is said to share with his five wives. SWAT officers were seen outside the two-story home in the evening as detectives searched the property.

Known for his role as the young Sioux tribe member Smiles a Lot in the Oscar-winning Kevin Costner film, Chasing Horse gained a reputation among tribes across the United States and in Canada as a so-called medicine man who performed healing ceremonies and spiritual gatherings and, police allege, used his position to abuse young Native American girls.

His arrest is the culmination of a monthslong investigation that began after police received a tip in October 2022. According to a 50-page search warrant obtained by AP, Chasing Horse is believed to be the

leader of a cult known as The Circle.

And it comes as state attorneys general and lawmakers around the U.S. are looking into creating specialized units to handle cases involving Native women.

In South Dakota, the attorney general's office has put a new focus on crimes against Native American people, including human trafficking and murders.

According to the document, Las Vegas police have identified at least six alleged victims and uncovered sexual allegations against Chasing Horse dating to the early 2000s in multiple states, including Montana, South Dakota and Nevada, where he has lived for about a decade.

There was no lawyer listed in court records for Chasing Horse who could comment on his behalf as of Tuesday evening.

Chasing Horse was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, which is home to the Sicangu Sioux, one of the seven tribes of the Lakota nation.

According to the warrant, he was banished in 2015 from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, amid allegations of human trafficking.

"Nathan Chasing Horse used spiritual traditions and their belief system as a tool to sexually assault young girls on numerous occasions," it reads, adding that his followers believed he could communicate with higher beings and referred to him as "Medicine Man" or "Holy Person."

Although the warrant includes details of crimes reported elsewhere, the arrest stems from crimes allegedly committed in Nevada's Clark County. They include sex trafficking, sexual assault of a child younger than 16 and child abuse.

Some of the alleged victims were as young as 13, according to the warrant. One of Chasing Horse's wives was allegedly offered to him as a "gift" when she was 15, while another became a wife after turning 16.

Chasing Horse also is accused of recording sexual assaults and arranging sex with the victims for other men who allegedly paid him.

California releases its own plan for Colorado River cuts

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California released a plan Tuesday detailing how Western states reliant on the Colorado River should save more water. It came a day after the six other states in the river basin made a competing proposal.

In a letter to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, California described how states could conserve between 1 million and nearly 2 million acre feet of water through new cuts based on the elevation of Lake Mead, a key reservoir.

Its plan did not account for water lost to evaporation and during transportation — a move sought by the other states that would mean big cuts for California.

The 1,450-mile river (2,334-kilometer) serves 40 million people across the West and Mexico, generating hydroelectric power for regional markets and irrigating nearly 6 million acres (2,428 hectares) of farmland.

A multi-decade drought in the West worsened by climate change, rising demand and overuse has sent water levels at key reservoirs along the river to unprecedented lows. That has forced federal and state officials to take additional steps to protect the system.

California's plan and the separate methods outlined by states Monday came in response to Reclamation asking them last year to detail how they would use between 15% and 30% less water. The federal agency operates the major dams in the river system.

All seven states missed that deadline last August. Six of them regrouped and came to an agreement by the end of January. California was the lone holdout to that agreement, and responded Tuesday with its own plan.

Unlike the other states' plan, California's does not factor the roughly 1.5 million acre feet of Colorado River water lost to evaporation and transportation.

Instead, it proposes reducing water taken out of Lake Mead by 1 million acre feet, with 400,000 acre feet

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 54 of 84

coming from its own users. The state previously outlined that level of cuts in October. Arizona would bear the brunt of bigger cuts — 560,000 acre feet — while Nevada would make up the rest. Those numbers are based on discussions from prior negotiations, California's letter said.

An acre foot is enough water to supply two to three U.S. households for a year.

The Arizona Department of Water Resources said it was still reviewing California's proposal and didn't have an immediate comment.

But Tom Buschatzke, the department's director, said earlier Tuesday that water managers across the basin couldn't reach agreement with California on cuts, even at the broader state level.

"The big issues are what does the priority system mean, what does the junior priority mean and how does that attach to that outcome of who takes what cut?" he said. "That was the issue over the summer, that was the issue over the fall, that's still the issue."

California has the largest allocation of water among the seven U.S. states that tap the Colorado River. It is also among the last to face water cuts in times of shortage because of its senior water rights.

That has given the state an advantage over others in talks that spanned months over how to cut water use.

California water officials have often repeated that any additional water cuts must be legally defensible and in line with western water law that honors its water rights.

JB Hamby, chairman of the Colorado River Board of California and a board member of the Imperial Irrigation District, indicated California may file a lawsuit if the federal government attempts to count for evaporative losses.

"The best way to avoid conflict and ensure that we can put water in the river right away is through a voluntary approach, not putting proposals that sidestep the Law of the River and ignore California's senior right and give no respect to that," he said.

Existing agreements only spell cuts when Lake Mead's elevation is between 1,090 feet (332 meters) and 1,025 feet (312 meters). If it drops any lower than 1,025 feet, California's plan proposes even further cuts based on the so-called Law of the River — likely meaning Arizona and Nevada would bear the brunt of them. Those cuts are designed to keep Lake Mead from reaching "dead pool," when it could no longer pump out water to farms and cities including Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Phoenix.

The reservoir's current elevation is around 1,045 feet.

In total, California's plan could save between 1 million and 2 million acre-feet of water based on the elevation levels at Lake Mead, from which Arizona, California, Nevada and Mexico draw their share of the river.

Adel Hagekhalil, general manager for the Metropolitan Water District of California, the nation's largest water supplier, said it was important to protect key reservoirs "without getting mired in lengthy legal battles."

Hagekhalil and other water managers pointed to numerous efforts the state has made to drastically reduce its water usage by making agricultural and urban water use more efficient.

"California knows how to permanently reduce use of the river — we have done it over the past 20 years, through billions of dollars in investments and hard-earned partnerships," he said in a statement. "We can help the entire Southwest do it again as we move forward."

The new proposals do not change states' water allocations immediately — or disrupt their existing water rights. Instead, they will be folded into a larger proposal Reclamation is working on to revise how it operates Glen Canyon and Hoover Dams — behemoth power producers on the Colorado River.

Despite California's inability to reach agreement with the other six states so far, the parties said they hope to keep talking.

"We're not going to stop the discussions," said Buschatzke of Arizona, "and maybe we come to an agreement and maybe we won't."

Omaha police fatally shoot armed man in Target store

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A man with an AR-15-style rifle and more than a dozen ammunition magazines

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 55 of 84

opened fire inside a Target store in Omaha, sending panicked shoppers and employees scrambling for safety before he was fatally shot by police Tuesday afternoon, authorities said. No injuries were reported.

The white man in his 30s, who has not been identified, fired multiple rounds as he entered the store but it wasn't clear if he fired at anyone, Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer said.

Target employee Lauren Murphy had just started her break when she heard the shots, and was in the store's front restroom. She got a text telling her to either run or stay put — so she hid in a bathroom stall, lifting her feet off the ground, and began texting her family and friends to say she loved them. A child next to her was crying.

"I was scared that this is how I might die at work," said Murphy, 21.

"I was just clutching onto the side of the toilet getting my feet off the ground, making sure I wasn't visible," she added.

Another 21-year-old employee, Samuel Jacobsen, was filling a personal shopping order when he heard the first gunshot. But he wasn't sure what the sound was, and kept working.

"Then my coworker ran by and she said, 'He's got a gun, get out!'" Jacobsen said. "I was like, 'Oh this is real. I have to get out, I have to get out, I have to get out.'"

He hid behind the store, texting coworkers to make sure they were OK.

Cathy Mahannah, a customer, said the scene inside was "sheer panic."

The 62-year-old grandmother was near the store's entrance picking out Valentine's Day gifts for her family when she heard a banging sound. She thought something had fallen, but then saw a mass of people running for the exit.

A shopper told her there was an active shooter, and she ran. She heard at least one more gunshot in the store and a few more when she was outside.

Mahannah was so rattled she initially couldn't find her car and jumped into a vehicle with a stranger.

"The moments in that parking lot were terrifying when I heard the shots and thought, 'Where do I hide? I don't know what to do,'" she said.

At least 29 calls to 911 came in around noon, and the city's police chief said officers were at the store within minutes. The first officers on the scene included Omaha police officers and a Nebraska State Trooper.

"The first arriving officers went into the building, confronted the suspect and shot him dead," Schmaderer said. "He had an AR-15 rifle with him and plenty of ammunition."

Police said the officers gave several loud commands for the man to drop the rifle before an Omaha officer shot the suspect, who died at the scene.

Agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives happened to be nearby and helped get victims to safety, bureau spokesperson John Ham said.

The ATF is tracing the weapon to determine where it came from, whether it was acquired legally and whether it has been used in other crimes, Ham said.

Target spokesperson Brian Harper-Tibaldo said in a statement that all shoppers and employees were safely evacuated from the store, which will remain closed indefinitely.

Lt. Neal Bonacci, a police spokesperson, said officers are trained to enter such scenes quickly to prevent mass casualties.

"We've learned a lot from other jurisdictions, other areas, other cities that have unfortunately experienced this," he said. "We enter right away. We're trained to do so. Whether it's one officer or 10, we go inside and neutralize the threat."

Several other shootings have taken place at stores across the country in recent months, at a time when mass shootings have commanded public attention on a disturbingly frequent basis.

In January, one woman was injured in a shooting at a Walmart store in Evansville, Indiana. Police said it could have been much worse if not for heroic actions by an employee and police. Officers arrived within minutes and fatally shot the gunman. A Walmart manager in Chesapeake, Virginia, killed six people in November when he began shooting wildly inside a break room. Six others were wounded. The gunman shot and killed himself before officers arrived.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 56 of 84

In Buffalo, New York, an 18-year-old fatally shot 10 people and injured three others last May, after seeking out a grocery store in a predominately Black neighborhood. Authorities immediately called it a hate crime.

The Omaha shooting came just over 15 years after the deadly December 2007 shooting at a Von Maur department store, when a 19-year-old gunman killed eight people and himself.

Nebraska allows gun owners to carry firearms — including assault-style rifles — in public view, as long as they don't have a criminal record that bars them from possessing one and aren't in a place where guns are prohibited. To legally conceal a gun, Nebraskans must submit to a state patrol background check, get fingerprinted and take a gun safety course.

Republican state Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon is sponsoring a bill that would allow people to carry concealed handguns without a permit. The measure also would prohibit cities and counties from issuing local laws with more stringent controls than the state law. The proposal has 25 cosponsors.

Jacobsen, the store employee, said he wants stricter, not looser, gun laws.

"As someone who grew up here, I always hear about this part of Omaha and west Omaha being so safe," he said. But Tuesday's shooting "really drives it home that it could happen anywhere."

Hong Kong bans CBD, forcing businesses to shut or revamp

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong banned CBD as a "dangerous drug" and imposed harsh penalties for its possession on Wednesday, forcing fledging businesses to shut down or revamp.

Supporters say CBD, or cannabidiol, derived from the cannabis plant, can help relieve stress and inflammation without getting its users high, unlike its more famous cousin THC, the psychoactive ingredient of marijuana which has long been illegal in Hong Kong. CBD was once legal in the city, and cafes and shops selling CBD-infused products were popular among young people.

But all that has changed with the prohibition, which took effect Wednesday but had been announced by the government last year. CBD-related businesses have closed down while others have struggled to remodel their businesses. Consumers dumped what they saw as a cure for their ailments into special collection boxes set up around the city.

The new rule reflects a zero-tolerance policy toward dangerous drugs in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous southern Chinese business hub, as well as in mainland China, where CBD was banned in 2022.

The city maintains several categories of "dangerous drugs," which include "hard drugs" such as heroin and cocaine.

In explaining the policy change, the Hong Kong government cited the difficulty of isolating pure CBD from cannabis, the possibility of contamination with THC during the production process and the relative ease by which CBD can be converted to THC.

Customs authorities vowed last week to do more to educate residents to help them understand that CBD is prohibited in Hong Kong even though it is legal elsewhere.

Starting Wednesday, possession of CBD can result in up to seven years in jail and a 1 million Hong Kong dollar (\$128,000) fine. Those convicted of importing, exporting or producing the substance can face up to life in prison and a 5 million Hong Kong dollar (\$638,000) fine.

Some users said the ban shows the international financial hub is going backward.

"It's just looking less like an international city," said Jennifer Lo, the owner of CBD Bakery, who started selling CBD-infused cheesecakes, cookies and drinks in 2021.

Her business largely dried up even before the ban took effect, she said.

"Rumors of the ban affected how I do business," she said. "Some platforms just took me offline without telling me. And then it was not as easy to get space at markets."

To comply with the ban, Lo dumped all her remaining stock, including dozens of cookies, and said she would have to rebrand her business.

Some other vendors, including the city's first CBD cafe that opened in 2020, shut down.

Karena Tsoi, who used CBD skincare products for two years to treat her eczema, said she will have to

find an alternative treatment.

"It's troublesome," she said. "The government doesn't have to regulate like this."

Most Asian nations have strict drug laws with harsh penalties with the exception of Thailand, which made marijuana legal to cultivate and possess last year.

Elsewhere, the debate over CBD continues.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said last week that there is not enough evidence about CBD to confirm that it's safe for consumption in foods or as a dietary supplement. It called on Congress to create new rules for the growing market.

Marijuana-derived products have become increasingly popular in lotions, tinctures and foods, while their legal status has been murky in the U.S., where several states have legalized or decriminalized substances that remain illegal federally.

Child welfare algorithm faces Justice Department scrutiny

By SALLY HO and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Justice Department has been scrutinizing a controversial artificial intelligence tool used by a Pittsburgh-area child protective services agency following concerns that the tool could lead to discrimination against families with disabilities, The Associated Press has learned.

The interest from federal civil rights attorneys comes after an AP investigation revealed potential bias and transparency issues surrounding the increasing use of algorithms within the troubled child welfare system in the U.S. While some see such opaque tools as a promising way to help overwhelmed social workers predict which children may face harm, others say their reliance on historical data risks automating past inequalities.

Several civil rights complaints were filed in the fall about the Allegheny Family Screening Tool, which is used to help social workers decide which families to investigate, AP has learned. The pioneering AI program is designed to assess a family's risk level when they are reported for child welfare concerns in Allegheny County.

Two sources said that attorneys in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division cited the AP investigation when urging them to submit formal complaints detailing their concerns about how the algorithm could harden bias against people with disabilities, including families with mental health issues.

A third person told AP that the same group of federal civil rights attorneys also spoke with them in November as part of a broad conversation about how algorithmic tools could potentially exacerbate disparities, including for people with disabilities. That conversation explored the design and construction of Allegheny's influential algorithm, though the full scope of the Justice Department's interest is unknown.

All three sources spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity, saying the Justice Department asked them not to discuss the confidential conversations. Two said they also feared professional retaliation.

Wyn Hornbuckle, a Justice Department spokesman, declined to comment.

Algorithms use pools of information to turn data points into predictions, whether that's for online shopping, identifying crime hotspots or hiring workers. Many agencies in the U.S. are considering adopting such tools as part of their work with children and families.

Though there's been widespread debate over the moral consequences of using artificial intelligence in child protective services, the Justice Department's interest in the Allegheny algorithm marks a significant turn toward possible legal implications.

Robin Frank, a veteran family law attorney in Pittsburgh and vocal critic of the Allegheny algorithm, said she also filed a complaint with the Justice Department in October on behalf of a client with an intellectual disability who is fighting to get his daughter back from foster care. The AP obtained a copy of the complaint, which raised concerns about how the Allegheny Family Screening Tool assesses a family's risk.

"I think it's important for people to be aware of what their rights are and to the extent that we don't have a lot of information when there seemingly are valid questions about the algorithm, it's important to have some oversight," Frank said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 58 of 84

Mark Bertolet, spokesman for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, said by email that the agency had not heard from the Justice Department and declined interview requests.

"We are not aware of any concerns about the inclusion of these variables from research groups' past evaluation or community feedback on the (Allegheny Family Screening Tool)," the county said, describing previous studies and outreach regarding the tool.

Child protective services workers can face critiques from all sides. They are assigned blame for both over-surveillance and not giving enough support to the families who land in their view. The system has long been criticized for disproportionately separating Black, poor, disabled and marginalized families and for insufficiently addressing – let alone eradicating – child abuse and deaths.

Supporters see algorithms as a data-driven solution to make the system both more thorough and efficient, saying child welfare officials should use all tools at their disposal to make sure children aren't maltreated.

Critics worry that delegating some of that critical work to AI tools powered by data collected largely from people who are poor can bake in discrimination against families based on race, income, disabilities or other external characteristics.

The AP's previous story highlighted data points used by the algorithm that can be interpreted as proxies for race. Now, federal civil rights attorneys have been considering the tool's potential impacts on people with disabilities.

The Allegheny Family Screening Tool was specifically designed to predict the risk that a child will be placed in foster care in the two years after the family is investigated. The county said its algorithm has used data points tied to disabilities in children, parents and other members of local households because they can help predict the risk that a child will be removed from their home after a maltreatment report. The county added that it has updated its algorithm several times and has sometimes removed disabilities-related data points.

Using a trove of detailed personal data and birth, Medicaid, substance abuse, mental health, jail and probation records, among other government data sets, the Allegheny tool's statistical calculations help social workers decide which families should be investigated for neglect – a nuanced term that can include everything from inadequate housing to poor hygiene, but is a different category from physical or sexual abuse, which is investigated separately in Pennsylvania and is not subject to the algorithm.

The algorithm-generated risk score on its own doesn't determine what happens in the case. A child welfare investigation can result in vulnerable families receiving more support and services, but it can also lead to the removal of children for foster care and ultimately, the termination of parental rights.

The county has said that algorithms provide a scientific check on call center workers' personal biases. County officials further underscored that hotline workers determine what happens with a family's case and can always override the tool's recommendations. The tool is also only applied to the beginning of a family's potential involvement with the child-welfare process; a different social worker conducts the investigations afterward.

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, which can include a wide spectrum of conditions, from diabetes, cancer and hearing loss to intellectual disabilities and mental and behavioral health diagnosis like ADHD, depression and schizophrenia.

The National Council on Disability has noted that a high rate of parents with disabilities receive public benefits including food stamps, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income, a Social Security Administration program that provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability.

Allegheny's algorithm, in use since 2016, has at times drawn from data related to Supplemental Security Income as well as diagnoses for mental, behavioral and neurodevelopmental disorders, including schizophrenia or mood disorders, AP found.

The county said that when the disabilities data is included, it "is predictive of the outcomes" and "it should come as no surprise that parents with disabilities ... may also have a need for additional supports and services." The county added that there are other risk assessment programs that use data about mental health and other conditions that may affect a parent's ability to safely care for a child.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein and Rhema Vaithianathan, the two developers of Allegheny's algorithm and other tools like it, deferred to Allegheny County's answers about the algorithm's inner workings. They said in an email that they were unaware of any Justice Department scrutiny relating to the algorithm.

The AP obtained records showing hundreds of specific variables that are used to calculate the risk scores for families who are reported to child protective services, including the public data that powers the Allegheny algorithm and similar tools deployed in child welfare systems elsewhere in the U.S.

The AP's analysis of Allegheny's algorithm and those inspired by it in Los Angeles County, California, Douglas County, Colorado, and in Oregon reveals a range of controversial data points that have measured people with low incomes and other disadvantaged demographics, at times evaluating families on race, zip code, disabilities and their use of public welfare benefits.

Since the AP's investigation published, Oregon dropped its algorithm due to racial equity concerns and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy emphasized that parents and social workers needed more transparency about how government agencies were deploying algorithms as part of the nation's first "AI Bill of Rights."

The Justice Department has shown a broad interest in investigating algorithms in recent years, said Christy Lopez, a Georgetown University law professor who previously led some of the Justice Department's civil rights division litigation and investigations.

In a keynote about a year ago, Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke warned that AI technologies had "serious implications for the rights of people with disabilities," and her division more recently issued guidance to employers saying using AI tools in hiring could violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"It appears to me that this is a priority for the division, investigating the extent to which algorithms are perpetuating discriminatory practices," Lopez said of the Justice Department scrutiny of Allegheny's tool.

Traci LaLiberte, a University of Minnesota expert on child welfare and disabilities, said the Justice Department's inquiry stood out to her, as federal authorities have largely deferred to local child welfare agencies.

LaLiberte has published research detailing how parents with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the child welfare system. She challenged the idea of using data points related to disabilities in any algorithm because, she said, that assesses characteristics people can't change, rather than their behavior.

"If it isn't part of the behavior, then having it in the (algorithm) biases it," LaLiberte said.

Flights canceled, at least 2 dead as ice storm freezes US

By PAUL J. WEBER and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Winter weather brought ice to a wide swath of the United States on Tuesday, canceling more than 1,700 flights nationwide and snarling highways. At least two people died on slick roads in Texas and two law officers in the state were seriously injured, including a deputy who was pinned under a truck, authorities said.

As the ice storm advanced eastward on Tuesday, watches and warnings stretched from the western heel of Texas all the way to West Virginia. Several rounds of mixed precipitation — including freezing rain and sleet — were in store for many areas through Wednesday, meaning some regions could be hit multiple times, the federal Weather Prediction Center warned.

Emergency responders rushed to hundreds of auto collisions across Texas and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott urged people to stay off the roads.

Authorities said one person in Austin was killed in a predawn pileup Tuesday. A 45-year-old man also died Monday night after his SUV slid into a highway guardrail near Dallas in slick conditions and rolled down an embankment, according to the Arlington Police Department.

More than 900 flights to or from major U.S. airport hub Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and more than 250 to or from Dallas Love Field were canceled or delayed Tuesday, according to the tracking service FlightAware. At Dallas-Fort Worth, more than 50% of Tuesday's scheduled flights had been canceled by Tuesday afternoon.

Dallas-based Southwest Airlines canceled more than 560 flights Tuesday and delayed more than 350

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 60 of 84

more, FlightAware reported.

About 7,000 power outages in Texas were reported as of late Tuesday morning, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said following a briefing in Austin on the worsening conditions. He emphasized the outages were due to factors such as ice on power lines or downed trees, and not the performance of the Texas power grid that buckled for days during a deadly winter storm in 2021.

Fleets of emergency vehicles were fanned out among 1,600 roads impacted by the freeze.

In Texas, a sheriff's deputy who stopped to help the driver of an 18-wheeler that went off an icy highway on Tuesday was hit by a second truck that pinned him beneath one of its tires, according to the Travis County Sheriff's Office. About 45 minutes after the crash on State Highway 130, the deputy was freed from the wreckage and taken to a hospital, where he was in surgery Tuesday afternoon, officials said. The deputy is expected to survive, officials said.

In another wreck, a Texas state trooper was hospitalized with serious injuries after being struck by a driver who lost control of their vehicle, said Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

"The roadways are very hazardous right now. We cannot overemphasize that," Abbott said.

As the ice and sleet enveloped Memphis, Tennessee, Memphis-Shelby County Schools announced that it will cancel classes Wednesday due to freezing rain and hazardous road conditions. The school system has about 100,000 students. The University of Memphis said it would announce plans for Wednesday classes by 6 a.m. tomorrow.

In Arkansas, Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders declared a state of emergency Tuesday because of the ice storm. In her declaration, Sanders cited the "likelihood of numerous downed power lines" and said road conditions have created a backlog of deliveries by commercial drivers.

One of the main thoroughfares through Arkansas — Interstate 40 — was ice-coated and "extremely hazardous" in the Forrest City area on Tuesday, according to the city's fire department.

The department responded to two bad wrecks and about 15 other crashes Tuesday morning, Division Chief Jeremy Sharp said by telephone. In many of the crashes, the drivers pick up speed on the highway but run into trouble when they reach a bridge, he said.

"They hit the ice and they start wrecking," he said.

"When I-40 shuts down like that, that can be hours of waiting," said John Gadberry, who lives in Colt, Arkansas, not far from the highway. "I-40 is usually one of the first things that freezes over due to its slight elevation."

By late Tuesday morning, I-40 was cleared and traffic had resumed, the Arkansas Department of Transportation announced. The interstate connects Little Rock, Arkansas, to Memphis, Tennessee.

The storm began Monday as part of an expected "several rounds" of wintry precipitation through Wednesday across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Tennessee, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Marc Chenard.

"Generally light to moderate freezing rain resulting in some pretty significant ice amounts," Chenard said.

"We're expecting ice accumulations potentially a quarter inch or higher as far south as Austin, Texas, up to Dallas over to Little Rock, Arkansas, towards Memphis, Tennessee, and even getting close to Nashville, Tennessee," according to Chenard.

The flight disruptions follow Southwest's meltdown in December that began with a winter storm but continued after most other airlines had recovered. Southwest canceled about 16,700 flights over the last 10 days of the year, and the U.S. Transportation Department is investigating.

The weather service has issued a winter storm warning for a large swath of Texas and parts of southeastern Oklahoma and an ice storm warning across the midsection of Arkansas into western Tennessee.

A winter weather advisory is in place in much of the remainder of Arkansas and Tennessee and into much of Kentucky, West Virginia and southern parts of Indiana and Ohio.

Schools and colleges in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas planned to close or go to virtual learning Tuesday.

Alaska gold, copper mine blocked over environmental worries

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 61 of 84

By BECKY BOHRER and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency took an unusually strong step Tuesday and blocked a proposed mine heralded by backers as the most significant undeveloped copper and gold resource in the world because of concerns about its environmental impact on a rich Alaska aquatic ecosystem that supports the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery.

The move, cheered by Alaska Native tribes and environmentalists and condemned by some state officials and mining interests, deals a heavy blow to the proposed Pebble Mine. The intended site is in a remote area of southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay region, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) southwest of Anchorage.

The mine site is accessible only by helicopter and snowmobile in winter, developer Pebble Limited Partnership said in a permit application with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As proposed, the project called for a mining rate of up to 73 million tons a year.

An appeal by the Pebble partnership of a separate rejection of a key federal permit is unresolved.

In a statement, Pebble Limited Partnership CEO John Shively called the EPA's action "unlawful" and political and said litigation was likely. Shively has cast the project as key to the Biden administration's push to reach green energy goals and make the U.S. less dependent on foreign nations for such minerals.

The Pebble Limited Partnership is owned Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd.

The Pebble deposit is near the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed, which supports a bounty of salmon "unrivaled anywhere in North America," according to the EPA.

Tuesday's announcement marks only the 14th time in the roughly 50-year history of the federal Clean Water Act that the EPA has flexed its powers to bar or restrict activities over their potential impact on waters, including fisheries. EPA Administrator Michael Regan said his agency's use of its so-called veto authority in this case "underscores the true irreplaceable and invaluable natural wonder that is Bristol Bay."

The veto is a victory for the environment, economy and tribes of Alaska's Bristol Bay region, which have fought the proposal for more than a decade, said Joel Reynolds, western director and senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The mine would have jeopardized the region's salmon fishery, which brings 15,000 jobs to the area and supplies about half the world's sockeye salmon, Reynolds said. The 2022 harvest was more than 60 million fish, state officials reported last year.

"It's a victory for science over politics. For biodiversity over extinction. For democracy over corporate power," Reynolds said.

The EPA, citing an analysis by the Army Corps of Engineers, said discharges of dredged or fill material to build and operate the proposed mine site would result in a loss of about 100 miles (160 kilometers) of stream habitat, as well as wetlands.

The Pebble partnership has maintained that the project can coexist with salmon. The partnership's website says the deposit is at the upper reaches of three "very small tributaries" and expresses confidence any impacts on the fishery "in the unlikely event of an incident" would be "minimal."

Republican Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy said the EPA's veto was a dangerous precedent that could affect future development in the state, while state Attorney General Treg Taylor called the agency's action "legally indefensible."

"Alarmingly, it lays the foundation to stop any development project, mining or non-mining, in any area of Alaska with wetlands and fish-bearing streams," Dunleavy said.

Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she opposed the mine but that the EPA's veto shouldn't be allowed to jeopardize future mining operations in the state.

"This determination must not serve as precedent to target any other project in our state and must be the only time EPA ever uses its veto authority under the Clean Water Act in Alaska," Murkowski said in a statement.

Washington Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell called the EPA's action "the final nail in the coffin for the Pebble Mine" and the culmination of a hard fought battle.

"Now, we will have a thriving Bristol Bay salmon run for generations to come," she said.

Tribes in the Bristol Bay region in 2010 petitioned the EPA to protect the area under the federal Clean

Water Act. Alannah Hurley, executive director of United Tribes of Bristol Bay, said that to call the EPA announcement "welcome news is an understatement."

Tim Bristol, executive director with the group SalmonState, lauded the EPA's decision, saying it "may be the most popular thing the federal government has ever done for Alaska."

The EPA's decision is the latest in a yearslong back-and-forth over the project that has spanned administrations.

Leila Kimbrell, executive director for the Resource Development Council for Alaska Inc., called the decision "a dangerous abuse of power and federal overreach." The National Mining Association, citing high demand for minerals and fragile global supply chains, said domestic mining has "never been more important." It said EPA's decision is "in stark contrast to national and global realities."

Tyre Nichols beating raises scrutiny on 'elite' police units

By CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

A car with dark tinted windows circles the block a few times before swerving onto the sidewalk. A handful of armed plainclothes police officers jump out and order everyone out of a double-parked car so they can search it, striking terror in the seconds before red and blue lights flash or an officer yells "police."

A similar scene plays out in dozens of cities across the country every day.

The beating and death of Tyre Nichols by five former Memphis police officers who were members of an anti-crime task force has renewed scrutiny on such squads, which frequently wear street clothes and often are involved in a disproportionate number of violent incidents and civilian complaints. Memphis police officials — after initially defending the SCORPION unit — permanently disbanded the team Saturday just hours after the release of video that showed immediate and prolonged aggression from its officers.

Police department leaders across the country bill the specialty squads as "elite" units of officers sent into neighborhoods as a direct response to an increase in specific crimes, often arguing they are a tool to dedicate additional resources.

But policing reform advocates and people who live in the Black and brown neighborhoods that these units usually patrol often say the officers employ aggressive tactics sometimes bordering on brutality, have little oversight and use pretextual stops of cars and pedestrians alike to search for larger crimes.

"Obviously it's a complicated issue, and they are responding to a tangible problem being whatever crime of the day they are formed to address — guns, gang violence, narcotics. But Memphis is not an outlier here," said Hans Menos, vice president of the Triage Response Team at the Center for Policing Equity. "I don't see any other option we have as a country but to say this is not working. This is leading to pain, injury and death."

Menos, who led Philadelphia's Police Advisory Commission, the former civilian oversight arm of the police department, said the units often are judged only on results without questions about how those were gained.

Less than a year before Nichols was killed, four officers from a similar plainclothes unit in Philadelphia tasked with getting illegal guns off the street initiated a stop in an unmarked car of two juveniles on bikes.

Department leaders have said the officers turned on their flashing lights before 12-year-old Thomas T.J. Siderio, allegedly fired a shot at the car. One of the officers chased down Siderio, fatally shooting him in the back as he fled. Prosecutors who charged that officer with murder said the boy was unarmed when he was shot.

But there were warning signs in Philadelphia that task force officers were acting aggressively or recklessly for months before the shooting — including car wrecks and citizen complaints.

Police leaders in several departments have argued that the high number of complaints and violent incidents in these squads are due to the exact work they are asked to do — interrupt patterns of dangerous crime often involving guns or drugs.

In Memphis, police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis started the Street Crimes Operations to Restore Peace In Our Neighborhoods unit when she took over the department in 2021. The team of about 40 officers was designed to focus on repeat violent offenders after three years of rising violence in the city, including a record number of homicides in 2021.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 63 of 84

Before she agreed to disband the SCORPION unit in an effort to speed the city's healing process, Davis had defended its work, saying it had taken 800 illegal guns off the street and made more than 2,000 felony arrests last year. She added that she would not shut down a unit if a few officers committed "some egregious act."

Menos scoffed at what he called a frequent defense used by police leaders who say a few "bad apples" commit those acts.

"The narrative that if this team was a problem, it was unique. Well, it's not. ... It's not bad apples," he said. "The reliance of departments on these young specialized units is one of the biggest structural problems in policing that could exist. They are operating with impunity in largely Black communities that are historically overpoliced. And we are compounding that problem by putting these overly aggressive, results-only oriented officers in those neighborhoods."

Hunter Demster, an organizer for the group Decarceration Memphis who has raised red flags about SCORPION and other plainclothes units in Memphis, said people in neighborhoods with higher crime want more police officers to solve murders, but when the department puts these patrols in their communities what they get is targeted harassment.

Demster said a friend recently got pulled over by an officer in an "unmarked car, unmarked clothing. And the officer said that his license plate was bent in the corner and everything was still visible. They use that as a pretext to do an investigation into hoping they can smell weed."

In Baltimore, seven Gun Trace Task Force members indicted in 2017 were convicted or pleaded guilty to federal racketeering charges for systematically robbing the city and its residents of money, drugs and jewelry using illegal searches and planted evidence.

Afterward, the Baltimore Police Department commissioned an independent review of agency operations and the resulting report included recommendations specifically aimed at increasing oversight of plainclothes units. The report, released in January 2022, called for more careful screening of applicants and routine financial audits for plainclothes and undercover officers.

Baltimore Police Commissioner Michael Harrison has also continued to shift the department away from a reliance on plainclothes policework in recent years, issuing uniforms and marked cars for so-called District Action Teams officers, whose focus is proactive patrols.

Terence Jones, a former Philadelphia police officer who served on multiple plainclothes units, investigated Siderio's shooting in March of 2022 as part of his work for the police accountability nonprofit Total Justice that he founded. Jones called the shooting a murder after talking with neighbors and uncovering cellphone and security videos that showed the aftermath.

Even so, Jones was unwilling to say the units should be disbanded. He advocated for reforming them to include better supervision, ban traffic stops for unmarked cars and screen out any officer with a history of excessive force from the application process.

"These jump-out boys are a slap in the face to real police officers that did the job the right way without having to abuse authority, plant evidence or use excessive force," he said. "But that lack of accountability starts at the top."

In New York City, Mayor Eric Adams agreed he'd rather reform than disband the squads, angering progressives during his 2021 mayoral campaign when he promised to bring back a modified form of a plainclothes anti-crime police unit of about 600 officers that was disbanded during protests over the killing of George Floyd.

The anti-crime officers were tasked with seizing illegal guns but had been blamed for abuses like the 2014 death of Eric Garner. Then-police Commissioner Dermot Shea said when he ended the program in June 2020 that the anti-crime unit had been responsible for a disproportionate share of complaints against the department.

Adams, a Democrat and retired police captain, changed the squad's name to the anti-gun unit when he reintroduced it in March 2022 and said officers would wear modified uniforms such as police windbreakers rather than street clothes.

Menos said Adams' plan is a way of saying he's run out of new policing options.

"What he did was try to thread that needle, to suggest that he recognized the problems with oppression could be directly tied to the tactics and operations of specialized units, but like many before him, he said, 'Don't worry, this time there will be oversight,'" Menos said. "How many specialized units are going to kill people, maim people, become criminals themselves before we say let's try something else?"

DeSantis pushes ban on diversity programs in state colleges

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday announced plans to block state colleges from having programs on diversity, equity and inclusion, and critical race theory.

The Republican governor debuted the proposal as part of a larger, higher education legislative package that is expected to be taken up by the GOP-controlled statehouse when its regular session begins in March.

DeSantis, a potential 2024 Republican presidential candidate, has heavily criticized critical race theory, which examines systemic racism — as well as diversity, equity and inclusion programs, commonly known as DEI.

Critical race theory is a way of thinking about America's history through the lens of racism. Scholars developed it during the 1970s and 1980s in response to what scholars viewed as a lack of racial progress following the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. It centers on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions, which function to maintain the dominance of white people in society.

"I think people want to see true academics and they want to get rid of some of the political window dressing that seems to accompany all this," DeSantis said at a news conference in Bradenton, adding that DEI and CRT programs would get "No funding, and that will wither on the vine."

In a statement, the governor's office said the proposal "raises the standards of learning and civil discourse of public higher education in Florida" by "prohibiting higher education institutions from using any funding, regardless of source, to support DEI, CRT, and other discriminatory initiatives."

Later in the day, the newly conservative majority on the once progressive New College of Florida board of trustees — most of whom DeSantis recently appointed— voted to oust the current president, Patricia Okker. They also voted to begin debate on whether to abolish the office of diversity, equity and inclusion, and related programs. The final word on DEI programs will come at another meeting.

The overall idea is to transform the school of less than 1,000 students in Sarasota into what the new trustees call a "classical" liberal arts school.

"I think it's time for us to set a new standard," said one of the new trustees, conservative activist Christopher Rufo. "I think new leadership is the expectation."

The trustees voted to hire Richard Corcoran as the next New College president. The Republican former state House speaker and education commissioner is a close ally of DeSantis.

Before the meeting, dozens of students held a rally outside to oppose major changes to the school and its mission, which is known for its open approach to coursework without specific grades, and being a safe place for many LBGQT students who feel marginalized in other schools.

"That's what's at stake today and what we're here to protect: the freedom to learn, the freedom to think and the freedom to be who we are," said fourth-year student Madison Markham.

The governor's overall higher education proposal was expected after the DeSantis administration requested in late December that state colleges submit spending data and other information on programs related to diversity, equity and inclusion, and critical race theory.

The governor is also pushing for education administrators to "realign" courses to provide historically accurate information and to not include identity politics. DeSantis' proposals have not yet been introduced as formal legislation but the GOP-controlled statehouse is often eager to carry out his initiatives.

DeSantis and other conservatives have long argued that critical race theory, and diversity, equity and inclusion programs are racially divisive and discriminatory — and are often cited in criticism of what they often call "woke" ideology in education.

Last year the governor signed legislation dubbed the Stop WOKE Act that restricts certain race-based conversations and analysis, in schools and businesses. The law bars instruction that says members of one race are inherently racist or should feel guilt for past actions committed by others of the same race, among other things.

This month the DeSantis administration blocked a new Advanced Placement course on African American studies from being taught in high schools, saying it violates state law and is historically inaccurate.

So far, at least 25 states have considered legislation or other steps to limit how race and racism can be taught, according to an analysis from Education Week. Eight states, all Republican-led, have banned or limited the teaching of critical race theory or similar concepts through laws or administrative actions. The bans largely address what can be taught inside the classroom.

4 key suspects in Haiti presidential slaying in US custody

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Four key suspects in the killing of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse were transferred to the United States for prosecution as the case stagnates in Haiti amid death threats that have spooked local judges, U.S. officials announced Tuesday.

The suspects now in custody of the U.S. government include James Solages, 37, and Joseph Vincent, 57, two Haitian-Americans who were among the first arrested after Moïse was shot 12 times at his private home near the capital of Port-au-Prince on July, 7 2021.

Also charged is Christian Emmanuel Sanon, an elderly pastor, doctor and failed businessman that authorities have identified as a key player. His associates have suggested he was duped by the real — and still unidentified — masterminds behind the assassination that has plunged Haiti deep into political chaos and unleashed a level of gang violence not seen in decades.

The fourth suspect was identified as Colombian citizen Germán Rivera García, 44, who is among nearly two dozen former Colombian soldiers charged in the case.

Rivera, along with Solages and Vincent, face charges including conspiring to commit murder or kidnaping outside the U.S. and providing material support and resources resulting in death, the U.S. Justice Department said.

Sanon is charged with conspiring to smuggle goods from the U.S. and providing unlawful export information. Court documents state that he allegedly shipped 20 ballistic vests to Haiti, but that the items shipped were described as “medical X-ray vests and school supplies.”

It was not immediately known if the four suspects had attorneys who could comment on the development. The men are scheduled to appear in federal court Wednesday in Miami.

A total of seven suspects in the case are now in U.S. custody. Dozens of others still languish in Haiti’s main penitentiary, which is severely overcrowded and often lacks food and water for inmates.

The case has reached a virtual standstill in Haiti, with local officials last year nominating a fifth judge to investigate the killing after four others were dismissed or resigned for personal reasons.

One judge told The Associated Press that his family asked him not to take the case because they feared for his life. Another judge stepped down after one of his assistants died under murky circumstances.

Court documents state that exactly two months before Moïse was killed, Vincent texted Solages a video of a cat “reacting alertly” to the sound of gunfire and that Solages laughed, prompting Vincent to respond: “That’s the way Jovenel will be pretty much, but (sooner) if you guys really up to it!”

The document states that Solages responded that “(this) cat will never come back,” and “trust me brother, we definitely working our final decision.”

Then in June, some 20 former Colombian soldiers were recruited to supposedly help arrest the president and protect Sanon, who envisioned himself as Haiti’s new leader. Rivera was in charge of that group, the documents state.

The plan was to detain Moïse and whisk him to an unidentified location by plane, but that plot fell through when the suspects couldn’t find a plane or sufficient weapons, authorities said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 66 of 84

A day before the killing, Solages falsely told other suspects that it was a CIA operation and that the mission was to kill the president, according to the documents. Shortly before the killing, authorities said, Solages shouted that it was allegedly a DEA operation to ensure compliance from the president's security detail.

About a year after the killing, U.S. authorities say they interviewed Solages, Vincent and Rivera while they were in Haitian custody and that they agreed to talk.

The other suspects already in U.S. custody are Rodolphe Jaar, a former U.S. government informant and a Haitian businessman who was extradited from the Dominican Republic, where he was detained in January 2022.

That same month, U.S. authorities arrested Mario Antonio Palacios Palacios, a former Colombian soldier who was deported by Jamaica after fleeing there from Haiti. While en route to Colombia, he was detained by U.S. officials in Panama during a layover.

Also in January 2022, authorities arrested former Haitian Sen. John Joël Joseph, who also had fled to Jamaica.

Alfredo Izaguirre, a Miami-based lawyer for Palacios, said Tuesday's arrival of the four other suspects will postpone the trial because they all have to be tried at the same time. He said Palacios had been prepared for the trial to begin in early March, but now it could be postponed for up to four months.

Haiti police say other high-profile suspects remain at large, including a former Supreme Court judge who authorities say was favored to seize power from Moïse instead of Sanon as originally planned. Another fugitive is Joseph Badio, alleged leader of the plot who previously worked for Haiti's Ministry of Justice and the government's anti-corruption unit until he was fired, police say.

Emmanuel Jeanty, an attorney for the president's widow, Martine Moïse, who was injured in the attack and flown to the U.S. for care, did not return a message for comment.

In December, Martine Moïse tweeted that her husband — who also has been accused of corruption, which he denied — had fought against it, which resulted in his assassination. "Despite the blockages, 17 months later, the people are demanding #Justice," she wrote.

Manslaughter charge for Alec Baldwin in 'Rust' set shooting

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Actor Alec Baldwin and a weapons specialist have been formally charged with involuntary manslaughter in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on a New Mexico movie set, according to court documents filed by prosecutors Tuesday.

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies filed the charging documents naming Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who supervised weapons on the set of the Western "Rust," and outlined evidence that they deviated repeatedly from known safety standards.

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

Prosecutors have said that Baldwin's involvement as a producer and as the person who fired the gun weighed in the decision to file charges.

In recent weeks, Carmack-Altwies outlined two sets of involuntary manslaughter charges in connection with the shooting.

The manslaughter charge filed Tuesday against Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed includes two alternative standards and sanctions.

One version would require proof of negligence, which is punishable by up to 18 months in jail and a \$5,000 fine under New Mexico law.

The second alternative is for reckless disregard of safety "without due caution and circumspection." It carries a higher threshold of wrongdoing and includes a "firearm enhancement" that could result in a mandatory five years in prison because the offense was committed with a gun.

Prosecutors have said a jury may ultimately decide which definition of manslaughter to pursue.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 67 of 84

A probable cause statement outlining evidence against Baldwin alleges many instances of "extremely reckless acts" or reckless failures to take precautions in the days and minutes leading up to the deadly shooting.

Investigators say that Baldwin drew a revolver from a holster, pointed it at Hutchins and fired the weapon when a plastic or replica gun should have been used by industry standards.

It says photos and videos of the rehearsal, including moments before the deadly shooting, showed Baldwin with his finger inside the trigger guard and on the trigger while "manipulating" the pistol's hammer, and that an FBI analysis shows the pistol could not be fired without pressing the trigger.

Investigators say Baldwin failed to appear for mandatory firearms training prior to filming, and that he didn't fully complete on-set training while distracted by phone calls to family. They also cite several breaches of required safety-checks and protocols as the gun was loaded and provided to Baldwin.

Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed maintain their innocence and have vowed to fight the charges.

Baldwin's attorney Luke Nikas declined comment Tuesday and referred to his previous statement on the case, in which he called the charges a "terrible miscarriage of justice" that he and his client would fight and win.

"Mr. Baldwin had no reason to believe there was a live bullet in the gun – or anywhere on the movie set," the statement said. "He relied on the professionals with whom he worked."

Gutierrez-Reed's attorney said they would release a statement later.

Prosecutors say that Baldwin, in his role as a producer of "Rust," failed to account for Gutierrez-Reed's relative inexperience as an uncertified armorer on her second film assignment. They allege that Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed skipped a critical safety check of the gun and its ammunition, and that Baldwin should have known better as an actor with extensive experience in films involving firearms.

"Standard protocol is the armorer is to show the actor the firearm, pull the bullets out in front of the actor, and demonstrate there are no live rounds (but dummies) in the firearm," investigators said. "Hannah Gutierrez-Reed did not do this protocol in front of Baldwin. Baldwin did not object."

Prosecutors also provided a new accounting of live ammunition on the set — noting that five additional live rounds were discovered by authorities, including a round in Baldwin's holster as well as an ammunition box, a holster, a weapons cart and one live round seized from Gutierrez-Reed.

Hutchins' death already has led to new safety precautions in the film industry.

Carmack-Altwies told The Associated Press in a Jan. 19 interview that the set was "really being run pretty fast and loose" and that Baldwin should have known there had been previous misfires on the set and that multiple people had brought up safety concerns.

Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed will be issued a summons to appear in court. Prosecutors will forgo a grand jury and rely on a judge to determine if there is sufficient evidence to move toward trial. It could take up to 60 days for decision.

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

Prosecutors say that a proposed plea agreement signed by assistant director David Halls, who oversaw safety on set, has not yet been approved by a judge and cannot be published.

Prosecutors said previously that Halls has agreed to plead guilty in the negligent use of a deadly weapon. Prosecutors say Halls may have handled the gun improperly before it was given to Baldwin.

Heather Brewer, a spokeswoman for the district attorney's office, said in a statement Monday that prosecutors are "fully focused on securing justice for Halyna Hutchins" and "the evidence and the facts speak for themselves."

Baldwin, also a co-producer on "Rust," has described the killing as a tragic accident. The 64-year-old actor said he was told the gun was safe and has sought to clear his name by suing people involved in handling and supplying the loaded .45-caliber revolver.

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

Defense attorney Jason Bowles, who represents Gutierrez-Reed, said the charges are the result of a

“flawed investigation” and an “inaccurate understanding of the full facts.”

Defendants can participate remotely in many initial court proceedings or seek to have their first appearance waived.

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

Elon Musk’s Tesla tweet trial delves into investor damages

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — An Elon Musk tweet declaring he had the financing to take Tesla private in 2018 caused billions of dollars in investor damages after the deal collapsed, according to estimates presented Tuesday at a trial examining the haphazard handling of the buyout proposal.

The mind-bending estimates laid out by two experts hired by attorneys representing Tesla shareholders underscored the challenges facing a nine-person jury as the three-week trial winds down this week. U.S. District Judge Edward Chen expects to turn the case over to the jury Friday.

Depending on the verdict, Musk and the electric automaker that he runs could be facing more financial fallout for his unpredictable behavior on the Twitter platform, which he now owns. Without acknowledging any wrongdoing, Musk and Tesla reached a \$40 million settlement with securities regulators after Musk’s troublesome tweets in August 2018.

In this class-action lawsuit on behalf of Tesla shareholders, the jurors must first determine whether two tweets that Musk abruptly posted on Aug. 7, 2018 steered Tesla investors in the wrong direction. If the jury decides to hold Musk accountable for the tweets that Chen has already deemed falsehoods, they will face what may be an even more formidable task — trying to calculate how much Musk — one of the world’s richest people — and Tesla should have to pay for the misleading tweets.

One of Tuesday’s two experts, economist Michael Hartzmark, reviewed a report peppered with terms such as “but-for” and “consequential inflation” that made a case for calculating the damages suffered by Tesla shareholders during a 10-day period in August 2018 at anywhere from \$4 billion to \$11 billion, or \$22.55 to \$66.67 per Tesla share at that time.

Another expert, University of Maryland finance professor Steven Heston, reviewed an even denser report analyzing the impact of Musk’s tweets on more than 2,000 types of Tesla stock options, drawing largely upon a formula known as the Black-Scholes model widely used by companies to value executive compensation packages.

When pressed by a Musk lawyer about the reliability of his model, Heston acknowledged: “All models deviate from reality, which is why they are models.”

Heston, who said he was paid \$300,000 to \$350,000 for his work in the case, demurred on trying to make a concrete estimate on the investor damages, saying that was a job for the jurors.

The crux of the case hinges on an Aug. 7, 2018, tweet in which Musk declared “funding secured” to take Tesla private. Musk abruptly posted the tweet minutes before boarding his private jet after being alerted that the Financial Times was about to publish a story that Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund had spent about \$2 billion buying a 5% stake in Tesla to diversify its interests beyond oil, according to his testimony.

Amid widespread confusion about whether Musk’s Twitter account had been hacked or he was joking, Musk followed up a few hours later with another tweet suggesting a deal was imminent.

During roughly eight hours of sworn testimony, Musk repeatedly insisted he was looking after shareholders’ best interests and believed he had a financing commitment from the Saudi fund that was recanted after his “funding secured” tweet. Musk also testified he could have still pulled off the buyout by raising money from other investors and selling some of his stock in SpaceX, a rocket ship maker that he founded.

After consulting with Tesla’s major shareholders, Musk decided the electric automaker should remain

publicly traded — a decision that has paid off for him and other investors. Tesla's shares are now worth more than eight times what they were at the time of Musk's buyout tweet, after adjusting for two stock splits that have occurred since then.

In Haiti, gangs take control as democracy withers

By MEGAN JANETSKY and PIERRE RICHARD LUXAMA Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Jimmy Cherizier zips through Haiti's capital on the back of a motorcycle, flanked by young men wielding black and leopard print masks and automatic weapons.

As the pack of bikes flies by graffiti reading "Mafia boss" in Creole, street vendors selling vegetables, meats and old clothes on the curb cast their eyes to the ground or peer curiously.

Cherizier, best known by his childhood nickname Barbecue, has become the most recognized name in Haiti.

And here in his territory, enveloped by the tin-roofed homes and bustling streets of the informal settlement La Saline, he is the law.

Internationally, he's known as Haiti's most powerful and feared gang leader, sanctioned by the United Nations for "serious human rights abuses," and the man behind a fuel blockade that brought the Caribbean nation to its knees late last year.

But if you ask the former police officer with gun tattoos running up his arm, he's a "revolutionary," advocating against a corrupt government that has left a nation of 12 million people in the dust.

"I'm not a thief. I'm not involved in kidnapping. I'm not a rapist. I'm just carrying out a social fight," Cherizier, leader of "G9 Family and Allies," told The Associated Press while sitting in a chair in the middle of an empty road in the shadow of a home with windows shattered by bullets. "I'm a threat to the system."

At a time when democracy has withered in Haiti and gang violence has spiraled out of control, it's armed men like Cherizier that are filling the power vacuum left by a crumbling government. In December, the U.N. estimated that gangs controlled 60% of Haiti's capital, but nowadays most on the streets of Port-au-Prince say that number is closer to 100%.

"There is, democratically speaking, little-to-no legitimacy" for Haiti's government, said Jeremy McDermott, a head of InSight Crime, a research center focused on organized crime. "This gives the gangs a stronger political voice and more justification to their claims to be the true representatives of the communities."

It's something that conflict victims, politicians, analysts, aid organizations, security forces and international observers fear will only get worse. Civilians, they worry, will face the brunt of the consequences.

Haiti's history has long been tragic. Home of the largest slave uprising in the Western Hemisphere, the country achieved independence from France in 1804, ahead of other countries in the region.

But it's long been the poorest country in the hemisphere, and Haiti in the 20th century endured a bloody dictatorship that lasted until 1986 and brought about the mass execution of tens of thousands of Haitians.

The country has been plagued by political turmoil since, while suffering waves of devastating earthquakes, hurricanes and cholera outbreaks.

The latest crisis entered full throttle following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. In his absence, current Prime Minister Ariel Henry emerged in a power struggle as the country's leader.

Haiti's nearly 200 gangs have taken advantage of the chaos, warring for control.

Tension hums in Port-au-Prince. Police checkpoints dot busy intersections, and graffiti tags reading "down with Henry" can be spotted in every part of the city. Haitians walk through the streets with a restlessness that comes from knowing that anything could happen at any moment.

An ambulance driver returning from carrying a patient told the AP he was kidnapped, held for days and asked to pay \$1 million to be set free.

Such ransoms are now commonplace, used by gangs to fund their warfare.

An average of four people are kidnapped a day in Haiti, according to U.N. estimates.

The U.N. registered nearly 2,200 murders in 2022, double the year before. Women in the country de-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 70 of 84

scribe brutal gang rapes in areas controlled by gangs. Patients in trauma units are caught in the crossfire, ravaged by gunshots from either gangs or police.

"No one is safe," said Peterson Pean, a man with a bullet lodged in his face from being shot by police after failing to stop at a police checkpoint on his way home from work.

Meanwhile, a wave of grisly killings of police officers by gangs has spurred outrage and protests by Haitians.

Following the slaying of six officers, video circulating on social media – likely filmed by gangs – showed six naked bodies stretched out on the dirt with guns on their chests. Another shows two masked men using officers' dismembered limbs to hold their cigarettes while they smoke.

"Gang-related violence has reached levels not seen in years ... touching near all segments of society," said Helen La Lime, U.N. special envoy for Haiti, in a late January Security Council meeting.

Henry, the prime minister, has asked the U.N. to lead a military intervention, but many Haitians insist that's not the solution, citing past consequences of foreign intervention in Haiti. So far, no country has been willing to put boots on the ground.

The warfare has extended past historically violence-torn areas, now consuming mansion-lined streets previously considered relatively safe.

La Lime highlighted turf wars between Cherizier's group, G9, and another, G-Pep, as one of the key drivers.

In October, the U.N. slammed Cherizier with sanctions, including an arms embargo, an asset freeze and a travel ban.

The body accused him of carrying out a bloody massacre in La Saline, economically paralyzing the country, and using armed violence and rape to threaten "the peace, security, and stability of Haiti."

At the same time, despite not being elected into power and his mandate timing out, Henry, whose administration declined a request for comment, has continued at the helm of a skeleton government. He has pledged for a year and a half to hold general elections, but has failed to do so.

In early January, the country lost its final democratically elected institution when the terms of 10 senators symbolically holding office ended their term.

It has turned Haiti into a de-facto "dictatorship," said Patrice Dumont, one of the senators.

He said even if the current government was willing to hold elections, he doesn't know if it would be possible due to gangs' firm grip on the city.

"Citizens are losing trust in their country. (Haiti) is facing social degradation," Dumont said. "We were already a poor country, and we became poorer because of this political crisis."

At the same time, gang leaders like Cherizier have increasingly invoked political language, using the end of the senators' terms to call into question Henry's power.

"The government of Ariel Henry is a de-facto government. It's a government that has no legitimacy," Cherizier said.

Cherizier, a handgun tucked into the back of his jeans, took the AP around his territory in La Saline, explaining the harsh conditions communities live in. He denies allegations against him, saying the sanctions imposed on him are based on lies.

Cherizier, who would not tell the AP where his money came from, claims he's just trying to provide security and improve conditions in the zones he controls.

Cherizier walked through piles of trash and past malnourished children touting an iPhone with a photo of his face on the back. A drone belonging to his team monitoring his security follows him as he weaves through rows of packed homes made of metal sheets and wooden planks.

Tailed by a cluster of heavily armed men in masks, he would not allow the AP to film or take photos of his guards and their weapons.

"We're the bad guys, but we're not the bad-bad guys," one of the men told an AP video journalist as he led her through a packed market.

While some have speculated that Cherizier would run for office if elections were held, Cherizier insists that he wouldn't.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 71 of 84

What is clear, said McDermott, of InSight Crime, is that gangs are reaping rewards from the political chaos. InSight Crime estimates that before the killing of the president, Cherizier's federation of gangs, G9, got half of its money from the government, 30% from kidnappings and 20% from extortions. After the killing, government funding dipped significantly, according to the organization.

Yet his gangs have significantly grown in power after the group blocked the distribution of fuel from Port-au-Prince's key fuel terminal for two months late last year.

The blockade paralyzed the country in the midst of a cholera outbreak and gave other gangs footholds to expand. Cherizier claimed the blockade was in protest of rising inflation, government corruption and deepening inequality in Haiti.

Today, G9 controls much of the center of Port-au-Prince and fights for power elsewhere.

"The political Frankenstein long ago lost control of the gang monster," McDermott said. "They are now rampaging across the country with no restraint, earning money any way they can, kidnapping foremost."

Civilians like 9-year-old Christina Julien are among those who pay the price.

The smiling girl with dreams of being a doctor wakes up curled on the floor of her aunt's porch next to her parents and two sisters.

She's one of at least 155,000 people in Port-Au-Prince alone that have been forced to flee their homes due to the violence. It's been four months since she has been able to sleep in her own bed.

Their neighborhood in the northern fringes of the city once was safe. But she and her mother, 48-year-old Sandra Sainteluz, said things began to shift last year.

The once bustling streets emptied out. At night, gunfire would ring outside their window and when neighbors would set off fireworks, Christina would ask her mother if they were bullets.

"When there were shootings I couldn't go in the yard, I couldn't go see my friends, I had to stay in the house," Christina said. "I had to always lay down on the floor with my mother, my father, my sister and my brother."

Christina started having heart palpitations due to the stress and Sainteluz, a teacher, worried for her daughter's health. At the same time, Sainteluz and her husband feared their kids could get kidnapped on the way to school.

In October, during Cherizier's blockade, armed men belonging to the powerful 400 Mawozo gang stormed their neighborhood. That same gang was behind the kidnapping of 17 missionaries in 2021.

Christina saw a group of men with guns from a friend's house and ran home. She told Sainteluz, "Mommy we have to leave, we have to leave. I just saw the gangsters passing by with their weapons, we need to leave!"

They packed everything they could carry, and sought refuge in the small, two-bedroom home of family members in another part of the city.

Life here is not easy, said Sainteluz, the main provider for her family.

"I felt desperate going to live in someone else's home with so many children. I left everything, I left with just two bags," she said.

Sainteluz scrambles to scrub clothes, cook soup for her family in the dirt-floored kitchen and help Christina sitting on an empty gasoline container meticulously doing her math homework.

Whenever a gust of wind blows through the nearby hills, the rusted metal rooftop of the house they share with 10 other people shudders.

The mother once worked as a primary school teacher, earning 6,000 Haitian gourdes (\$41) a month. She had to stop teaching two years ago due to the violence. Now she sells slushies on the side of the road, earning a fraction of what she once made.

Young Christina said she misses her friends and her Barbie dolls.

But, the sacrifice is worth it, Sainteluz said. Over the past few months, she's heard horror stories of her daughter's classmates getting kidnapped, neighbors having to pay ransoms of \$40,000 and killings right outside their house.

At least here they feel safer. For now, she added.

Blinken Mideast visit highlights US limitations in region

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday wrapped up a two-day visit to Israel and the occupied West Bank with no visible signs of progress toward halting one of the deadliest outbreaks of Israeli-Palestinian violence in years.

The anemic outcome highlighted what appears to be the limited influence the Biden administration has over Israel's new government, which is dominated by hard-line nationalists who oppose concessions toward the Palestinians. But it also reflected a years-long process that has turned the U.S. into little more than a conflict manager — drawing Palestinian accusations that Washington is a dishonest broker with a bias toward Israel.

Blinken arrived in the region at a particularly tense time — ending a month in which 35 Palestinians and seven Israelis were killed.

The bloodshed overshadowed what was meant to be a mission to establish working relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his new far-right government. Instead, Blinken spent much of his time trying to defuse tensions.

Speaking to reporters before returning to the U.S., Blinken said both sides had voiced their readiness to restore calm and that he had instructed two senior officials to remain in the region.

He also reiterated the long-term U.S. goal of working toward a two-state solution that would establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel under a final peace settlement.

"Restoring calm is our immediate task. But over the longer term, we have to do more than just lower tensions," he said.

It was a familiar message expressed by a string of U.S. administrations — but based on the bitter experiences of his predecessors — one that is unlikely to bear fruit. Blinken gave no details on what steps he has in mind to promote his short-term goals or his long-term vision.

In the short run, Blinken must contend with Israel's most right-wing government ever — a collection of religious and ultra-nationalist politicians who oppose concessions to the Palestinians and rule out Palestinian independence.

On the eve of Blinken's arrival, Netanyahu's Cabinet approved a series of punitive steps against the Palestinians in response to a pair of shootings in east Jerusalem last weekend — including an attack that killed seven people outside a synagogue in a Jewish settlement.

These include plans to step up West Bank settlement construction, demolitions of the homes of attackers' families as well as dozens of Palestinian homes constructed without building permits. Palestinians say such permits are almost impossible to get.

Blinken said the U.S. would oppose "anything" that undermines hopes of a two-state solution, including settlement construction built on occupied lands sought by the Palestinians. Some 700,000 Israeli settlers now live in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, areas captured by Israel in 1967 and claimed by the Palestinians.

But he gave no indication on how the U.S. might respond if Israel presses ahead with such moves, and reiterated longstanding lines about the U.S. commitment to Israel's security and "shared values" between the countries.

Yara Hawari, a senior analyst at Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank, said Palestinian expectations for Blinken's visit were low to begin with, and that Blinken had delivered a worn message coddling Israel.

"It's a textbook visit," she said. "The U.S. is not an honest broker in this situation, so I don't understand how it could bring anything to the table that would actually lead us toward achieving Palestinian fundamental rights."

In a sign of what could lie ahead if the U.S. pushes the new government, Israeli Cabinet Minister Orit Strock, a member of a religious ultra-nationalist party, lashed out at Blinken's call for a commitment to human rights and rule of law.

The comments were widely seen as criticism of the government's plans to overhaul Israel's judicial sys-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 73 of 84

tem and weaken its Supreme Court. Critics in Israel say the plan will severely damage Israel's democratic system of checks and balances.

"Blinken needed to respect Israeli sovereignty. We're not the 51st or 52nd state of the U.S.," Strock said.

Blinken played down the criticism, saying he would focus on Israel's policies, not individual personalities.

Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to Washington, said the blame for failed peacemaking lies with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who at 87 is seen as weak, corrupt and increasingly authoritarian after nearly 20 years in office.

"I think this administration understands there is no one really to work with on the Palestinian side," he said. "They have other issues to deal with."

The mutual lack of trust is just one of the many reasons for repeated U.S. failures in the region since the historic interim Oslo accords 30 years ago. Over the decades, the Clinton, Bush, Obama and Trump administrations have all tried their hands at Mideast peace plans — with little to show beyond sporadic interventions to halt outbreaks of violence.

Preoccupied with the war in Ukraine and the U.S. rivalry with China, the Biden administration appears to have little desire or bandwidth to wade into a mission doomed to fail.

Aaron David Miller, who served as an adviser to a string of Democratic and Republic administrations for over two decades, said he believes U.S. diplomats have reached the conclusion that the best they can do is damage control. "It's trying to prevent an explosion, but they haven't figured out how to do that," said Miller, who is now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

For the Palestinians, there has been one constant throughout all of the failed peace efforts — a U.S. unwillingness to put pressure on Israel. They say that without this pressure, Israel, as the occupier, holds all the cards and has no incentive to make concessions.

The U.S. has confronted Israel a few times, including over a short-lived settlement construction slowdown under President Barack Obama. These instances achieved little and ended up in bitter public spats. And when the Palestinians turned to the United Nations and other international organizations, the U.S. blocked them.

In his meeting with Blinken, Abbas appealed for more U.S. involvement, saying Israel was being given a pass "without deterrence or accountability."

"Our people will not accept the continuation of the occupation forever, and regional security will not be strengthened by violating the sanctity of the holy sites, trampling on the dignity of the Palestinian people and ignoring their legitimate rights to freedom, dignity and independence," he said.

Ukraine pushes for Western fighter jets after tank deals

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine won support Tuesday from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets, but there were no signs that larger nations like the U.S. and Britain have changed their stance of refusing to provide warplanes to Kyiv after almost a year of battling Russia's invading forces.

"Ukraine needs fighter jets ... missiles, tanks. We need to act," Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in the Latvian capital of Riga at a news conference with his Baltic and Polish colleagues. Those countries, which lie on NATO's eastern flank, feel especially threatened by Russia and have been the leading advocates for providing military aid.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov held talks with his French counterpart, saying they did not discuss specific fighter jets, but they did talk about aviation "platforms" to help Ukraine's ground-to-air defense.

"I don't know how quick it will be, this response from Western allies" to Kyiv's requests for fighter jets, Reznikov said. "I'm optimistic and I think it will be as soon as possible."

He also listed weapons Ukraine has sought in the past year, starting with Stingers, and said the first response was always, "Impossible." Eventually though, he said, "it became possible."

French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, speaking with Reznikov, said there are "no taboos" on

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 74 of 84

sending fighter jets. He also confirmed France is sending 12 more Caesar cannons in the coming weeks.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets but set out conditions before such a step is taken, including not leading to an escalation of tensions or using the aircraft "to touch Russian soil," and not resulting in weakening "the capacities of the French army."

Reznikov's trip came a week after Western nations pledged to send Kyiv sophisticated modern tanks.

Several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could escalate the conflict and draw them in deeper.

The U.K. government, among Kyiv's staunchest supporters and military suppliers, said sending its fighter jets is "not practical." Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain, said Tuesday that "the U.K.'s Typhoon and F-35 fighter jets are extremely sophisticated and take months to learn how to fly," although he didn't say London was opposed to other nations sending planes.

Asked Monday if his administration was considering sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, U.S. President Joe Biden responded, "No."

On Tuesday, Reznikov was asked if Biden's "no" to F-16s was the final word.

"All types of help first passed through the 'no' stage," he said. "Which only means 'no' at today's given moment. The second stage is, 'Let's talk and study technical possibilities.' The third stage is, 'Let's get your personnel trained.' And the fourth stage is the transfer (of equipment)."

Reznikov said Ukraine went through those stages before it got the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, the Bradley armored vehicles and 155mm artillery.

"Remember the story of the German Leopards -- the answer was also 'no,'" he added. "And now we have a tank coalition. Therefore I believe an airplane coalition is within reach. But first there should always be a leader. And that's why I'm here."

Kyiv has repeatedly urged allies to send jets, calling them essential to challenging Russia's air superiority and to ensure the success of future counteroffensives spearheaded by Western tanks.

The West also has ruled out providing Kyiv with long-range missiles able to hit Russian territory, citing potential escalation.

After months of haggling, Western allies agreed last week to send the tanks, despite the hesitation and caution of some NATO members.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz appeared to balk at providing fighter jets, suggesting Sunday the reason for the discussion might be "domestic political motives" in some countries.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Monday there are "no taboos" in efforts to help Ukraine but added that jets "would be a very big next step."

Asked Tuesday about Western weapons supplies to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov repeated the Kremlin's view that "NATO long has been directly involved into a hybrid war against Russia."

Following talks in Moscow with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, he said the Russian military will "take all the necessary measures to derail the fulfillment of Western plans."

He said Shoukry conveyed a message from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken about Ukraine, which repeated calls from Washington for Russia to withdraw. Lavrov said "Russia is ready to hear any serious — I want to underline this word — proposal aimed at comprehensive settlement of the current situation."

Both Ukraine and Russia are believed to be building up their arsenals for an expected offensive in the coming months after the war being deadlocked on the battlefield during winter.

Asked about Lithuania's call for fighter jets and long-range missiles for Ukraine, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the comments "reflected an aggressive approach taken by the Baltic nations and Poland, who are ready to do everything to provoke further escalation without thinking about consequences."

Croatia President Zoran Milanovic, meanwhile, criticized Western nations for supplying Ukraine with tanks and other weapons, arguing those deliveries will only prolong the war.

Early in the conflict, discussions focused on possibly providing Kyiv with Soviet-made MiG-29 fighter jets that Ukrainian pilots are familiar with. In March, the Pentagon rejected Poland's proposal to transfer its MiG-29s to Kyiv through a U.S. base in Germany, citing a risk of triggering a Russia-NATO escalation.

Ukraine inherited a significant fleet of Soviet-made warplanes, including Su-27 and MiG-29 fighter jets

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 75 of 84

and Su-25 ground attack aircraft. Switching to Western aircraft would require Ukrainian crews to undergo long training and raise logistical challenges over maintenance and repair.

Russia methodically targeted Ukrainian air bases and air defense batteries in the opening stage of the war, but Ukraine has relocated its warplanes and concealed air defense assets, resulting in Moscow's failure to gain full control of the skies.

After suffering early, heavy losses, the Russian air force has avoided venturing deep into Ukraine's airspace and mostly focused on close support missions along the front line.

Analysis: NFL wasn't at its best in conference championships

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL didn't put on its Sunday best for the conference championships.

Before the San Francisco 49ers ran out of luck and quarterbacks, they were burned by a fourth-down catch by Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Devonta Smith that wasn't even a catch.

Although Kyle Shanahan could have thrown a challenge flag, the league's replay assist rule allows the replay official to make a quick reversal without a challenge, something that didn't happen before the Eagles hurried to the line and snapped the ball.

Smith's 29-yard catch from Jalen Hurts to the San Francisco 6 was quickly followed by Miles Sanders' TD run that opened the scoring.

After Christian McCaffrey tied it up by pinballing his way into the end zone from 23 yards out, the Niners were done in by their quarterback issues and succumbed 31-7 in an NFC championship that was only slightly more competitive than Georgia's 65-7 stomping of TCU in college football's national championship.

At least the Horned Frogs had a quarterback who could still throw the ball more than 5 to 10 yards in the fourth quarter.

Not so the 49ers, who were done in by Philadelphia's relentless pass rush, losing third-stringer Brock Purdy to a right elbow injury and fourth-string journeyman Josh Johnson to a concussion.

"You dress two quarterbacks and neither one of them can throw and neither one of them is really available," tight end George Kittle said. "It kind of limits what you can do as an offense, kind of limits our playbook to like 15 plays. You can only do so much."

Dressing two quarterbacks is the problem.

The NFL used to allow an "emergency" third quarterback to dress for the game, but the league stopped doing that 2011 when it expanded game-day rosters from 45 to 46, with the third quarterback no longer designated an "emergency" active player.

A third QB would count toward the 46-man limit, so teams quit doing it. And it burned the 49ers and the NFL on Sunday.

When Johnson went out with a concussion on the first drive of the second half, the Niners were left with the choice of putting Purdy back in even though he could hardly throw the ball or play the rest of the game in the wildcat with McCaffrey running the show.

They chose Purdy, and the Niners had no shot against a Philadelphia defense that stacked the box with no concern about defending the pass.

On the ice later that night, the NHL's Edmonton Oilers activated their emergency backup goaltender — affectionately known as the EBUG — Matt Berlin, a player from the University of Alberta Golden Bears. They put him in net with a five-goal lead over the Chicago Blackhawks and 2:26 to play, and he stopped the only shot he faced.

If the NHL can have the EBUG on standby, then there's no reason for the NFL not to reintroduce its EQBIII.

Another thing the league might have to look into again is its officiating.

The AFC championship went down to the wire and Patrick Mahomes finally beat Joe Burrow when Kansas City prevailed 23-20 over Cincinnati in a game that featured enough infuriating flags and blatantly missed calls — plus some bad clock keeping — to reignite the debate about the league needing to replace moonlighting lawyers with full-time officials.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 76 of 84

Among the flags that drew fans' ire was a costly intentional grounding call on Burrow on the last possession. Earlier, a nearly identical throw to the ground from Burrow didn't draw a flag.

Former NFL VP of officials and Fox rules analyst Dean Blandino said the intentional grounding call on Burrow never should have been called because Chris Jones hit him just as he released his pass.

"Was Joe Burrow's passing motion affected by the contact by Chris Jones?" Blandino asked in a tweet from The 33rd Team. "And that's the key: if the quarterback starts his throwing motion, which the hand coming forward with the ball starts that motion, and then he's contacted by a defender, which impacts that motion, then you are not to call intentional grounding.

"And I thought that the contact may have impacted Burrow's ability to get the ball out toward (Samaje) Perine enough to not calling grounding in that situation."

The good thing is the NFL has one more marquee evening to get it all right when Jason Kelce's Eagles and Travis Kelce's Chiefs square off in Super Bowl 57 in Glendale, Arizona, on Feb. 12.

Feds drop lobbying probe of retired general, lawyer says

By ALAN SUDERMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has dropped its probe of retired four-star Gen. John Allen for his role in an alleged illegal foreign lobbying campaign on behalf of the wealthy Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, his lawyer told The Associated Press.

Attorney David Schertler said in a statement Tuesday that the Justice Department had informed him that it was closing its investigation of Allen and no charges would be filed. The Justice Department declined to comment but a law enforcement official familiar with the inquiry who wasn't authorized to speak publicly confirmed the decision on condition of anonymity.

The AP first reported last June that the FBI had outlined a potential criminal case against Allen in a confidential search warrant application that appeared to have been filed in error on a federal courts website. Days later, the former Marine general who oversaw U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan resigned as head of the influential Brookings Institution think tank.

Schertler said it was "deeply unfortunate" and "unfair" that the public release of the FBI's confidential document had damaged Allen's reputation and livelihood. A Brookings spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The 77-page document detailed Allen's behind-the-scenes efforts to help Qatar influence U.S. policy in June 2017 when a diplomatic crisis erupted between the gas-rich monarchy and its neighbors. That included traveling to Doha to advise top Qatari officials and then lobbying U.S. officials, the FBI said.

An FBI agent said in an affidavit in support of a search warrant there was "substantial evidence" that Allen had knowingly broken foreign lobbying laws, and had made false statements and withheld "incriminating" documents.

Allen denied any wrongdoing, saying his involvement with Qatar was meant to help benefit the United States.

The federal investigation has previously ensnared Richard G. Olson, a former ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan who pleaded guilty to federal charges last year, and Imaad Zuberi, a prolific political donor now serving a 12-year prison sentence on corruption charges.

The Justice Department has made enforcing foreign lobbying laws a higher priority in recent years but suffered some high-profile defeats in contested cases.

Qatar has spent lavishly on its influence efforts in the U.S. and Europe. The country is allegedly behind a massive cash-for-favors corruption scandal currently unfolding at the European Union's parliament.

Cheaters beware: ChatGPT maker releases AI detection tool

By MATT O'BRIEN and JOCELYN GECKER undefined

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The maker of ChatGPT is trying to curb its reputation as a freewheeling cheat-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 77 of 84

ing machine with a new tool that can help teachers detect if a student or artificial intelligence wrote that homework.

The new AI Text Classifier launched Tuesday by OpenAI follows a weeks-long discussion at schools and colleges over fears that ChatGPT's ability to write just about anything on command could fuel academic dishonesty and hinder learning.

OpenAI cautions that its new tool – like others already available – is not foolproof. The method for detecting AI-written text "is imperfect and it will be wrong sometimes," said Jan Leike, head of OpenAI's alignment team tasked to make its systems safer.

"Because of that, it shouldn't be solely relied upon when making decisions," Leike said.

Teenagers and college students were among the millions of people who began experimenting with ChatGPT after it launched Nov. 30 as a free application on OpenAI's website. And while many found ways to use it creatively and harmlessly, the ease with which it could answer take-home test questions and assist with other assignments sparked a panic among some educators.

By the time schools opened for the new year, New York City, Los Angeles and other big public school districts began to block its use in classrooms and on school devices.

The Seattle Public Schools district initially blocked ChatGPT on all school devices in December but then opened access to educators who want to use it as a teaching tool, said Tim Robinson, the district spokesman. "We can't afford to ignore it," Robinson said.

The district is also discussing possibly expanding the use of ChatGPT into classrooms to let teachers use it to train students to be better critical thinkers and to let students use the application as a "personal tutor" or to help generate new ideas when working on an assignment, Robinson said.

School districts around the country say they are seeing the conversation around ChatGPT evolve quickly.

"The initial reaction was 'OMG, how are we going to stem the tide of all the cheating that will happen with ChatGPT,'" said Devin Page, a technology specialist with the Calvert County Public School District in Maryland. Now there is a growing realization that "this is the future" and blocking it is not the solution, he said.

"I think we would be naïve if we were not aware of the dangers this tool poses, but we also would fail to serve our students if we ban them and us from using it for all its potential power," said Page, who thinks districts like his own will eventually unblock ChatGPT, especially once the company's detection service is in place.

OpenAI emphasized the limitations of its detection tool in a blog post Tuesday, but said that in addition to deterring plagiarism, it could help to detect automated disinformation campaigns and other misuse of AI to mimic humans.

The longer a passage of text, the better the tool is at detecting if an AI or human wrote something. Type in any text -- a college admissions essay, or a literary analysis of Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man" --- and the tool will label it as either "very unlikely, unlikely, unclear if it is, possibly, or likely" AI-generated.

But much like ChatGPT itself, which was trained on a huge trove of digitized books, newspapers and online writings but often confidently spits out falsehoods or nonsense, it's not easy to interpret how it came up with a result.

"We don't fundamentally know what kind of pattern it pays attention to, or how it works internally," Leike said. "There's really not much we could say at this point about how the classifier actually works."

Higher education institutions around the world also have begun debating responsible use of AI technology. Sciences Po, one of France's most prestigious universities, prohibited its use last week and warned that anyone found surreptitiously using ChatGPT and other AI tools to produce written or oral work could be banned from Sciences Po and other institutions.

In response to the backlash, OpenAI said it has been working for several weeks to craft new guidelines to help educators.

"Like many other technologies, it may be that one district decides that it's inappropriate for use in their classrooms," said OpenAI policy researcher Lama Ahmad. "We don't really push them one way or another."

We just want to give them the information that they need to be able to make the right decisions for them.”

It’s an unusually public role for the research-oriented San Francisco startup, now backed by billions of dollars in investment from its partner Microsoft and facing growing interest from the public and governments.

France’s digital economy minister Jean-Noël Barrot recently met in California with OpenAI executives, including CEO Sam Altman, and a week later told an audience at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland that he was optimistic about the technology. But the government minister — a former professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the French business school HEC in Paris — said there are also difficult ethical questions that will need to be addressed.

“So if you’re in the law faculty, there is room for concern because obviously ChatGPT, among other tools, will be able to deliver exams that are relatively impressive,” he said. “If you are in the economics faculty, then you’re fine because ChatGPT will have a hard time finding or delivering something that is expected when you are in a graduate-level economics faculty.”

He said it will be increasingly important for users to understand the basics of how these systems work so they know what biases might exist.

Bring back dodo? Ambitious plan draws investors, critics

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The dodo bird isn’t coming back anytime soon. Nor is the woolly mammoth. But a company working on technologies to bring back extinct species has attracted more investors, while other scientists are skeptical such feats are possible or a good idea.

Colossal Biosciences first announced its ambitious plan to revive the woolly mammoth two years ago, and on Tuesday said it wanted to bring back the dodo bird, too.

“The dodo is a symbol of man-made extinction,” said Ben Lamm, a serial entrepreneur and co-founder and CEO of Colossal. The company has formed a division to focus on bird-related genetic technologies.

The last dodo, a flightless bird about the size of a turkey, was killed in 1681 on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius.

The Dallas company, which launched in 2021, also announced Tuesday it had raised an additional \$150 million in funding. To date, it has raised \$225 million from wide-ranging investors that include United States Innovative Technology Fund, Breyer Capital and In-Q-Tel, the CIA’s venture capital firm which invests in technology.

The prospect of bringing the dodo back isn’t expected to directly make money, said Lamm. But the genetic tools and equipment that the company develops to try to do it may have other uses, including for human health care, he said.

For example, Colossal is now testing tools to tweak several parts of the genome simultaneously. It’s also working on technologies for what is sometimes called an “artificial womb,” he said.

The dodo’s closest living relative is the Nicobar pigeon, said Beth Shapiro, a molecular biologist on Colossal’s scientific advisory board, who has been studying the dodo for two decades. Shapiro is paid by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports The Associated Press’ Health and Science Department.

Her team plans to study DNA differences between the Nicobar pigeon and the dodo to understand “what are the genes that really make a dodo a dodo,” she said.

The team may then attempt to edit Nicobar pigeon cells to make them resemble dodo cells. It may be possible to put the tweaked cells into developing eggs of other birds, such as pigeons or chickens, to create offspring that may in turn naturally produce dodo eggs, said Shapiro. The concept is still in an early theoretical stage for dodos.

Because animals are a product of both their genetics and their environment — which has changed dramatically since the 1600s — Shapiro said that “it’s not possible to recreate a 100% identical copy of something that’s gone.”

Other scientists wonder if it’s even advisable to try, and question whether “de-extinction” diverts atten-

tion and money away from efforts to save species still on Earth.

"There's a real hazard in saying that if we destroy nature, we can just put it back together again — because we can't," said Duke University ecologist Stuart Pimm, who has no connection to Colossal.

"And where on Earth would you put a woolly mammoth, other than in a cage?" asked Pimm, who noted that the ecosystems where mammoths lived disappeared long ago.

On a practical level, conservation biologists familiar with captive breeding programs say that it can be tricky for zoo-bred animals to ever adapt to the wild.

It helps if they can learn from other wild animals of their kind — an advantage that potential dodos and mammoths won't have, said Boris Worm, a biologist at the University of Dalhousie in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who has no connection to Colossal.

"Preventing species from going extinct in the first place should be our priority, and in most cases, it's a lot cheaper," said Worm.

Justice Department seeks Tesla automated driving documents

By TOM KRISHER and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

The U.S. Justice Department has requested documents from Tesla related to its Autopilot and "Full Self-Driving" features, according to a regulatory filing.

"To our knowledge no government agency in any ongoing investigation has concluded that any wrongdoing occurred," Tesla said in the filing Tuesday with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Austin, Texas, electric vehicle maker cautioned that if the government decides to pursue an enforcement action, it could possibly have a material adverse impact on its business.

Messages were left Tuesday seeking comment from the Justice Department and from Tesla, which has disbanded its media relations department.

Tesla Inc. is already facing multiple investigations by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for problems with its two driver-assist systems, Autopilot and "Full Self-Driving."

Despite their names, Tesla still says on its website that the cars can't drive themselves. Teslas using "Full Self-Driving" can navigate roads in many cases, but experts say the system can make mistakes, which even CEO Elon Musk acknowledges. "We're not saying it's quite ready to have no one behind the wheel," CEO Musk said in October.

Michael Brooks, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, said the Justice Department could be looking at safety issues with the systems, or it could be investigating Tesla claims that the cars can drive themselves when they can't.

"When you get the car, it really can't do everything that's been promised," Brooks said. "Tesla is putting a vehicle out on the road that is unable to perform to the capabilities claimed. Yet we have drivers relying on those promises and essentially not paying attention to the drive because they think it is more capable than it is."

The systems have been under investigation by NHTSA since June of 2016 when a driver using Autopilot was killed after his Tesla went under a tractor-trailer crossing its path in Florida. A separate probe into Teslas that were using Autopilot when they crashed into emergency vehicles started in August 2021. At least 14 Teslas that have crashed into emergency vehicles while using the Autopilot system.

Including the Florida crash, NHTSA has sent investigators to 35 Tesla crashes in which automated systems are suspected of being used. Nineteen people have died in those crashes, including two motorcyclists.

The agency also is investigating complaints that Teslas can brake suddenly for no reason.

"Full Self-Driving" went on sale late in 2015, and Musk has used the name ever since. It currently costs \$15,000 to activate the system. Tsl

In 2019 he promised a fleet of autonomous robotaxis by 2020, and he said in early 2022 that the cars would be autonomous that year.

Since 2021, Tesla has been beta-testing "Full Self-Driving" using owners who haven't been trained on the system but are actively monitored by the company. Tesla said this month that 400,000 owners are

participating.

Auto safety advocates and government investigators have long criticized Tesla's monitoring system as inadequate. Three years ago the National Transportation Safety Board listed poor monitoring as a contributing factor in a 2018 fatal Tesla crash in California. The board recommended a better system, but said Tesla has not responded.

NHTSA has noted in documents that numerous Tesla crashes have occurred in which drivers had their hands on the wheel but still weren't paying attention. The agency has said that Autopilot is being used in areas where its capabilities are limited and that many drivers aren't taking action to avoid crashes despite warnings from the vehicle.

In addition, the National Transportation Safety Board determined in 2020 that Tesla's system to make sure drivers are paying attention is not adequate, and it should be limited to areas where it can safely operate.

Tesla shares were up just under 4% in Tuesday morning trading.

US wage growth slowed in the final quarter of 2022

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pay and benefits for America's workers grew at a healthy but more gradual pace in the final three months of 2022, a third straight slowdown, which could help reassure the Federal Reserve that wage gains won't fuel higher inflation.

Wages and benefits, such as health insurance, grew 1% in the October-December quarter compared with the previous three months. That marked a solid gain, though it was slower than the 1.2% increase in the July-September quarter.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell and economists consider the data released Tuesday, known as the employment cost index, to be the most comprehensive gauge of labor costs. Powell last year cited a sharp increase in the index as a key reason why the Fed accelerated its interest rate hikes.

Powell has said that he sees rapid wage gains, particularly in the labor-intensive service sector, as the biggest impediment to bringing inflation down to the Fed's 2% target. When restaurants, hotels, veterinary clinics and other services companies raise pay, they often pass along those higher costs by charging their customers higher prices.

In last year's first quarter, total worker compensation had jumped 1.4% — the most on records dating to 2001. Before then, quarterly compensation growth had rarely topped 1%.

On an annual basis, wages and benefits grew 5.1% in the fourth quarter compared with a year earlier. That matched last year's April-June figure as the strongest such figure in the roughly two decades that the data has been tracked. With the unemployment rate matching a 53-year low, businesses rapidly raised pay to try to attract and keep workers.

But now, evidence increasingly suggests that the robust pay growth of the past year is slowing.

Strong wage gains, though beneficial for workers, tend to fuel high inflation. Unless companies achieve greater worker efficiencies or are willing to post lower profits, they typically pass their higher labor costs on to their customers by charging more. Those higher prices, in turn, elevate inflation.

Tuesday's report of slower-growing labor costs, though the latest sign that inflation could continue to ease, won't likely alter the Fed's plans to further tighten credit in the short run.

"The Fed is still likely to keep raising interest rates at the next couple of meetings, but we expect a further slowdown in wage growth over the coming months to convince officials to pause the tightening cycle after the March meeting," said Andrew Hunter, an economist at Capital Economics.

Last quarter, Hunter noted, wage growth slowed particularly sharply for restaurant, hotel and entertainment workers, a group that has enjoyed some of the biggest pay gains. With many companies in those industries struggling to fill jobs, pay and benefits grew 0.9% in the fourth quarter — exactly half its pace of the previous quarter. That suggested that labor demand is declining even in areas of the economy that remain most eager to fill jobs.

On Wednesday, Powell and his Fed colleagues are set to raise their benchmark interest rate by a quarter-

point to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%, their eighth straight rate hike. But as inflation has cooled, the central bank has been boosting rates by smaller increments. Last year, the Fed raised its key rate by three-quarters of a point four times.

Overall inflation is steadily cooling, having eased to 6.5% in December compared with a year ago. That is down from a 40-year high of 9.1% in June. Powell's concern, though, is that fast-growing wages will cause inflation to plateau at around 4% — still twice as high as the Fed's target.

Europe scrapes out economic growth by dodging gas disaster

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Europe's economy scraped out meager gains at the end of last year as galloping inflation fed by high energy prices and Russia's invasion of Ukraine deterred people from spending in shops and restaurants.

Economic output crept 0.1% higher in the last three months of 2022 from the previous quarter, European Union statistics agency Eurostat reported Tuesday, avoiding an outright downturn as warmer-than-usual winter weather shelved fears of energy rationing.

For all of 2022, the economy grew 3.5%, outpacing the 2.1% expansion in the U.S. and China's 3% growth last year.

The countries that share the euro currency — 19 in 2022, now 20 after Croatia joined the eurozone in the new year — appeared to have avoided the worst case scenario: forced industrial shutdowns from running out of natural gas after Russia halted most supplies. Warmer weather and efforts to find new supply that comes by ship instead of pipeline from Russia have eased that worry for now.

Nonetheless, natural gas prices are still three times higher than before Russia started massing troops on Ukraine's border, after rising to a record of 18 times that level in August. Those prices are hitting utility bills and leading companies to pass on costs to customers by charging more for goods and food.

"Growth was still very weak," said Rory Fennessy, European economist at Oxford Economics. He added that "the positive reading could mask underlying weakness in domestic demand" and that "private consumption is likely to have contracted."

"The main reason" pushing Europe into positive territory was strong growth of 3.5% in Ireland — a figure usually "distorted" by the large number of foreign firms located there for tax reasons, said Martin Moryson, chief economist for Europe at asset manager DWS. Major economies Germany and Italy shrank, by 0.2% and 0.1%, respectively.

Growth also faced headwinds from reduced activity in China, a major trade partner, due to the severe COVID-19 restrictions that have since been lifted. A possible economic rebound there is a key question for Europe and the global economy this year, given China's previous role as a motor of global growth.

While underwhelming, Europe's growth figure at least raises the chance it will scrape by without a technical recession even if economic expansion is negative in the first three months of this year. Two straight quarters of falling output is one definition of recession, although the economists on the eurozone business cycle dating committee use a broader range of data such as unemployment and the depth of the downturn.

The news comes as the International Monetary Fund raised its forecast for global economic growth this year to 2.9% from 2.7% — not great but an improvement based partly on hopes for China. A stronger global economy is important for Europe given its extensive trade links.

Fears of lagging economic growth so far have not deterred the European Central Bank from its series of interest rate increases, which are sharply raising the cost of borrowing for businesses and consumers in an attempt to cool off inflation.

Consumer prices jumped 9.2% in December from a year earlier, far above the central bank's goal of 2%. Rate increases are the chief antidote to excessive inflation but can slow the economy by making it more expensive to buy a house or a car on credit or borrow to expand a business.

The central bank's governing council is expected to add another half-percentage point rate hike at its meeting Thursday.

Rate increases by other central banks around the world, including the U.S. Federal Reserve and the Bank of England, also have added strain to the global economy. ECB officials say that raising rates now and capping inflation before it gets baked into the economy avoids the need for more drastic action later.

Tyre Nichols case shows officers still fail to intervene

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

As five Memphis police officers attacked Tyre Nichols with their feet, fists and a baton, others milled around at the scene, even as the 29-year-old cried out in pain and then slumped limply against the side of a car.

Just like the attack on George Floyd in Minneapolis nearly three years ago, a simple intervention could have saved a life. Instead, Nichols is dead and the five officers are charged with second-degree murder and other crimes.

More disciplinary action may be coming now that the harrowing video of Nichols' treatment has been released. Memphis police suspended two other officers Monday and say the department is still investigating what happened. The Memphis Fire Department also fired three emergency response workers who arrived on the scene for failing to assess Nichols' condition.

The Memphis and Minneapolis police departments are among many U.S. law enforcement agencies with "duty to intervene" policies. The Memphis protocol is clear: "Any member who directly observes another member engaged in dangerous or criminal conduct or abuse of a subject shall take reasonable action to intervene."

It's not just a policy, it's the law. The three Minneapolis officers who failed to step in and stop former Officer Derek Chauvin from kneeling on Floyd's neck as the Black man said he couldn't breathe were all convicted of federal civil rights violations.

Experts agree peer pressure, and in some cases fear of retribution, is on the minds of officers who fail to stop colleagues from bad actions.

"They're afraid of being ostracized," said George Kirkham, a criminology professor emeritus at Florida State University and former police officer. "You've got to depend on those guys. It's the thin blue line. When you get out there and get in a jam, you've got nobody else to help you but other cops."

Nichols was pulled over in a traffic stop the night of Jan. 7. Body camera video shows he was beaten as officers screamed profanities, even as Nichols seemed confused about what he did wrong. Amid the chaos, he ran and was eventually caught at another intersection, a short distance from his mother's house.

Security camera images from that scene show two officers holding Nichols to the ground as a third appears to kick him in the head. Later, another officer strikes Nichols repeatedly with a baton as another officer holds him.

Officers pull Nichols to his feet, though he's barely able to stand. An officer punches him in the face, and Nichols stumbles, still held up by two officers. After more punches, he collapses. But the attack continues.

When it ends, Nichols is slumped against a car. It would be more than 20 minutes before medical attention was rendered, though three members of the fire department arrived on the scene with medical equipment within 10 minutes. Those workers, two medics and a lieutenant who was with them, were the personnel fired late Monday.

Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington-based think tank, said duty to intervene policies became common after officers attacked and badly injured Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992.

"But having a policy and overcoming what many would argue is the culture in policing are two different things," Wexler said. "It's not enough to simply have a policy. You need to practice. You need to talk through it."

In some cases, concerns by officers about retaliation for intervening have proven true.

In Buffalo, New York, Officer Cariol Horne was a year away from collecting her pension when she faced departmental charges after pulling a fellow officer's arm from around the neck of a domestic violence suspect in 2006. She was fired. In 2021 a state Supreme Court judge reinstated her pension and over-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 83 of 84

turned her dismissal.

Last year in Sunrise, Florida, Sgt. Christopher Pullease was criminally charged after an incident caught on video in which an unidentified female officer pulled Pullease by the belt away from a handcuffed suspect after Pullease pointed pepper spray at him. Pullease responded by putting a hand on his colleague's throat and pushing her away, the video showed.

Experts were also perplexed that no police department supervisors were present during the Memphis incident. Had there been, they said, the outcome might have been different.

"I was a supervisor for a long time, and you showing up on the scene even unannounced keeps people from doing, for lack of a better adjective, stupid things," said former New York City Police Sgt. Joseph Giacalone, who teaches at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

Memphis Police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis said the police department has a supervisor shortage and called the lack of a supervisor at the incident "a major problem." Davis on Saturday disbanded the city's so-called Scorpion unit, whose officers were involved in the beating.

University of Missouri-St. Louis criminologist David Klinger said decisions on whether to intervene in a police colleague's actions are not always cut and dried. He said one officer may see a weapon that is blocked from the view of another, for example, and stepping in at the wrong time could jeopardize the lives of officers at the scene.

"Training has to be precise about the sorts of circumstances that would warrant an intervention," Klinger said.

Today in History: FEB 1, Space shuttle Columbia breaks up

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 1, the 32nd day of 2023. There are 333 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

In Feb. 1, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia broke up during re-entry, killing all seven of its crew members: commander Rick Husband; pilot William McCool; payload commander Michael Anderson; mission specialists Kalpana Chawla, David Brown and Laurel Clark; and payload specialist Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli in space.

On this date:

In 1790, the U.S. Supreme Court convened for the first time in New York. (However, since only three of the six justices were present, the court recessed until the next day.)

In 1862, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," a poem by Julia Ward Howe, was published in the Atlantic Monthly.

In 1865, abolitionist John S. Rock became the first Black lawyer admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1943, during World War II, one of America's most highly decorated military units, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up almost exclusively of Japanese-Americans, was authorized.

In 1959, men in Switzerland rejected giving women the right to vote by a more than 2-1 referendum margin. (Swiss women gained the right to vote in 1971.)

In 1960, four Black college students began a sit-in protest at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they'd been refused service.

In 1979, Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (hoh-MAY'-nee) received a tumultuous welcome in Tehran as he ended nearly 15 years of exile.

In 1991, 34 people were killed when an arriving USAir jetliner crashed atop a commuter plane on a runway at Los Angeles International Airport.

In 1994, Jeff Gillooly, Tonya Harding's ex-husband, pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to racketeering for his part in the attack on figure skater Nancy Kerrigan in exchange for a 24-month sentence (he ended up serving six months) and a \$100,000 fine.

In 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak announced he would not run for a new term in September

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Feb. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 208 ~ 84 of 84

elections but rejected protesters' demands he step down immediately and leave the country, after a dramatic day in which a quarter-million Egyptians staged their biggest protest to date calling on him to go.

In 2016, the World Health Organization declared a global emergency over the explosive spread of the Zika virus, which was linked to birth defects in the Americas, calling it an "extraordinary event" that posed a public health threat to other parts of the world.

In 2020, as China's death toll from the new coronavirus rose to 259, Beijing criticized Washington's order barring entry to most foreigners who had visited China in the past two weeks. A World Health Organization official said governments needed to prepare for "domestic outbreak control."

Ten years ago: Hillary Rodham Clinton formally resigned as America's 67th secretary of state, capping a four-year tenure that saw her shatter records for the number of countries visited. The Dow Jones industrial average closed at 14,009.79, above the 14,000 mark for the first time in more than five years. Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch died at age 88.

Five years ago: Republican State Rep. Don Shooter was expelled from the Arizona House because of a lengthy pattern of sexual misconduct, making him the first state lawmaker in the U.S. to be booted out since the #MeToo movement emerged. Sheriff's officials in Los Angeles said new witnesses had emerged in the 1981 drowning death of actress Natalie Wood, prompting investigators to name her former husband, Robert Wagner, a "person of interest" in what they considered a "suspicious death." (Detectives later said the evidence hadn't reached the threshold for a murder investigation and that they had no plans to file criminal charges.)

One year ago: Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. and its allies of ignoring Russia's top security demands but signaled he was willing to engage in more diplomacy to ease tensions in Ukraine. (Russia would invade Ukraine on Feb. 24.) Quarterback Tom Brady announced his retirement from the NFL after winning seven Super Bowls and an unprecedented 22-year career. (Six weeks later he would reverse course and announce he would return for a 23rd season). ABC News announced that Whoopi Goldberg would be suspended for two weeks as co-host of "The View" over remarks a day earlier about Jews and the Holocaust that the network called "wrong and hurtful."

Today's birthdays: Today's birthdays: Actor Garrett Morris is 86. Bluegrass singer Del McCoury is 84. TV personality-singer Joy Philbin is 82. Political commentator Fred Barnes is 80. Rock musician Mike Campbell (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers) is 73. Blues singer-musician Sonny Landreth is 72. Actor-writer-producer Bill Mumy (MOO'-mee) is 69. Rock singer Exene Cervenka is 67. Actor Linus Roache is 59. Princess Stephanie of Monaco is 58. Actor Sherilyn Fenn is 58. Comedian-actor Pauly Shore is 55. Actor Brian Krause is 54. Jazz musician Joshua Redman is 54. Rock musician Patrick Wilson (Weezer) is 54. Actor Michael C. Hall is 52. Rock musician Ron Welty is 52. Rapper Big Boi (Outkast) is 48. Roots rocker Jason Isbell is 44. Country singer Julie Roberts is 44. Rock singer-musician Andrew VanWyngarden is 40 TV personality Lauren Conrad is 37. Actor-singer Heather Morris is 36. Actor and mixed martial artist Ronda Rousey is 36. Rock singer Harry Styles (One Direction) is 29.