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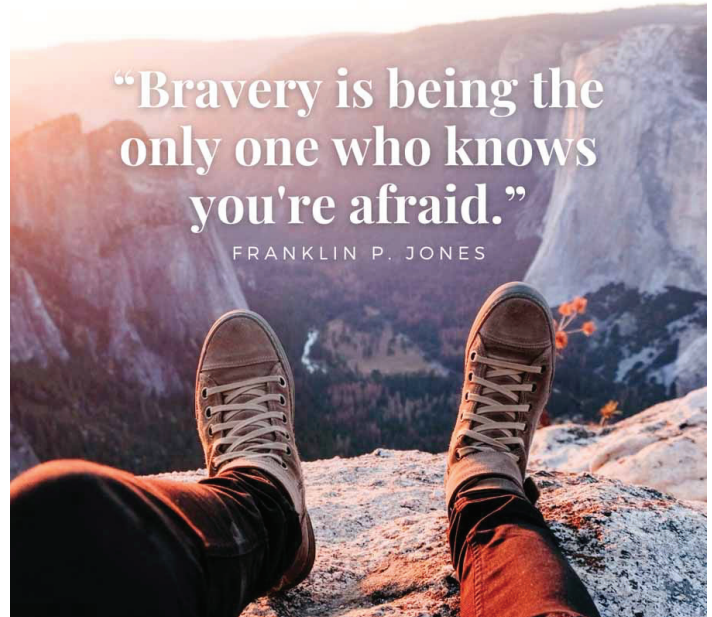
Groton Community Calendar Monday, Feb. 6

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, wild rice, mixed vegetables, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Chicken legs, scalloped potatoes.
The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Junior High BB hosting Aberdeen Christian, 5:30 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 7

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, peas, sunset salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: French toast.
School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn bread.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Boys Basketball hosts North Central. JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.
United Methodist Church: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

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



Wednesday, Feb. 8

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Egg omelets.
School Lunch: Chicken noodle soup.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
Small Group Music Contest at the Aberdeen Recreation Cultural Center
United Methodist Church: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Book Study with Lindsey Tietz, 4 p.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; UMYF Bowling at the Jungle, 6:30 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Big tax cut likely this session, but details still in debate

Stu Whitney and Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

A bipartisan consensus has emerged in the South Dakota Legislature that the time is right for some form of tax relief to be passed as part of budget negotiations in Pierre.

But questions about which tax is reduced, and who will benefit, are still in debate and will be resolved largely on political inclinations and differing perceptions of whether the recent surplus of state revenues is temporary or a trend of continuous growth.

On a basic level, three possible tax reduction proposals are in play in the 2023 legislative session, though lawmakers have said it is likely only one is affordable at this time without cutting programs or adding other taxes or revenue streams:

- A full or partial removal of the 4.5% state sales tax on groceries, which would collectively save shoppers up to \$120 million a year.
- A reduction in the overall state sales tax from 4.5% to 4%, which would save residents and visitors an estimated \$150 million a year.
- A reduction in property taxes on single-family homes that would save homeowners an estimated \$85 million a year.

Of course, each measure that provides a savings for taxpayers would result in a corresponding reduction in government revenues – and that is where lawmakers face difficult choices. The GOP-led Legislature must also consider how a tax cut would fit into Republican Gov. Kristi Noem’s campaign promise to eliminate the South Dakota food tax.

Weeks before being re-elected in November 2022, Noem made a public pledge to preside over “the largest tax cut in state history,” a full repeal of the 4.5% grocery tax. The fiscal impact of that move is not written in stone, with the governor’s team saying the repeal would save taxpayers \$102 million annually and the Legislative Research Council – in a fiscal note attached to a proposed ballot amendment – estimating that the state would lose \$124 million in annual revenue by cutting the food tax.

Noem touted South Dakota’s favorable economic outlook in announcing the plan, pointing to double-digit increases in sales tax revenue in 2021 and 2022, a budget surplus last year of \$115 million and \$423 million in reserves.

Some legislative leaders are more cautious, however, due to concerns that the state fiscal prospects are temporarily boosted by pandemic-related federal stimulus and infrastructure funds and by sales tax receipts augmented by record inflation. Other than federal revenues, South Dakota state government and programs



State Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Pierre, said at a press conference on Jan. 26, 2023 that lawmakers will be diligent in reviewing revenue data before passing any tax cuts this legislative session.

Photo: Courtesy Jeremy Waltner on behalf of the South Dakota Newspaper Association

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South Dakota Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, discussed tax cut proposals during a Jan. 26, 2023 press conference in Pierre. Photo: Courtesy

Jeremy Waltner on behalf of the South Dakota Newspaper Association

are funded primarily by sales taxes.

“When it comes to cutting tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in ongoing revenue that our hospitals, nursing homes and schools and state employees depend on, we don’t make those decisions easily,” said House Majority Leader Will Mortenson, R-Pierre. “Fools rush in ... so we’re going to be taking our time and scrutinizing these proposals on the policy merits.”

The grocery tax, which repeal supporters say has a disproportionate impact on low-income families because food expenditures represent a higher percentage of their household budget, has been a target of legislative reform for decades, mostly by Democrats. South Dakota is one of only three states that tax groceries without offering targeted credits or rebates for low-income residents to compensate for the added cost, though some low-income residents do qualify for the federal food stamps program.

House Bill 1075, the Noem-supported food tax elimination sponsored by Rep. Mary Fitzgerald, R-Spearfish, and Sen. John Wiik, R-Big Stone City, passed out of the House Taxation Committee Jan. 26 and was referred to House Appropriations for further study. Jim Terwilliger, commissioner of the South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management, echoed Noem’s sentiments about conditions being favorable for a significant tax reduction. Municipal food tax rates would not be affected by the House measure.

“This tax cut allows more money to stay in the pockets of taxpayers, plain and simple,” Terwilliger said during committee testimony. “It does so in a fair and transparent way, with every trip to the grocery for every family in South Dakota. Even with this cut, there is still \$208 million in new ongoing revenue for investment in other areas. We have not abandoned our conservative approach to how we manage our state budget.”

While legislators have not yet received state revenue estimates, Terwilliger said that collections over the first six months of the current fiscal year were \$146 million higher than projected in the legislative budget, or 13% above the estimate.

“This tax cut is affordable for us,” he told the committee, adding that there is no need for other taxes or revenue replacement to offset the repeal.

Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association and a former policy director under former Gov. Dennis Daugaard, testified against HB 1075 and expanded upon his testimony in an interview with News Watch. He said it is critical to determine whether South Dakota’s recent windfall is a one-time source of revenue – boosted by federal stimulus and inflation-impacted tax receipts – or an ongoing source.

“We tend to believe that these are largely one-time sources of revenue,” said Sanderson. “If you think that they’re one time in nature, then it doesn’t make sense to cut the sales tax or reduce sales tax on food, because the chickens will come home to roost, and you’ll end up seeing tax increases in the future. Our interest is in ensuring that any tax reductions that we offer are more one time in nature than ongoing, because the last thing we want is a structural deficit.”

Sanderson points out that national inflation averaged 8.0% in 2022, twice as high as any inflationary year in the past two decades other than 2021, which was 4.7%. Higher prices mean more sales tax revenues for the state. South Dakota also received \$3.5 billion in federal funds in 2021 and \$2.6 billion in 2022 after

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averaging \$1.4 billion a year from 2014-2019.

"What is abundantly clear is that we got a boatload of federal money over the last few years and we're seeing extraordinarily high inflation," Sanderson said. "You can't just ignore that when you're having this conversation."

Family of four would save \$600 a year with no food tax

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture data, an average family of four in South Dakota spends roughly \$1,100 a month on food purchased at a store and prepared at home. Eliminating the 4.5% tax on food would save that household \$54 a month, or nearly \$600 a year.

Eric Figueroa, an analyst for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, said eliminating the grocery tax is a good way to advance racial and economic equity for low-income residents but that states should pursue full repeals of the tax with caution if they don't have a plan to offset the revenue.

Figueroa noted that several states use refunded tax credits for low-income brackets in which consumers pay the full sales tax rate on food but recoup some of those added costs by claiming a credit when they file their taxes.

"That's sort of the safe route for a lot of states, to provide targeted relief without taking a huge hit to the general fund," Figueroa told News Watch. "Tax credits are good, but there are barriers to filing for those

STATE REVENUES ON STEADY RISE

South Dakota is operating with a large budget surplus due to rising annual state and federal revenues that include new federal money the state received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here is a look at revenue growth in the two main ongoing categories of sales tax collections and federal revenue disbursements to the state over the past decade.

FEDERAL FUNDS RECEIVED

FY 2014: \$1.40 billion
FY 2015: \$1.35 billion
FY 2016: \$1.37 billion
FY 2017: \$1.41 billion
FY 2018: \$1.40 billion
FY 2019: \$1.43 billion
FY 2020: \$1.83 billion
FY 2021: \$3.53 billion
FY 2022: \$2.65 billion

STATE SALES TAX COLLECTIONS

FY 2014: \$823.4 million
FY 2015: \$836.6 million
FY 2016: \$860.9 million
FY 2017: \$951.2 million
FY 2018: \$988.8 million
FY 2019: \$1.03 billion
FY 2020: \$1.07 billion
FY 2021: \$1.20 billion
FY 2022: \$1.36 billion

Source: State of South Dakota

refunds, and not every family sees the benefits, for all kinds of reasons. There's more complexity to doing something proactively, checking the right box and knowing how to file properly, as opposed to taking a basket of goods to the cash register and getting the immediate benefit of a tax being removed."

Idaho Republican Gov. Brad Little pushed for a full food tax repeal in 2022 but couldn't get it through the state Legislature. Lawmakers instead passed a \$20 increase in the amount that Idaho residents can recover on taxes paid on food through the grocery sales tax credit, from \$100 to \$120 for people under 65 and from \$120 to \$140 for people 65 and older.

Idaho's sales tax rate is 6%, while South Dakota's is 4.5%. South Dakota is also one of only eight states with no personal income tax. Sanderson said that's an important distinction when considering long-term policy changes that impact budget revenues.

"If you're a state that has no sales tax on food but a 7% sales tax on everything else and an income tax, is that preferable to South Dakota's approach? Maybe, maybe not," he said. "Most South Dakotans don't want an income tax, so if you take that off the table from a policy perspective, what is left? Sales tax. That's why we've been supportive of a very low but broad-based sales tax for a long time; it's not as volatile as other types of revenue. Our approach has been not to grant a whole bunch of exemption for the sales tax. It's been to tax everyone relatively uniformly but keep that rate as low as possible. It's simple for people to understand and has provided us with a reliable source of revenue for years and years."

Failing to repeal food tax would be 'failure' for Noem

The Cato Institute, a prominent Libertarian think tank, gave Noem a grade of 'C' in its Fiscal Policy Report Card for 2022, saying that the "middling grade" was based on "a lack of tax

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cuts during a period when many other states passed large tax cuts.”

Neighboring Republican governors Kim Reynolds of Iowa and Pete Ricketts of Nebraska both received 'A' grades for their tax reduction policies, with Reynolds described as a “lean budgeter and dedicated tax reformer since entering office in 2017.”

During his testimony for the food tax repeal, Terwilliger mentioned other states catching up to South Dakota in terms of livability by offering lower taxes. Noem’s status as a potential GOP presidential aspirant in 2024 made her “largest tax cut in state history” announcement at a Rapid City grocery store in September 2022 a potentially beneficial headline for political reasons as much as for policy purposes.

The question is whether the political benefit is negated if the measure fails to pass. Though budget talks are still weeks away from resolution, Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, said he has not seen much evidence of Noem actively trying to build support for the food tax repeal.

“I’ve been a little frustrated that the governor announced her efforts at repealing this, but then she doesn’t seem to be using her staff or herself to be making phone calls to legislators to get this done,” said Nesiba, a member of the Appropriations Committee and an economics professor at Augustana University. “She used this as a campaign stunt and now she’s missing in action. Perhaps it’s going on behind closed doors, but my sense is that she’s not personally working this as aggressively as I had hoped.”

Rick Weiland, founder of Dakotans for Health, which is proposing a 2024 ballot measure to repeal the food tax if it doesn’t happen during the 2023 legislative session, sounded incredulous that Noem was struggling to push through the most noteworthy plank from a campaign platform that saw her re-elected with 62% of the vote.

“There are only 11 Democrats in the entire state Legislature, the rest are Republicans and she’s a Republican,” Weiland told News Watch. “She made the commitment and she’s the governor of the state of South Dakota, so you would think she’d be able to get this done – unless it was an empty promise.”

Nesiba noted that there are “compromise” bills proposed to lower the food tax rate to 3.5% or 2.5%, depending on the pace of progress of the original legislation to fully repeal the tax. He noted that Democrats may actually help Noem if one of their compromise bills is able to pass after a full food tax repeal effort stalls.

“I’m a Democrat in the South Dakota Senate who simply wants us to do something for state taxpayers this year,” Nesiba said. “If we can take off 1 cent or 2 cents, which amounts to \$25 million or \$50 million annually, and leave that in the pockets of South Dakota food buyers, I think that would be good stewardship of public resources. But make no mistake: If we do not get a full sales tax repeal on food, it will be a major political failure on the part of Gov. Noem.”

Supporters say property tax relief plan won't hurt schools

In Sanderson’s estimation, there is more support in the House for food tax reform and more appetite in the Senate for property tax relief, but there’s a long way to go. Most legislators want more information on economic forecasts before sharpening their stance on major issues that will stretch into the final days



Democratic leaders in the South Dakota Legislature gave their views on three main proposals to cut taxes in the state during a press conference in Pierre on Jan. 26, 2023. They included (left to right): Rep. Erin Healy of Sioux Falls; Sen. Reynold Nesiba of Sioux Falls; and Rep. Oren Lesmeister of Parade. Photo: Courtesy

Jeremy Waltner on behalf of the South Dakota Newspaper Association

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“Overall, I think most of us would love to do a tax cut; which one, that’s got to be weighed out through the process [because] we have to know what this thing looks like in the future before we can make those decisions.”

-- Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree, R-Madison

of the session.

“Overall, I think most of us would love to do a tax cut; which one, that’s got to be weighed out through the process,” said Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree, R-Madison. “We have to know what this thing looks like in the future, before we can make those decisions before we lay out the obligations, the priorities and the tax cuts. We’re going to be conservative and

prudent in our decision-making. I know that’s not a flashy headline, but that’s how South Dakota has been governed for years, and we don’t want to make a mistake now.”

House Bill 1043 would create an exemption from property taxes on the first \$100,000 of the value of an owner-occupied, single-family home. The concept originated in a summer taxation study completed by the Legislature last year, according to Rep. Mike Derby, R-Rapid City, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee.

“Most of us legislators, when we’re on the campaign trail, the No. 1 issue we hear about is skyrocketing property taxes,” Derby said.

School districts, which rely largely on local property taxes for revenue, “would be held harmless” under the bill, Derby said. The idea is to reduce the taxes homeowners pay, and then use ongoing general fund revenues to “backfill” the money school districts need to operate, he said.

The benefit of the property tax reduction compared to eliminating another sales tax revenue category is that lawmakers could readdress the property tax reduction and change it if financial conditions changed from year to year, Derby said.

At this point, there is no mechanism in place to determine what impact such a tax reduction would have on school districts, or a method to ensure schools receive the funding they would lose in property tax collections. Also, unlike a reduction in the food tax, a property tax cut does not benefit renters or other residents who do not own a home.

Nesiba said it would be difficult and unwieldy and require significant new programming to determine how to redistribute state general funds back to school districts that see reduced property tax revenues.

“The state is going to set up a brand-new government bureaucracy to redistribute sales tax and other general fund revenue and backfill these things forever?” Nesiba said. “For somebody who is in favor of efficient government, just starting up a whole new program to do that is a non-starter.”

If lawmakers don’t repeal food tax, voters might

Adding to the political calculus in Pierre is the fact that if the governor falls short in her public bid to repeal the food tax, South Dakota voters might do it themselves.

Dakotans for Health, the grassroots organization pushing for policy change through citizen initiatives, plans to gather signatures for both an initiated measure and a constitutional amendment on the 2024 ballot to mandate that the state “may not tax the sale of anything sold for human consumption, except alcoholic beverages and prepared food.”

The group re-submitted language for the ballot proposals Dec. 7, 2022, after a conflict in interpretation of the food tax measures between the Legislative Research Council and then-Attorney General Mark Vargo. The new language clarifies that the measure applies only to the state grocery tax and has no impact on the taxing authority of municipalities.

Weiland said re-submitting the language set his group back “a good three months” and that he never received an explanation from Vargo as to why municipalities were included in the attorney general’s ballot explanation despite not being mentioned by Dakotans for Health or by the LRC.

Dakotans for Health requested an expedited process with its second submission due to “the delay in our ability to begin collecting signatures caused by the attorney general’s misinterpretation of our previous submission on this subject.” The LRC submitted a new fiscal note to Secretary of State Monae Johnson on

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Jan. 5, 2023, estimating that the state could lose \$123.9 million in annual revenue by eliminating the state grocery tax if the measure passed. The attorney general's office, now occupied by Marty Jackley, has noted that under state law it has until Feb. 7, 2023, to file a draft title and explanation with the secretary of state.

Under current law, the deadline to submit petition signatures is six months prior to an election for initiated measures and a year before the election for constitutional amendments. The number of verified signatures needed for initiated measures to make the ballot is 5% of the total vote in the last gubernatorial election (17,508 based on the 2022 turnout of 350,166), while constitutional amendments require 10% (35,016).

"They've made it very difficult for us with this timeline," said Weiland, "but someone needs to hold (Noem and the Legislature) accountable." Even if the food tax is repealed in the state Legislature, he said, there is the "gnawing question" of past statutory changes – such as minimum wage or ethics reform – passing through initiated measures or the Legislature and then being altered or reversed by lawmakers.

Initiated measures can be repealed by the state Legislature or referred to the statewide ballot for reconsideration, while constitutional amendments are entrenched in the state constitution and can only be addressed through court challenges or a superseding amendment on a subsequent ballot.

"That's why a lot of us in the citizen initiative process have been forced to look at constitutional amendments, because of the Legislature's inclination to want to come in and thwart the will of the voters and change it," Weiland said. "You could make the argument that there's a reason regardless of what happens in Pierre that we get this in the constitution, not just in the law books. The question is whether we have time to collect enough signatures to get it on the ballot, because they're running the clock out."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at SDNewsWatch.org.



ABOUT STU WHITNEY

Stu Whitney is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A resident of Sioux Falls, Whitney is an award-winning reporter, editor and novelist with more than 30 years of experience in journalism.



ABOUT BART PFANKUCH

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.

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2022 Fall Coaches of the Year

Sioux Falls, SD – The South Dakota High School Coaches Association announces the Coach of the Year Awards for the Fall of 2022. (Other nominees are listed below each winner):

Cheer – Cami Bacon of St. Mary’s High School
Val Ewing-Winner Area, Eve Langerock-Harrisburg, Diedra Nissen-Sioux Falls Jefferson, Quiana Pardee, Sioux Falls Roosevelt
Dance – Lynsey Andal of Beresford High School
Carey Baczwaski-Dakota Valley, Ashley Hoffman-Brandon Valley, Misty Mousseaux-Begay-Lakota Tech, Amanda Stoesser-Pierre
Girls’ Soccer – Mark Anderson of Tea Area High School
Merle Aske-Aberdeen Central, , Cori Bonte-Sioux Falls Roosevelt, Eric Christensen-Harrisburg, Kelli Herman-Sioux Falls Lincoln
Boys’ Soccer – Jeff Fierro of Rapid City Stevens High School
Ryan Beier-O’Gorman, Alex Nelson-Sioux Falls Lincoln, Ephron Poyer-Sioux Falls Christian, Nate Sales-St. Thomas More
Girls’ Cross Country – Jesse Coy of Rapid City Stevens High Schools
Holly Evans-Chamberlain, Jessica Larson-Potter County, Luke VanderLeest-Sioux Falls Christian, Jeani Vincent-Arlington
Boys’ Cross Country – Jesse Coy of Rapid City Stevens High Schools
Jeremy Elsom-Belle Fourche, Ralph Kroetch-Philip, Tom McGough-Miller, Joey Noyes-Hill City
Football – Lex Heathershaw of Wall High School
Vince Benedetto-Sioux Falls Jefferson, Jordan Huska-Dell Rapids, Tom Salmen-Hitchcock-Tulare/Doland, Steve Steele-Pierre, Jacob Terry-Elk Point-Jefferson
Volleyball – Kari Jung of Warner High School
Ronette Costain-Harrisburg, Beth Donnelly-Sioux Falls Jefferson, Melissa Erickson-Elkton-Lake Benton, Erin Kuper-Elk Point-Jefferson, Jean O’Hara-Chester Area

Last year’s winners:

Cheer – Misty Mousseaux-Begay of Lakota Tech High School
Dance – Ashley Hoffman of Brandon Valley High School
Girls’ Soccer – Cori Bonte of Sioux Falls Roosevelt High School
Boys’ Soccer – Dave Dannenbring of Yankton High School
Girls’ Cross Country – Holly Evans of Chamberlain High School
Boys’ Cross Country – Tom McGough of Miller High School
Football – Brandon White of Harrisburg High School
Volleyball – Dennis Northrup of Garretson High School

These coaches will be recognized at the annual awards banquet on Sunday, June 16, 2023 to be held in N Sioux City in conjunction with the South Dakota High School Coaches’ Association Clinic.

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"The Benefits of Sleep: Why You Should be Sleeping More"

Most people know that getting enough sleep is important for their health, but many do not realize that there are specific health benefits that come from getting a good night's sleep. Getting enough sleep can improve your mood, help you maintain a healthy weight, and reduce your risk of chronic health problems like diabetes and heart disease. Sleep can even help boost your immune system and improve memory.

Despite knowing that sleep is important, according to the CDC, one in three adults do not get enough sleep. The National Sleep Foundation found that almost half of all Americans say they feel sleepy during the day between three and seven days each week. Many untreated health conditions can interrupt or affect sleep. Issues from an enlarged prostate, hot flashes from menopause, sleep apnea, acid reflux, and restless legs are just some of the conditions that can keep us from a good night's rest. A lack of sleep can also affect or worsen depression and anxiety. Unfortunately depression and anxiety can make falling asleep much harder causing a cycle of worsening mood and sleep difficulties.

Weight can also be affected by the lack of sleep due to the hormones that help regulate your appetite and sense of fullness. Lack of sleep increases the hormone ghrelin, which increases appetite. Even partial sleep deprivation can increase the body's resistance to insulin. This can increase blood sugar levels and contribute to the development of diabetes.

Loss of sleep affects the risk of heart attacks and high blood pressure. This is related to the hormone, cortisol which is on a circadian rhythm and increases in the morning hours. Increased cortisol helps to awaken you and peaks about thirty to forty-five minutes after awakening. One study found that there was a 24% increase in heart attacks on the Monday after Daylight Savings Time. This increase is thought to be related to the hour of sleep lost and increased cortisol levels.

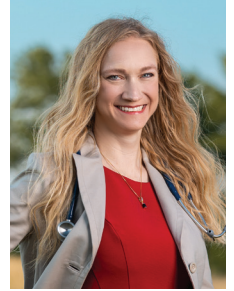
Certain immune components work more while you are sleeping to help repair the body and fight infections. Good sleep helps consolidate memories, improves creativity, and can even improve sports performance.

Getting a good night's rest is not just nice, it is imperative to your body's health. If you are having trouble sleeping, it is important to talk with your health care provider to see what can be done to help your sleep improve. He or she can also help rule out any underlying health conditions that could be impacting your ability to get the rest your body needs. Count some sheep and get some extra ZZZ's so you can "stay healthy out there!"

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



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Jill Kruse, DO

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Groton Area December Students of the Month



**Elliana
Weismantel**
Senior



Cadence Feist
Junior



Rebecca Poor
Sophomore



**Natalia
Warrington**
Freshman



Liby Althoff
8th Grade



Addison Hoeft
7th Grade



**Novalea
Warrington**
6th Grade

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

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Groton Area Wrestling

Ehresmann, Bisbee and Kucker place at Big Dakota Conference Wrestling Tournament

Three Groton Area wrestlers placed at the Big Dakota Conference wrestling tournament on Saturday at Stanley County.

Christian Ehresmann placed first at 138 pounds, Cole Bisbee placed second at 170 pounds and Korbin Kucker placed fourth at 152 pounds.

106 Lincoln Krause (1-4) scored 3.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Vincent Lenz (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 27-13 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 1-4 (Fall 1:35)

Cons. Round 1 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 1-4 won by fall over Ben Glanzer (Marion/Freeman) 0-6 (Fall 0:42)

Cons. Round 2 - Maddux Risse (Bennett County) 26-9 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 1-4 (Fall 0:44)

106 John Bisbee (2-10)

Champ. Round 1 - Gunner Fuegen (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 2-9 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-10 (Fall 0:59)

Cons. Round 1 - Shay Smith (Harding County) 19-21 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-10 (Fall 1:22)

132 Tristan McGannon (2-12)

Champ. Round 1 - Spencer Sargent (Stanley County) 17-13 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-12 (Fall 0:50)

Cons. Round 1 - Sutton Powers (Chamberlain) 4-8 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-12 (Fall 0:46)

138 Christian Ehresmann (24-3) placed 1st and scored 28.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 23-3 won by fall over August Bartels (Winner Area) 10-15 (Fall 1:01)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 23-3 won by fall over Roy Antrim (Faith) 6-17 (Fall 0:38)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 23-3 won by fall over Quinn Long (Chamberlain) 18-13 (Fall 1:03)

1st Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 24-3 won by decision over Konner Osborn (Winner Area) 30-15 (Dec 5-2)

138B Isiah Scepaniak (2-14)

Champ. Round 1 - Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 2-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Chisum Blum (Chamberlain) 3-0 won by fall over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 2-14 (Fall 0:51)

Cons. Round 2 - Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 2-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Quirt Wondercheck (Faith) 8-9 won by major decision over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 2-14 (MD 10-0)

145 Nick Morris (3-10) scored 4.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Nick Morris (Groton Area) 3-10 won by forfeit over Forf. Forf. (Lakota Tech) 0-2 (For.)

Quarterfinal - Ryken Orel (Winner Area) 37-15 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 3-10 (Fall 1:13)

Cons. Round 2 - Jerrod Larsen (Chamberlain) 2-2 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 3-10 (Fall 3:43)

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152 Korbin Kucker (5-2) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-1 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Jack Peters (Winner Area) 20-15 won by decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-1 (Dec 13-6)

Cons. Round 2 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-1 won by fall over Carson Schrempp (McLaughlin) 1-15 (Fall 2:48)

Cons. Round 3 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-1 won by fall over Austin Blare (Winner Area) 8-22 (Fall 4:01)

Cons. Semi - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-1 won by injury default over Colby Kolda (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 29-7 (Inj. 0:00)

3rd Place Match - Bryce Reuer (Chamberlain) 26-11 won by decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 5-2 (Dec 6-2)

170 Cole Bisbee (16-11) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 16-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 16-10 won by decision over Kamryn Meek (Winner Area) 13-16 (Dec 7-3)

Semifinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 16-10 won by fall over Case Kolda (Stanley County) 18-14 (Fall 3:55)

1st Place Match - Jesse Bears Heart (Mobridge-Pollock) 30-9 won by decision over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 16-11 (Dec 8-2)

220 Gavin Englund (4-14) scored 4.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 4-14 won by fall over Wyatt Zeigler (Mobridge-Pollock) 5-14 (Fall 1:49)

Quarterfinal - Grey Gilbert (Harding County) 32-7 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 4-14 (Fall 1:00)

Cons. Round 2 - Dalton Deffenbaugh (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 9-15 won by decision over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 4-14 (Dec 10-7)

GDILIVE.COM

Junior High Boys Basketball at Groton Area
Monday, Feb. 6, 2023, 5:30 p.m.



Groton Area vs.
Aberdeen Christian



Sponsored by
Akaska Tavern & Bait Shop

\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Boys' Basketball at the Groton Area Arena
Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023

Groton Area vs. North Central

JV game at 6 p.m. sponsored by Larry & Val Flihs

Varsity Game to follow 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



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

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GDILIVE.COM

Girls' Basketball at the Groton Area Arena
Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023

Groton Area vs. Elk Point-Jefferson

JV game at 4 p.m. sponsored by Mr. Anonymous

Varsity Game to follow 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
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Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheething



Games called by Shane Clark

\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Boys' Basketball
Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023

Groton Area at Redfield

JH Boys game at 5 p.m. (1 combined game)
sponsored by Akaska Tavern & Bait Shop

JV game at 6 p.m. sponsored by Grandma & Grandpa

Varsity Game to follow 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 Wheething



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Girls' Basketball
Friday, Feb. 10, 2023

Groton Area hosting Redfield

C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV sponsored by Mr. Anonymous

Varsity Game to follow 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 Wheething



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Double Header Basketball at Moberidge-Pollock
Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023

Girls JV Game @ 1 PM in HS Gym sponsored by Larry & Val Flihs
Boys JV Game @ 1 PM in MS Gym sponsored by Ed & Connie Stauch

Varsity Games to follow 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 Wheething



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
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Weekly Vikings Recap - Super Bowl Preview

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Pro Bowl Recap

For the first time in history, the Pro Bowl switched from tackle football to flag football. The Vikings had seven pro bowlers partake in the game: Justin Jefferson, Kirk Cousins, TJ Hockenson, Dalvin Cook, Danielle Hunter, Za'Darius Smith, and Andrew DePaola. The NFC came out victorious over the AFC, 35-33, thanks to yet another game-winning drive by Kirk Cousins. Justin Jefferson, who was reportedly the most popular player among all the pro bowlers' children, had the game-winning one-point conversion from Cousins.

In all honesty, it's hard for a football game played in shorts and t-shirts to bring the same level of excitement as a padded, tackle football game. So, let's move on to a game that matters.

Super Bowl LVII Preview

Historically Close Matchup

Currently, the Eagles are 1.5-point favorites over the Chiefs. If that point spread remains the same by next Sunday, it will be tied for the second smallest point spread over the last 40 Super Bowls. In other words, it is rare when we get a Super Bowl matchup between such evenly-matched teams like this one.

Storylines

There are several storylines heading into this game that make this Super Bowl so unique.

For starters, Chiefs' tight end, Travis Kelce, and Eagles' center, Jason Kelce, will be the first brothers to play against one another in a Super Bowl. The fact that there are two brothers in a Super Bowl, as the Kelce brothers mentioned on their New Heights Podcast, is crazier than hitting the lottery.

The other big storyline is that Andy Reid is facing his former team. Reid, who coached the Eagles for 14 seasons, is the all-time winningest coach in Eagles history by a wide margin. He will become the fifth head coach in Super Bowl history to face his former team. If Reid wins next Sunday, he will tie Hank Stram for the most wins as the Chiefs' head coach. So, with a victory on Sunday, Reid will be the only head coach to hold the record for most wins for two NFL franchises.

Key Matchup

The biggest matchup of the game will be between the Chiefs' offensive line and the Eagles' pass rush. This season, the Eagles become the first team in NFL history to have four players total 10 or more sacks: Haason Reddick (16), Josh Sweat (11), Javon Hargrave (11), and Brandon Graham (11). That means that the Chiefs' offensive line will be unable to focus their protection on just one Eagles' pass rusher.

The good news for the Chiefs is that their offensive line might have the talent to match the Eagles' pass rush. The Chiefs had three offensive linemen elected to the pro bowl this year: Orlando Brown, Joe Thuney, and Creed Humphrey. And Andrew Wylie and Trey Smith, the other two Chiefs' offensive linemen, are no scrubs either. In Mahomes' two prior Super Bowl appearances, he has been pressured on an astonishing 30% of his dropbacks. If the Chiefs' offensive line can cut that number in half, it will not only ensure Mahomes more time, but it will also ensure his health as he is still healing from that high-ankle injury he suffered just three weeks before the Super Bowl.

Prediction

The underdog mentality that helped propel the Eagles' Super Bowl run in 2017 is no longer there with this version of the Eagles. The team has been a favorite in every game they have played throughout the whole season, and as mentioned above, that will include the Super Bowl next Sunday. However, the Chiefs have something the Eagles do not have: Patrick Mahomes. A victory on Sunday would give Mahomes his second Super Bowl trophy, a future Hall of Fame jacket, and the start of a realistic discussion of where he ranks among the greatest quarterbacks of all time. And because of all that, we predict the Chiefs to win Super Bowl LVII 31-21.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Researcher says simple fix could help farmers retain water and nutrients, but few are using it

Up to 50% less nitrates leave fields when 'controlled drainage' is used with drain tile

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 6, 2023 12:30 AM

Few farmers have installed a control system to manage water discharged from underground pipes, even though it could benefit their bottom line and the environment, according to research underway at South Dakota State University.

"Drain tile" is the common name for perforated pipes that many farmers bury under their fields to remove excess water. John McMaine, an SDSU water management engineer, said there's a simple way to manage drain tile outflow that only a small percentage of farmers use.

"It would probably be fewer than 10 percent," McMaine said.

Conventional "free-draining" systems remove excess water to the depth of the underground pipes. "Controlled drainage" increases water retention in the soil by using a structure — sometimes specially designed boxes, and sometimes as simple as wooden boards manually stacked up — to raise the depth of drainage outlets, operating like spillways. The system helps to hold back more moisture in a field during periods when drainage is not needed, like a drought.

Climate change is increasing the number of severe flooding and drought events in the state, according to SDSU Extension State Climatologist Laura Edwards.

And when big rains come, farms are losing fertilizers like nitrogen — and money — by not using a system to manage discharged water. That can also contribute to soil erosion and loss of soil fertility. In addition, the discharge of excess water and nutrients into nearby rivers and streams causes water pollution.

"We see less nitrate leaving with controlled drainage by, usually, between 40 and 50%," McMaine said.

While farmers can benefit financially from controlling their tile drain discharge, McMaine said most need to be made aware of how simple implementing a system can be.

"Especially in a dry year, it would be nice to have the ability to turn my tile off, but they don't know that's something they don't have to develop on their own," McMaine said. "There are commercially available options to do that."

And managing tile drainage may become even easier. McMaine and fellow researchers hope to design software that would automatically raise or lower the height of the "spillways" based on soil conditions, without farmers having to do it manually.

"Phase two is to start to develop that technology," McMaine said. "Remote control structures will be installed, and we'll develop the algorithms to make them truly automated."

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.

COMMENTARY

Bill on public comments at meetings doesn't go far enough

DANA HESS ~ FEBRUARY 5, 2023 7:00 AM

Whenever the topic is citizens being mistreated by their local government, it's not uncommon to hear the phrase, "There oughta be a law."

Well, if you've been mistreated by a local government entity and your friend is a member of the state House of Representatives, a new law is what you're going to get.

That's what happened in 2018 when Rep. Elizabeth May, a Republican from Kyle, told her colleagues about attending a local meeting of a government entity with a friend of hers who wanted to address the board about a particular issue.

They sat through 30 minutes of old and new business and then waited outside the meeting room for an hour while the board went into executive session. Done with executive session, the board adjourned and made their escape out a side door. It's always odd when public servants go out of their way to avoid the public.

As a consequence of that board's actions, May brought House Bill 1172, a bill to require a period of public comment at all regular meetings of local government. It was successfully endorsed by the Legislature, signed by the governor and has been the law of the land for the past few years.

This year another public comment bill is up for consideration: Senate Bill 162, which has been approved by the Senate Local Government Committee. The current law mandates a public comment period at all "regularly scheduled" meetings. Over time, citizens found that the public comment period they became accustomed to was not on the agenda during work sessions or emergency meetings since they are not "regular" meetings.

The very nature of an emergency meeting cries out for public comment. A school board may have an emergency meeting if a tornado has swept away a school. A city council may have an emergency meeting if the town's sewer system has gone horribly wrong. A county commission may have an emergency meeting if an often-used bridge collapses.

Public boards and commissions have read the law and found that at a time of emergency — just when the public may want to comment on the situation at hand — that pesky time for public comment doesn't have to be included on the agenda.

SB162 would fix that, changing the law to say that a time of public comment will be included on all "official" meetings of local governmental bodies, not just regularly scheduled meetings. It's a worthy change, but it doesn't go far enough.

While requiring a time for public comment was a step in the right direction, it has been mishandled by some public government boards and councils. Like the board that snuck out the side door rather than listen to Rep. May's friend, some boards and commissions are circumventing public comment. They do this by testing the public's patience and putting the comment period at the end of the agenda. By the time they get to the end of the agenda and the public comment period, the item that citizens wanted to comment on may already have been dealt with by the board.

If lawmakers want to give a real boost to public comment, they should amend SB162 so that public comment is at the top, rather than the bottom, of the agenda. At a perfect meeting, the top of the agenda should read: Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance, approve agenda, public comment.

Many commissions and boards already have their agendas in the right order. They put public comment at the start of the meeting, but that doesn't mean that they don't have their own complaints about the way they have been told to run their meetings.

The problem is that some citizens believe the public comment period on the agenda allows them to share their thoughts on anything that's bothering them. Consequently, they'll use their time at the microphone to comment on their hatred of vaccines, their love of guns or the shortcomings of the president.

The creation of a public comment period has highlighted the public's general lack of knowledge about how local government works. This is apparent as some use their public comment time at the city council

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meeting to talk about the latest scandal at the school. County commissioners are forced to listen to grievances about the city police force.

As they consider SB 162, legislators should consider another amendment, this one limiting public comment to those items on the meeting agenda.

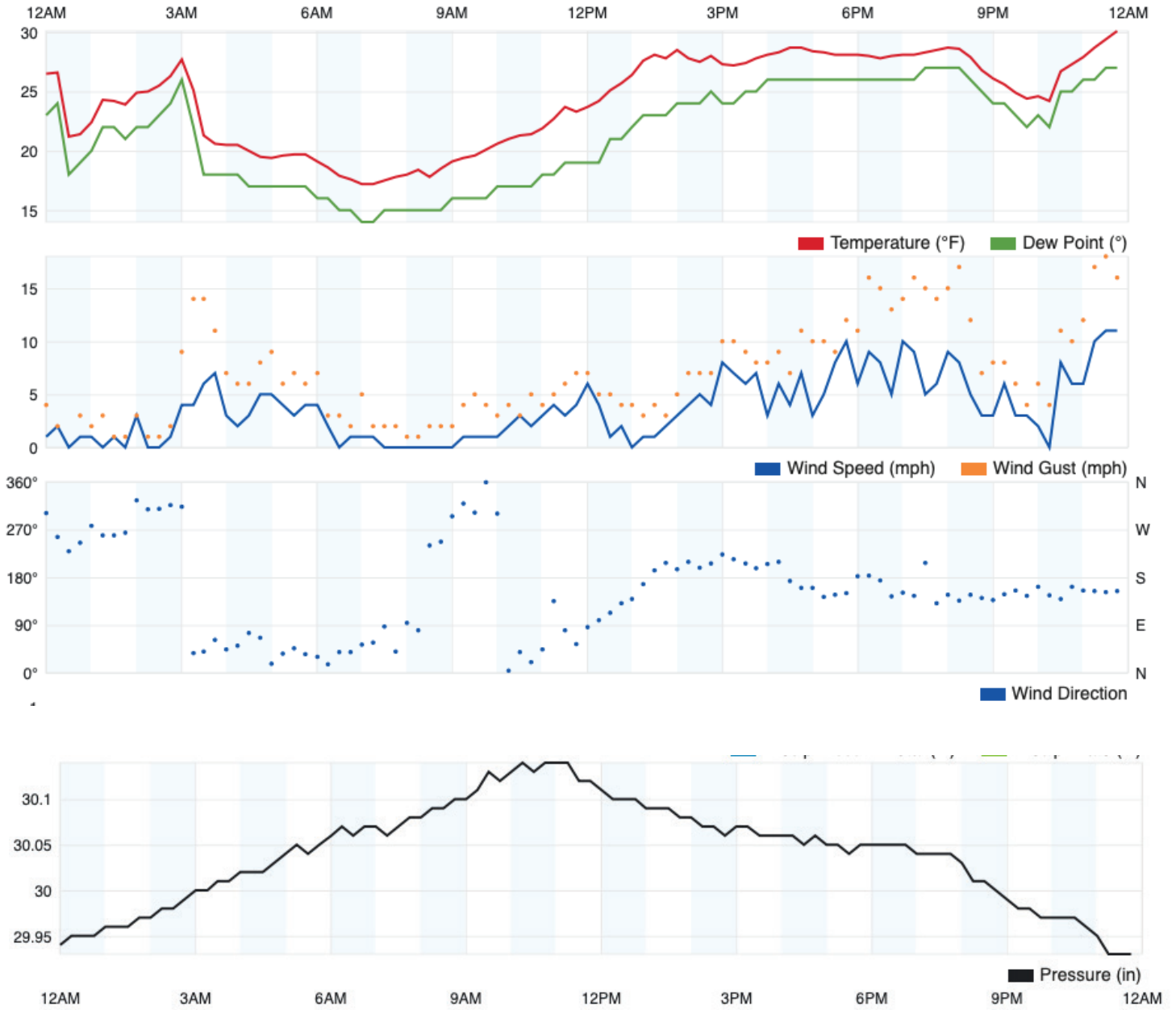
By itself, SB 162 is a good step toward ensuring citizens always have a voice in their government. Making two amendments — to put public comments at the top of the agenda and limiting comments to topics on the agenda — would go a long way toward ensuring better government and, we can only hope, shorter meetings in South Dakota.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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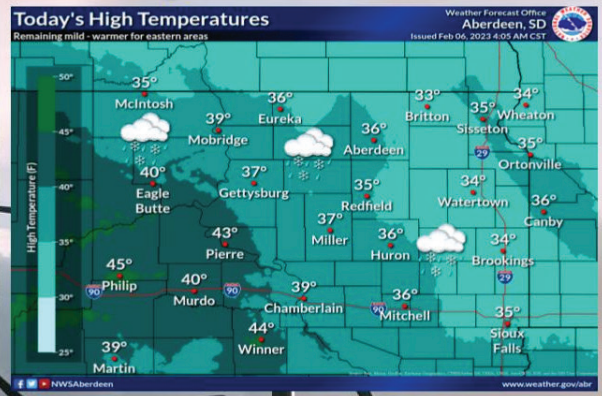
Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
High: 35 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 31 °F

Windy and Mild Today

February 6, 2023
4:41 AM

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	2/6 Mon														2/7 Tue							
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am
Aberdeen	37	37	39	38	33	29	24	26	29	31	33	36	40	41	41	44	39	36	35	35	32	30
Britton	44	44	39	41	38	39	37	33	29	25	26	30	35	36	43	39	36	36	33	32	26	22
Eagle Butte	16	23	29	32	35	37	39	40	43	44	45	45	44	40	40	37	33	32	29	30	28	26
Eureka	24	21	18	15	18	23	33	36	37	39	41	41	41	38	41	39	35	31	29	26	23	22
Gettysburg	28	24	22	20	22	28	32	35	36	38	43	41	39	37	36	37	32	32	28	26	23	21
Menominee	16	17	20	21	23	29	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	37	39	36	37	36	30	29	26	23
McIntosh	8	15	25	30	31	35	40	43	44	46	45	44	40	39	40	38	36	35	31	35	33	30
Milbank	29	30	30	31	32	29	31	28	25	22	22	24	28	32	36	40	36	37	33	35	35	31
Miller	46	40	31	26	25	24	28	30	32	35	35	39	37	38	37	36	37	37	31	32	30	28
Mobridge	16	15	15	17	21	25	32	33	35	36	38	37	38	33	33	31	28	25	22	23	22	20
Murdo	12	16	26	29	29	32	36	36	36	36	37	36	35	33	36	39	35	30	28	28	25	23
Pierre	21	18	16	17	21	26	31	32	32	33	35	36	32	31	29	30	26	28	23	24	20	18
Redfield	35	37	40	36	32	29	24	26	28	30	31	35	37	38	38	36	36	36	31	30	30	30
Sisseton	26	29	30	29	25	30	28	25	24	22	25	31	36	39	44	45	43	40	41	38	38	37
Watertown	35	40	46	46	43	40	41	37	33	29	28	31	33	35	39	39	37	36	35	37	33	30
Webster	44	45	46	46	46	43	41	39	36	33	35	38	40	44	46	45	40	40	41	38	36	31
Wheaton	31	33	33	33	28	30	31	26	23	18	18	21	25	29	33	35	36	33	33	31	31	30



- Southerly winds becoming northwest through the day.
- Mild temperatures in the 30s and 40s.
- Slight chance for rain/snow with weak system passing through.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Gusty southerly winds will occur across eastern portions of the forecast area this morning. Through the day, winds will eventually switch to the northwest and become windy/gusty once again. The hourly chart shows the trends with speed and direction today for selected cities. Temperatures will be mild again today, and warmer for eastern areas compared to Sunday. Highs will reach the 30s and 40s. A weak system moving east across the Dakotas will bring just slight chances for light rain or snow today into this evening.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 30 °F at 11:58 PM

Low Temp: 17 °F at 7:16 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 11:21 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 02 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1987

Record Low: -33 in 1907

Average High: 26

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.12

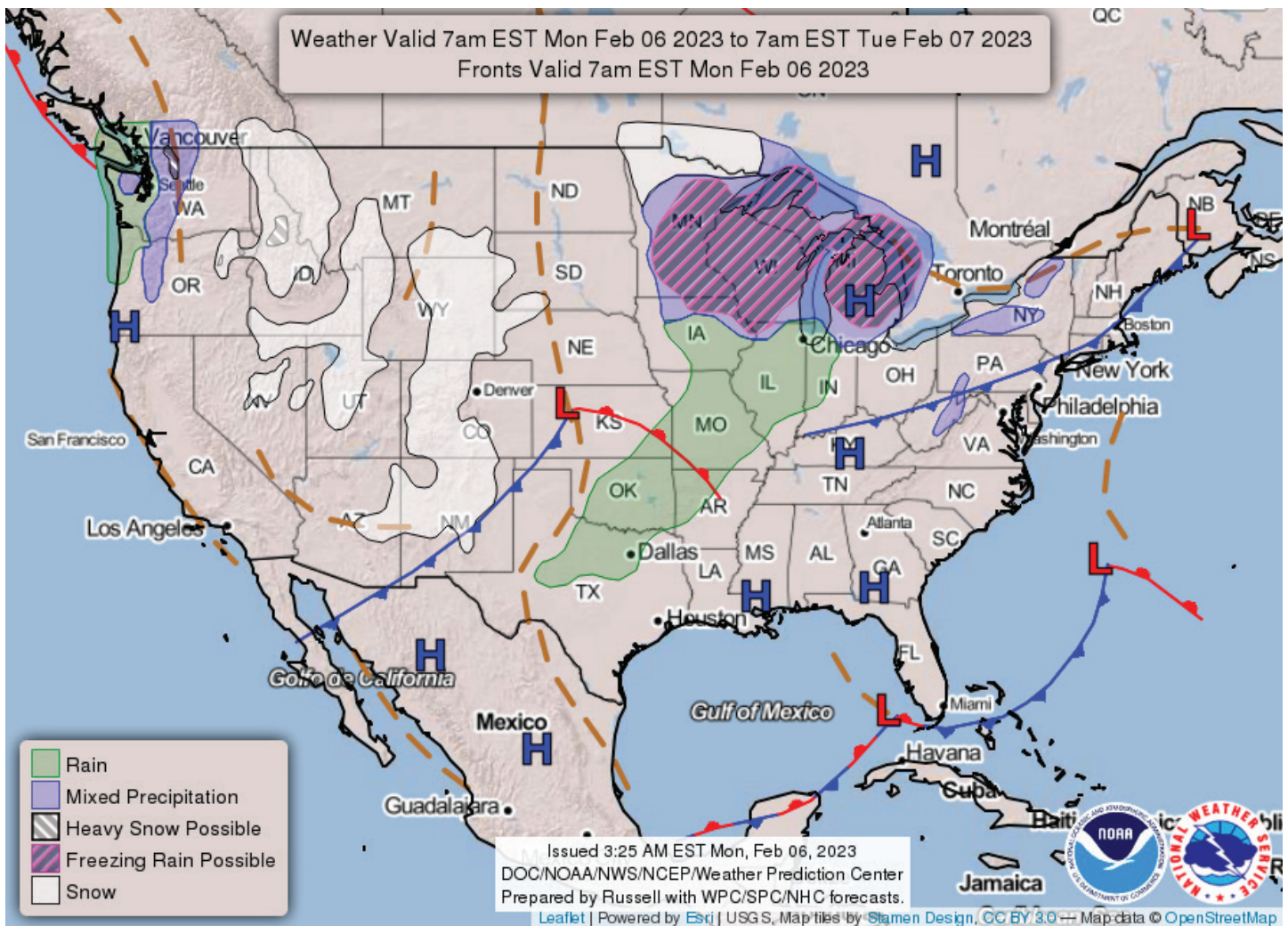
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.67

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 5:47:40 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:52 AM



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Today in Weather History

February 6, 1959: A man from Gary in Deuel County was in critical condition with frozen hands, feet, and arms after spending the night in his car in subzero weather.

February 6, 1987: Record warmth occurred across all of central, north-central, and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, with highs in the mid-50s to the lower 60s. Aberdeen, Kennebec, Mobridge, Pierre, Sisseton, Timber Lake, Watertown, and Wheaton all set record highs on this date in 1987. Pierre recorded the warmest temperature for the day with 62 degrees.

1807 - It was the famous "Cold Friday" in the Midwest and South. The temperature did not rise above zero in Ohio and Kentucky. (David Ludlum)

1958: The Munich air disaster occurred when British European Airways Flight 609 crashed on its third attempt to take off from a slush-covered runway at Munich-Riem Airport, West Germany. On the plane was the Manchester United football team, nicknamed the "Busby Babes," along with supporters and journalists. Twenty of the 44 on the aircraft died at the scene. The injured, some unconscious, were taken to the Rechts der Isar Hospital in Munich, where three more died, resulting in 23 fatalities with 21 survivors.

1978 - A massive nor'easter buried the cities of the northeastern U.S. Storm totals included 18 inches at New York City, 16 inches at Philadelphia, and 14 inches at Baltimore. The Boston MA area received 25 to 30 inches in "The Great New England Blizzard" and the mayor outlawed travel in the city for an entire week. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Brownsville, TX, was deluged with seven inches of rain in just two hours, and flooding in some parts of the city was worse than that caused by Hurricane Beulah in 1967. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic cold invaded the south central and eastern U.S. Sixteen cities reported new record low temperatures for the date. Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced a foot of snow at Arcade NY in three hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Forty-one cities in the western U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date. Lows of -30 degrees at Ely NV and -33 degrees at Richfield UT were all-time records. Morning lows of 31 degrees at San Francisco CA and -15 degrees at Reno NV were records for February. Logan Canyon UT was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 54 degrees below zero, and Craig CO hit 51 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A second cold front brought more heavy snow to the high elevations of Oregon, with 12 inches reported at Sunset Summit. Ten inches of snow blanketed Crater Lake and Mount Bachelor. Heavy snow also blanketed northeastern Nevada and parts of Washington State. In Nevada, up to a foot of snow was reported between Spring Creek and Lamoille. Stevens Pass WA received 14 inches of snow in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: On February 5-6, a severe nor'easter, commonly referred to as Snowmageddon, impacted the east coast from North Carolina to New York. Some snowfall amounts include; 32.9 inches at Washington Dulles International Airport; 28.5 inches at the Philadelphia International Airport; 21.1 inches at the Pittsburgh International Airport; 18.2 in Atlantic City; Trace in Central Park.

2020: The Esperanza Base, the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, 63°23'S, reached 18.3°C (64.94°F), February 6th, 2020. The 18.3°C sets a new, all-time high temperature for the continent of Antarctica. The previous record was 17.5°C in 2015, also at Esperanza. Please Note: A verification process needs to be done before certifying as a new record.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

MISPLACED TRUST

We all inherit the same sinful nature at birth. It is very evident in the way we think and act. We have an "inbred" dependence on our subjective, self-focused, self-centered, or perhaps might we be more honest and say "sinful" selves. We tend to rely on our God-given gifts as something we have accomplished on our own apart from Him. It is as though we took a lump of clay from the ground and fashioned a person, endowed him with skills and abilities and said, "Now, let's do something that we can be proud of!"

"He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe." This statement reminds us of the wisdom contained in another proverb: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Once again in his wisdom and our lack of it, Solomon took time to remind us of how we easily turn to ourselves rather than God. Trusting in ourselves is normal and natural but not without proving to ourselves, others and God that we are fools.

Notice this: "A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper." This theme, flowing throughout Proverbs, is so very important when we relate it to our sinful nature. To "trust in" is difficult because it signals to the world that what we do is not of ourselves but is a gift from God and to God be the glory for that gift!

Greed is who we are. It's not a word that we want to be identified by. It is something most of us try to deny. The solution? Give credit to God for who we are and what we have!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for seeing who we can be in spite of who we think we are. Make us willing to be willing to let go and let God get the glory, honor, and praise! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. Proverbs 28:26



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 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
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 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
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.03.23

1 4 50 54 59 17

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$31,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 6
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.04.23

8 17 18 21 52 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,620,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 6 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.05.23

2 16 23 43 47 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 36 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.04.23

7 10 14 30 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$42,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 6
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.04.23

6 38 57 58 63 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 5 Mins 42
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.04.23

2 8 15 19 58 10

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$747,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 5 Mins 42
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Victims to speak in court in Chasing Horse's sex abuse case

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — Victims, police detectives and federal agents are expected to speak in court Monday before a judge decides whether to grant bail to a former "Dances With Wolves" actor accused of sexually abusing Indigenous girls and leading a cult during a period spanning two decades.

Nathan Chasing Horse, 46, faces charges of sex trafficking, sexual assault and child abuse after his arrest last Tuesday near the North Las Vegas home he shares with his wives. He has not been formally charged in the case.

He appeared briefly in court Thursday in North Las Vegas for the first time but did not speak as his public defenders invoked on his behalf his right to a detention hearing, citing Nevada case law that requires prosecutors to present convincing evidence as to why a defendant should remain in custody.

Clark County Chief Deputy District Attorney Jessica Walsh told the judge Thursday that she expected Las Vegas police detectives, FBI special agents and victims to speak at Monday's hearing.

North Las Vegas Justice of the Peace Natalie Tyrrell could also hear from Chasing Horse's relatives, who attended his first court hearing last week and filled up an entire row in the courtroom gallery in a show of support.

Known for his role as young Sioux tribe member Smiles a Lot in Kevin Costner's Oscar-winning film, Chasing Horse built a reputation for himself among tribes across the United States and in Canada as a "medicine man" who performed healing ceremonies. He 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.

In a 50-page search warrant obtained by The Associated Press, police described Chasing Horse as the leader of a cult known as The Circle, whose followers believed he could communicate with higher powers.

Police said he abused his position, physically and sexually assaulted Indigenous girls and took underage wives over two decades.

According to the warrant, Chasing Horse trained his wives to use firearms and instructed them to "shoot it out" with police officers if they tried to "break their family apart." If that failed, or if he was ever to be arrested or die unexpectedly, he told his wives to take "suicide pills," the document said.

SWAT officers and detectives took Chasing Horse into custody last week and cleared the family's home without incident.

Detectives who searched the property found guns, 41 pounds (18.5 kilograms) of marijuana and psilocybin mushrooms, and a memory card with multiple videos of sexual assaults, according to an arrest report released Wednesday.

Additional charges could be filed related to the videos, the report said.

Las Vegas police said in the search warrant that at least six victims had been identified, including one who was 13 when she says she was abused and another who says she was offered to him as a "gift" when she was 15.

Police said the crimes date to the early 2000s and span multiple states, including South Dakota, Montana and Nevada, where he has lived for about a decade.

His arrest came nearly a decade after he was banished from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, amid similar allegations.

China accuses US of indiscriminate use of force over balloon

By EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China on Monday accused the United States of indiscriminate use of force in shooting down a suspected Chinese spy balloon, saying it "seriously impacted and damaged both sides' efforts and progress in stabilizing Sino-U.S. relations."

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The U.S. shot down the balloon off the Carolina coast after it traversed sensitive military sites across North America. China insisted the flyover was an accident involving a civilian aircraft.

Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng said he lodged a formal complaint with the U.S. Embassy on Sunday over the "U.S. attack on a Chinese civilian unmanned airship by military force."

"However, the United States turned a deaf ear and insisted on indiscriminate use of force against the civilian airship that was about to leave the United States airspace, obviously overreacted and seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice," Xie said.

The presence of the balloon in the skies above the U.S. dealt a severe blow to already strained U.S.-Chinese relations that have been in a downward spiral for years. It prompted Secretary of State Antony Blinken to abruptly cancel a high-stakes Beijing trip aimed at easing tensions.

Xie repeated China's insistence that the balloon was a Chinese civil unmanned airship that blew into U.S. airspace by mistake, calling it "an accidental incident caused by force majeure."

China will "resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies, resolutely safeguard China's interests and dignity and reserve the right to make further necessary responses," he said.

U.S. President Joe Biden issued the shutdown order after he was advised that the best time for the operation would be when it was over water, U.S. officials said. Military officials determined that bringing down the balloon over land from an altitude of 60,000 feet (18,000 meters) would pose an undue risk to people on the ground.

"What the U.S. has done has seriously impacted and damaged both sides' efforts and progress in stabilizing Sino-U.S. relations since the Bali meeting," Xie said, referring to a recent meeting between Biden and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in Indonesia that many hoped would create positive momentum for improving ties that have plunged to their lowest level in years.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning provided no new details on Monday, repeating China's insistence that the object was a civilian balloon intended for meteorological research, had little ability to steer and entered U.S. airspace by accidentally diverging from its course. She also did not say what additional steps China intended to take in response to Washington's handling of the issue and cancellation of Blinken's trip, which would have made him the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have stated that this is completely an isolated and accidental incident caused by force majeure, but the U.S. still hyped up the incident on purpose and even used force to attack," Mao said at a daily briefing. "This is an unacceptable and irresponsible action."

Balloons thought or known to be Chinese have been spotted from Latin America to Japan. Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki told reporters Monday that a flying object similar to the one shot down by the U.S. had been spotted at least twice over northern Japan since 2020.

"We are continuing to analyze them in connection with the latest case in the United States," he said.

Mao confirmed that a balloon recently spotted over Latin American was Chinese, describing it as a civilian airship used for flight tests.

"Affected by weather and due to its limited self-control ability, the airship severely deviated from its set route and entered the space of Latin America and the Caribbean by accident," Mao said.

Washington and Beijing are at odds over a range of issues from trade to human rights, but China is most sensitive over alleged violations by the U.S. and others of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Beijing strongly protests U.S. military sales to Taiwan and visits by foreign politicians to the island, which it claims as Chinese territory, to be recovered by force if necessary.

It reacted to a 2022 visit by then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi by firing missiles over the island and staging threatening military drills seen as a rehearsal for an invasion or blockade. Beijing also cut off discussion with the U.S. on issues including climate change that are unrelated to military tensions.

Last week, Mao warned Pelosi's successor, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, not to travel to Taiwan, implying that China's response would be equally vociferous.

"China will firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests," Mao said. McCarthy said China had no right to dictate where and when he could travel.

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China also objects when foreign military surveillance planes fly off its coast in international airspace and when U.S. and other foreign warships pass through the Taiwan Strait, accusing them of being actively provocative.

In 2001, a U.S. Navy plane conducting routine surveillance near the Chinese coast collided with a Chinese fighter plane, killing the Chinese fighter pilot and damaging the American plane, which was forced to make an emergency landing at a Chinese naval airbase on the southern Chinese island province of Hainan. China detained the 24-member U.S. Navy aircrew for 10 days until the U.S. expressed regret over the Chinese pilot's death and for landing at the base without permission.

The South China Sea is another major source of tension. China claims the strategically key sea virtually in its entirety and protests when U.S. Navy ships sail past Chinese military features there.

At a news conference Friday with his South Korean counterpart, Blinken said "the presence of this surveillance balloon over the United States in our skies is a clear violation of our sovereignty, a clear violation of international law, and clearly unacceptable. And we've made that clear to China."

"Any country that has its airspace violated in this way I think would respond similarly, and I can only imagine what the reaction would be in China if they were on the other end," Blinken said.

China's weather balloon explanation should be dismissed outright, said Oriana Skylar Mastro, an expert on Chinese military affairs and foreign policy at Stanford University.

"This is like a standard thing that countries often say about surveillance assets," Mastro said.

China may have made a mistake and lost control of the balloon, but it was unlikely to have been a deliberate attempt to disrupt Blinken's visit, Mastro said.

For the U.S. administration, the decision to go public and then shoot down the balloon marks a break from its usual approach of dealing with Beijing on such matters privately, possibly in hopes of changing China's future behavior.

However, Mastro said, it was unlikely that Beijing would respond positively.

"They're probably going to dismiss that and continue on as things have been. So I don't see a really clear pathway to improved relations in the foreseeable future."

ChatGPT bot channels history to pen State of Union speech

By CALVIN WOODWARD and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If you've heard it once in a president's State of the Union speech, you've heard it 100 times: There is nothing the American people can't do when they pull together.

But you haven't heard that thought in a State of Union address from William Shakespeare: "Lo," said the bard. "With kindness, love, and understanding clear, we shall conquer all, and have naught to fear."

Nor from the noggin-knocking Three Stooges of last century's fame: "We just put our heads together, come up with a plan, and bam! Problem solved!"

Let's face it, State of the Union speeches are mostly rote. Presidents roll out a list of accomplishments, a few anecdotes about guests in attendance, a sober assessment of the problems of the day and a crescendo about glory times ahead.

To shake up the formula before President Joe Biden's speech to Congress on Tuesday night, The Associated Press instructed the artificial intelligence program ChatGPT to work up State of the Union speeches as they might have been written by some of history's greatest minds as well as some stooges.

AP ordered up 300-word versions, in contrast to Biden's sprawling 6,400 words last year, and tapped a few people so iconic we know them by only one name. The virtual Greek philosopher Aristotle gracefully quoted Socrates, Cleopatra the historic Egyptian ruler asked for the blessing of the gods, Madonna cited her perspective as a mother and a woman in the entertainment industry.

ChatGPT was also asked to channel singer Elvis Presley, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, the ground-breaking NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson, Tesla and Twitter CEO Elon Musk, the abolitionist Sojourner Truth, and baseball's Yogi Berra, among other luminaries.

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We also wanted to see what a bright, unidentified 10-year-old might say to the assembled lawmakers. The app is part of a new generation of AI systems that can converse in human-like fashion and generate text on demand based on what they've learned from a vast database of digital books, online writings and other media. It petrifies teachers who fear their students will use it instead of their brains for school papers.

ChatGPT rendered Shakespeare's State of the Union speech in rhyme, scrolling on the screen faster than anyone could read it. The version channeling comedian Jerry Seinfeld captured his verbal mannerisms and signature phrasings.

"I've been thinking about this a lot lately, and I've realized that the state of our union is like a sandwich," wrote the app-generated Seinfeld. "You've got the top bun, which is all the good stuff. You've got the cheese, the lettuce, the tomato, the mayo. It's all delicious.

"But then, when you take a closer look, you see the bottom bun, and that's where the real work is. That's where the foundation is."

Yada, yada yada.

For all the app's smarts and speed, it wasn't all-knowing. In the speech channeling King, it had the civil rights leader quoting himself. It conveyed none of Abraham Lincoln's eloquence. And it declined to take a run at drafting 2023 Biden's speech, instead serving up a rehash of his last one.

It also drew a blank when asked for a speech from George Santos, the new Republican congressman from New York who was caught fictionalizing his past. It seemed to sense, though, that there was something make-believe in the picture.

"George Santos is not a widely recognized public figure or historical figure," the app responded. "There is no widely known information about a person by this name in the public domain. It's possible that the name was created for a specific use or scenario, such as a fictional character or a person in a private setting."

A look at some of the speeches ChatGPT generated:

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

My Lords and Ladies, countrymen and women, Gather ye here today to hear what I say, In this great hall of ours, let us unite, And listen to the state of our fair state.

We stand today as one, in good health and grace, Prosperous and free, with a peaceful space, Our trade and commerce flourish, wealth abounds, With bountiful harvests, and peace surrounds.

But, lo, there are still challenges we face, For not all are equal in our fair place, We must work together to bridge the divide, And bring forth equality, from side to side.

Let us not forget, our soldiers bold and brave, Who fought for freedom, and our country gave, Their lives and limbs, for our safety and peace, We must repay them with honors and release.

And so I say, let us work hand in hand, To build a brighter future, in this fair land, With kindness, love, and understanding clear, We shall conquer all, and have naught to fear.

And now, my friends, I bid thee all farewell, And trust that thou wilt work, with heart and will, For the good of all, and the betterment of man, Together we shall build, a stronger, better land.

SOJOURNER TRUTH, the 1800s abolitionist and evangelist born into slavery

As a former slave, I stand before you today as a witness to the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality in this great nation. Despite the progress made since the abolition of slavery, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of disappointment at the persistence of racial injustice.

African Americans are still being denied their basic rights, facing discrimination and prejudice at every turn. This is evident in the disproportionate number of black people who are incarcerated, unemployed, and living in poverty. It is also evident in the ongoing struggle for voting rights, as Black citizens are still being denied the right to vote through various means, including gerrymandering and voter suppression tactics.

But I have not lost hope. I have faith in the resilience of my people, and I am inspired by the efforts of those who continue to fight for justice. I am heartened by the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the many other groups who are speaking out against systemic racism and calling for change.

I call upon all of you to join me in this fight. We must not be complacent in the face of injustice. We

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must continue to stand up for what is right, even when it is difficult. We must continue to fight for equal rights for all, regardless of race, gender, or religion.

Together, we can create a future where all people are free from discrimination and prejudice, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, and where justice and equality reign supreme. This is the state of our union, and it is a call to action. Let us work together to build a brighter future for all.

JERRY SEINFELD

Good evening, my fellow Americans. How's everyone doing tonight? I'm here to give you the State of the Union address, and I must say, I'm a little nervous. I mean, usually when I give a speech, I have a microphone and a stage and a live audience. But tonight, it's just me and you, so I hope you don't mind if I sprinkle in a few jokes to lighten the mood.

Now, let's talk about the state of our union. I've been thinking about this a lot lately, and I've realized that the state of our union is like a sandwich ...

We've got the top bun, which is all the good stuff. We've got the economy, which is looking pretty tasty. We've got low unemployment, and businesses are thriving. ... I want to focus on the bottom bun. I want to focus on the foundation. I want to talk about the things that we don't always see or talk about, but that are so important. I want to talk about education, and healthcare, and infrastructure. I want to talk about the things that make our country strong ...

Let's make sure that our country is a delicious sandwich that we can all be proud of.

YOGI BERRA, baseball hall of famer

It's like deja vu all over again, folks! We've been here before and we're here again. The state of the union, it's complicated, but we're makin' progress. We've got our ups and our downs, but we gotta keep swingin' at those curveballs life throws our way.

Now, let me tell ya, we've been workin' hard to make this country a better place for all of us. We've got a lot of people doin' a lot of good things, and we gotta keep that up. And for those who ain't doin' so well, we gotta help 'em out. We're all in this together, like a big ol' family.

We've got a lot of challenges ahead of us, but we've also got a lot of opportunities. We've gotta take 'em both on, head on. And we've gotta work together, 'cause ain't nothin' we can't do if we work together.

So, let's keep up the good work, folks. Let's make this country the best it can be. It ain't gonna be easy, but ain't nothin' worth doin' ever is.

KATHERINE JOHNSON, a mathematician whose calculations enabled NASA to put the first Americans into Earth's orbit and on the moon

My fellow Americans,

As a mathematician, I have spent my career using numbers and equations to solve complex problems and push the boundaries of what is possible. And as I look at our nation today, I see a problem that demands our attention and our action.

We are facing a crisis in mathematics education. Too many of our children are struggling to keep up, and too few are pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This not only undermines their future opportunities, but also threatens our ability to compete in an increasingly technological world.

But the solution to this problem is within our reach. We must invest in math education, from early childhood through high school and beyond. We must provide our teachers with the support and resources they need to help students succeed, and we must encourage girls and underrepresented minorities to pursue careers in STEM fields.

As we work to address this crisis, let us also remember the incredible potential of mathematics. Math is not just a subject to be studied, but a powerful tool that can help us tackle the greatest challenges of our time. Whether we are working to cure diseases, address climate change, or build a more just and

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equitable society, math will be an essential part of the solution.

My own journey as a mathematician has taken me from the halls of NASA to the history books, but it all started with a love of numbers and a desire to use them to make a difference in the world. And I believe that every child in America, regardless of their background or circumstances, should have the opportunity to discover their own love of math and use it to make a difference.

So let us recommit ourselves to ensuring that all Americans have access to a quality math education, and let us harness the power of math to build a better future for ourselves and for generations to come.

ELVIS PRESLEY

Well, hello there, my fellow Americans!

It's great to be here today, talking to you all about the state of our union. Now, let me tell you, we've been rockin' and rollin' over the past year, and I've got some good news to share with you all.

We're making progress, friends. Our economy is stronger than ever, our businesses are booming, and our country is more united than ever. You know, when I look out into this crowd, I see Americans from all walks of life, all coming together for the greater good of our nation.

Now, I know some folks out there might say we've got some challenges to overcome, but I've got to tell you, I believe in the American people. We've faced tough times before, and we've always come out on top. And we're gonna do it again.

We're gonna keep on truckin', we're gonna keep rockin' and rollin', and we're gonna keep building a better future for all Americans. I've got faith in you, my fellow Americans, and I know that together, we can do anything.

So let's get to work, let's keep this train rollin', and let's make America great again. Thank you, and God bless America!

ARISTOTLE, ancient Greek philosopher

Citizens of the Republic, I stand before you today to address the state of our great society. In the words of my predecessor, Socrates, the measure of a state is not the number of people in it, but the quality of life they lead. And it is with this measure that I assess the state of our union.

We must strive for excellence in all that we do, for it is this pursuit of excellence that will bring about true happiness and fulfillment. It is through virtuous action that we find our true purpose and meaning, and it is through the cultivation of virtue that we build a strong and just society.

But we must not simply aim for personal excellence, for a society is more than the sum of its individual parts. We must also strive for excellence in our relationships with one another, promoting justice and harmony among our citizens. Only then can we build a society in which each individual can flourish and reach their full potential.

It is our duty as citizens to actively participate in the governance of our society, to use our reason and our wisdom to help shape the policies and laws that govern us. And it is our duty to educate future generations in the art of virtuous living, to ensure that our society remains strong and virtuous for generations to come.

So let us work together, citizens of the Republic, to build a society that is truly excellent, a society in which each and every one of us can reach our full potential and find true happiness and fulfillment. For it is only through such a society that we can truly say that the state of our union is strong and virtuous.

Thank you, and may the gods bless our great Republic.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

My fellow Americans,

We gather here today, at a momentous time in our nation's history, to address the state of our union. And as we do so, I am reminded of the words of the great prophet Amos, who declared, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

For too long, justice has been denied to too many in our society. For too long, righteousness has been an elusive dream. And it is time for us to awaken from this slumber and work together to build a more

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perfect union.

We cannot be satisfied until every American, regardless of race, religion, or background, has an equal opportunity to achieve the American dream. We cannot be satisfied until every child, regardless of zip code, has access to a quality education. We cannot be satisfied until every worker, regardless of industry, is paid a fair wage and treated with dignity and respect.

But let us not become discouraged, for we have made progress. We have seen a civil rights movement that brought about change, and we will continue to see change in our time. For as Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

So let us bend that arc, together. Let us roll down justice and righteousness like waters. Let us create a society where every person is valued and respected, where every person has an equal chance to succeed.

And let us not forget, as we work for this noble cause, that we are all one people, bound together by our common humanity. For as Dr. King also said, "We may have all come on different ships, but we are in the same boat now."

So let us come together, as one people, to build a better future for all. Thank you.

A 10-YEAR-OLD

Hi everyone! I'm really excited to be here today, talking about the state of our country.

I think that overall, things are going pretty well. We have a lot of great things happening, like new schools being built, new parks being made, and new jobs being created. But there are still some things that we can do better.

For example, there are still a lot of kids who don't have enough to eat, or who don't have a safe place to live. That's not okay, and I think we need to do more to help them. I think we should make sure that every kid has enough to eat, and that every kid has a warm and safe place to sleep at night.

Another thing I think we need to work on is making sure that everyone gets along. There's still a lot of fighting and meanness, and that's not cool. I think we should all be friends and help each other out.

Finally, I think we need to make sure that everyone has a chance to be happy and have fun. That means making sure that everyone has access to parks, playgrounds, and places to play. It also means making sure that everyone has access to books, computers, and other things that can help us learn and grow.

So that's what I think about the state of our country. I think we're doing pretty well, but there's still a lot of work to do. But I'm optimistic, because I know that if we all work together, we can make things better for everyone.

Thanks for listening, and let's work together to make our country the best it can be!

MAHATMA GANDHI

My dear friends, I stand before you today as a humble servant of the people, to address the state of our nation.

In the face of adversity, it is easy to lose sight of what is truly important. But I implore you, let us not forget the values that have guided us for generations. Let us not forget the power of nonviolence, the strength of truth, and the importance of compassion.

For it is only through these values that we can truly build a just and equitable society. It is only through these values that we can truly claim to be a great nation.

But we have much work to do. The poverty, the inequality, and the discrimination that still plagues our society must be eradicated. We must be unwavering in our commitment to justice, to peace, and to compassion.

And we must not be afraid to challenge the status quo, to resist the forces of oppression, and to stand up for what is right. For it is only by doing so that we can truly claim to be a great people.

So let us come together, my friends, and let us work for a brighter future for all our citizens. ...

And let us do so with nonviolence, with truth, and with compassion. For it is only through these values that we can truly claim to be a great nation, a great people, and a great civilization.

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Thank you, and may God bless us all.

THE THREE STOOGES of vaudeville, film and TV fame

My fellow Americans, it's a honor to stand before you today to talk about the state of our great union. And let me tell you, it's been quite the ride so far! But we're not ones to back down from a challenge, are we? No sirree, not the Three Stooges!

But we can't do it alone. We need the support of all Americans. ... So, let's keep working hard, my fellow Americans. Let's make this country the best it can be. And most importantly, let's keep laughing and having a good time while we do it! After all, life is too short to take it too seriously.

WINSTON CHURCHILL, 20th century British prime minister and orator

My fellow citizens, it is with a heavy heart and steadfast determination that I address you today. Our great nation stands at a crossroads, facing challenges that would test the mettle of any generation. But I have faith, faith in the resilience and courage of the American people, that we shall overcome.

We have seen the forces of division and despair seek to tear at the fabric of our society, but we shall not be swayed. We shall stand united, firm in our resolve to defend the principles upon which this great nation was founded. Freedom, justice, and equality for all shall not be sacrificed upon the altar of greed or hatred.

The road ahead will not be easy, and there will be obstacles, but we shall not falter. We shall continue to work tirelessly, to build a future of prosperity and security for all our citizens. A future where every American has the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, regardless of the circumstances of their birth.

It is time for us to rededicate ourselves to the ideals that have made this country great. It is time for us to come together, to set aside our differences, and work towards a common goal. A goal of a better future for all Americans, a future where our children and grandchildren can live in peace, security, and prosperity.

So let us stand together, my fellow citizens. Let us face the future with the same courage and determination that has made this country the envy of the world. Let us continue to move forward, always remembering that, "We shall never surrender."

Thank you, and may God bless the United States of America.

CLEOPATRA, queen of Egypt 51-30 B.C.

My fellow Egyptians,

It is with great pride and humility that I stand before you today, as your Queen and leader, to deliver this State of the Union address. I am honored to serve the people of this great nation, a nation with a rich and proud history that has stood tall and strong for centuries.

In recent years, we have faced many challenges, but through hard work and determination, we have emerged stronger and more united than ever before. Our economy is thriving, our communities are flourishing, and our people are thriving.

However, we cannot rest on our achievements ... we must remain vigilant against those who would threaten our security and our way of life. We must work with our allies to promote peace and stability in the world, and to defend our values and our interests.

But most of all, we must remember that our greatest strength lies in our people. It is the hard work, the ingenuity, and the determination of the Egyptian people that has always made our country great, and it is their continued efforts that will keep us strong and prosperous in the years to come.

So let us continue to work together, to strive for a better future, and to build a stronger, more prosperous Egypt.

Thank you, and may the gods bless Egypt.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

My fellow Americans,

It is with a heavy heart but steadfast determination that I stand before you today to deliver this State of the Union address. Our great nation is embroiled in a conflict that has tested the very fabric of our union,

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but I am confident that with the perseverance of our people and the grace of God, we will emerge from this trial stronger and more united than ever before.

This war, fought over the fundamental principles of freedom and equality, has taken a tremendous toll on our country and our people. But despite the hardships, we have not wavered in our commitment to preserving the Union and ending the scourge of slavery.

As we move forward, we must work together to heal the wounds of this conflict and build a better future for all Americans. We must work to reunite our divided nation and ensure that the blessings of liberty and equality are extended to all, regardless of race or station.

We must also take steps to ensure that this dark chapter in our history is never repeated. We must ensure that the sacrifice of so many brave Americans was not in vain, and that we never again turn a blind eye to the injustice and suffering of our fellow citizens.

So let us come together, as one people, and work towards a brighter future for our nation and for all who call it home.

Thank you, and may God bless America.

ELON MUSK, CEO of Tesla, SpaceX and Twitter, and one of the founders of Open AI, the research lab that created ChatGPT

My fellow Americans,

It is an honor to address you today, as your elected leader, and to deliver this State of the Union Address. ... I am proud to announce a bold new plan to invest in the technologies of the future, and to create millions of good-paying jobs in the process. We must lead the world in the transition to a clean energy economy, and we must ensure that our infrastructure is the most advanced and resilient in the world ...

I am announcing a new initiative to increase funding for space research and development, so that we can continue to explore the mysteries of the universe and maintain our position as a leader in space exploration ...

But we must also address the inequalities that have been exposed by the pandemic, and we must ensure that all Americans have access to the opportunities of the future. That is why I am announcing a comprehensive plan to improve access to education, job training, and affordable healthcare.

BIDEN, delivered by the app as a rehash of past remarks

It is an honor to stand before you today as your President and deliver this State of the Union address. This past year has been one of the most challenging in our nation's history, but through it all, the American people have shown remarkable resilience, bravery, and compassion.

We have faced a once-in-a-century pandemic that has taken too many lives and disrupted our economy, but we are making progress. We have delivered vaccines to millions of Americans and are seeing cases decline, and we are working to reopen our schools and businesses safely.

But we cannot rest on our achievements. We must do more to rebuild our economy and make sure that the benefits of this recovery are felt by all Americans, not just the wealthy and well-connected. That is why I am proposing a bold infrastructure plan to create millions of good-paying jobs, modernize our roads, bridges, and highways, and make America more competitive in the global economy.

At the same time, we must address the long-standing injustices in our society, particularly racial and economic inequality. That is why I am committed to passing legislation to protect voting rights, advance racial justice, and ensure that everyone has a fair shot at the American Dream.

And as we look to the future, we must also address the existential threat of climate change. We cannot afford to wait any longer to address this crisis, which is already affecting communities across our country. That is why I am committed to achieving a 100% clean energy economy and creating good-paying jobs in the process.

So let us come together, as one nation, and build a better future for all Americans. Together, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

Thank you, and may God bless America.

Israeli troops kill 5 Palestinian gunmen in West Bank raid

By IMAD ISSEID and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

AQABAT JABR, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces killed five Palestinian gunmen in a raid on refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Monday, the latest bloodshed in the region that will likely further exacerbate tensions.

The Palestinian president's office called the violence a crime, urging the United States to pressure Israel to hold back on its incursions. The military said the raid was meant to apprehend a militant cell that staged a botched shooting attack on a restaurant in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

The violence comes amid one of the deadliest periods in years in the West Bank and in the first weeks of Israel's new government, its most right-wing ever, which has promised to take a tough stance against the Palestinians.

The Israeli military said it was operating in the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp to apprehend the suspects behind a failed shooting attack last month at a West Bank restaurant, where attackers allegedly were thwarted by a weapon malfunction. The attackers then fled the scene, the military said, adding that they were members of the Hamas militant group that rules the Gaza Strip and has elements in the West Bank as well.

The military said it was searching Monday for the militant cell behind the shooting that it said had sealed itself inside a home in the refugee camp. During the search, troops encountered gunmen and a gun battle erupted. The military said several of the gunmen who were killed were involved in the attempted attack on the restaurant.

"The new Israeli government is continuing its series of crimes against our Palestinian people," a statement from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' office said.

Jihad Abu Al-Assal, the governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley, said the military was still holding on to the gunmen's bodies. Without access to the bodies, the Palestinian Health Ministry did not immediately confirm the deaths, saying only that three were injured, one of them critically.

Speaking at an event at the site of a recent deadly Palestinian shooting attack, Netanyahu confirmed earlier reports by Israeli security officials that five gunmen were killed, two of them involved in the attempted attack.

The security officials told The Associated Press the two were Hamas members, while the three others were gunmen who had exchanged fire with troops during the raid. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the raid with the media.

Hamas said it mourned the deaths of the members of its armed wing, without specifying how many had died. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the violence would be met with a response.

"Our people and their resistance will not delay in responding to this crime," he said.

The raid comes days after an earlier incursion in the Aqabat Jabr camp, which is near the Palestinian city of Jericho, a desert oasis in an area of the West Bank that rarely sees such unrest, where troops were also searching for the suspects.

Since the shooting at the nearby settlement, the Israeli military has blocked access to several roads into Jericho — a closure that has placed the city under a semi-blockade, disrupting business and creating hourslong bottlenecks at checkpoints that affected even Palestinian security forces, footage showed.

Monday's violence comes days after an Israeli military raid on the Jenin refugee camp killed 10 Palestinians, mostly militants but also a 61-year-old woman. The next day, a Palestinian shooting attack outside an east Jerusalem synagogue killed seven people, including a 14-year-old.

The Israeli army has ramped up near-nightly raids in the occupied West Bank since a series of deadly Palestinian attacks within Israel last spring. Over the last year of escalating raids, Jericho has remained a sort of sleepy desert town, spared much of the violence.

The Palestinian Authority, in retaliation for last week's raid into the Jenin refugee camp, declared a halt

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to security coordination with Israel.

Nearly 150 Palestinians were killed last year in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, making it the deadliest year in those areas since 2004, according to figures by the Israeli rights group B'Tselem. Since the start of this year, 41 Palestinians have been killed in those territories. Some 30 people were killed in Israel by Palestinians in 2022.

The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for their hoped-for independent state.

Powerful quake rocks Turkey and Syria, kills more than 1,300

By GHAITH ALSAYED AND SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

AZMARIN, Syria (AP) — A powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked southeastern Turkey and northern Syria early Monday, toppling hundreds of buildings and killing more than 1,300 people. Hundreds were still believed to be trapped under rubble, and the toll was expected to rise as rescue workers searched mounds of wreckage in cities and towns across the area.

On both sides of the border, residents jolted out of sleep by the pre-dawn quake rushed outside on a cold, rainy and snowy winter night, as buildings were flattened and strong aftershocks continued.

Rescue workers and residents in multiple cities searched for survivors, working through tangles of metal and giant piles of concrete. A hospital in Turkey collapsed and patients, including newborns, were evacuated from a handful of facilities in Syria.

In the Turkish city of Adana, one resident said three buildings near his home collapsed. "I don't have the strength anymore," one survivor could be heard calling out from beneath the rubble as rescue workers tried to reach him, said the resident, journalism student Muhammet Fatih Yavus.

Farther east in Diyarbakir, cranes and rescue teams rushed people on stretchers out of a mountain of pancaked concrete floors that was once an apartment building.

The quake, felt as far away as Cairo, was centered north of Gaziantep, a Turkish provincial capital.

It struck a region that has been shaped on both sides of the border by more than a decade of civil war in Syria. On the Syrian side, the swath affected is divided between government-held territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by Russian-backed government forces. Turkey, meanwhile, is home to millions of refugees from that conflict.

The opposition-held regions in Syria are packed with some 4 million people displaced from other parts of the country by the fighting. Many of them live in buildings that are already wrecked from past bombardments. Hundreds of families remained trapped in rubble, the opposition emergency organization, called the White Helmets, said in a statement.

Strained health facilities and hospitals were quickly filled with wounded, rescue workers said. Others had to be emptied, including a maternity hospital, according to the SAMS medical organization.

"We fear that the deaths are in the hundreds," Muheeb Qaddour, a doctor, said by phone from the town of Atmeh.

Turkey sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999. The U.S. Geological Survey measured Monday's quake at 7.8. At least 20 aftershocks followed, some hours later during daylight, the strongest measuring 6.6, Turkish authorities said.

Buildings were reported collapsed in a wide area extending from Syria's cities of Aleppo and Hama to Turkey's Diyarbakir, more than 330 kilometers (200 miles) to the northeast. Nearly 900 buildings were destroyed in Turkey's Gaziantep and Kahramanmaras provinces, said Vice President Fuat Oktay. A hospital collapsed in the Mediterranean coastal city of Iskanderoun, but casualties were not immediately known, he said.

"Unfortunately, at the same time, we are also struggling with extremely severe weather conditions,"

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Oktay told reporters. Nearly 2,800 search and rescue teams have been deployed in the disaster-stricken areas, he said.

"We hope that we will get through this disaster together as soon as possible and with the least damage," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan wrote on Twitter.

Countries from Taiwan to Russia to Germany offered to send help, whether medical supplies, search teams or money.

In Turkey, people trying to leave the quake-stricken regions caused traffic jams, hampering efforts of emergency teams trying to reach the affected areas. Authorities urged residents not to take to the roads. Mosques around the region were being opened up as a shelter for people unable to return to damaged homes amid temperatures that hovered around freezing.

The quake heavily damaged Gaziantep's most famed landmark, its historic castle perched atop a hill in the center of the city. Parts of the fortresses' walls and watch towers were leveled and other parts heavily damaged, images from the city showed.

In Diyarbakir, hundreds of rescue workers and civilians formed lines across a mountain of wreckage, passing down broken concrete pieces, household belongings and other debris as they searched for trapped survivors while excavators dug through the rubble below.

In northwest Syria, the quake added new woes to the opposition-held enclave centered on the province of Idlib, which has been under siege for years, with frequent Russian and government airstrikes. The territory depends on a flow of aid from nearby Turkey for everything from food to medical supplies.

The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense described the situation there as "disastrous," adding that entire buildings have collapsed and people are trapped under the rubble.

In the small Syrian rebel-held town of Azmarin in the mountains by the Turkish border, the bodies of several dead children, wrapped in blankets, were brought to a hospital.

The USGS said the quake was centered about 33 kilometers (20 miles) from Gaziantep. It was 18 kilometers (11 miles) deep.

At least 912 people were killed in 10 Turkish provinces, with more than 5,400 injured, according to Turkey's president. The death toll in government-held areas of Syria climbed to 326 people, with some 1,000 injured, according to the Health Ministry. In rebel-held areas, at least 150 people were killed, according to the White Helmets, though the SAMS medical organization put the toll at 106; both said hundreds were hurt.

In Damascus, buildings shook and many people went down to the streets in fear. The quake jolted residents in Lebanon from beds, shaking buildings for about 40 seconds. Many residents of Beirut left their homes and took to the streets or drove in their cars away from buildings, terrorized by memories of the 2020 port explosion that wrecked a large portion of the city.

Huseyin Yayman, a legislator from Turkey's Hatay province, said several of his family members were trapped under the rubble of their collapsed homes.

"There are so many other people who are also trapped," he told HaberTurk television by telephone. "There are so many buildings that have been damaged. People are on the streets. It's raining, it's winter."

UK nurses, ambulance crews strike, straining health system

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Tens of thousands of nurses and ambulance staff walked off the job in the U.K. on Monday in what unions called the biggest strike in the history of the country's public health system.

The walkout is the latest in a wave of strikes that has disrupted Britons' lives for months, as workers — especially in the public sector — demand pay raises to keep pace with double-digit inflation. Teachers, train drivers, airport baggage handlers, border staff, driving instructors, bus drivers and postal workers also have all walked off their jobs in recent months to demand higher pay.

Teachers, health workers and many others say their wages have fallen in real terms over the last decade, and a cost-of-living crisis fueled by sharply rising food and energy prices has left many struggling to pay their bills.

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Britain's annual inflation rate was 10.5% in December, a 41-year high. The Conservative government argues that giving public sector staff pay increases of 10% or more would drive inflation even higher.

The strike piles more pressure on the state-funded National Health Service, already staggering under demand from winter viruses, staff shortages and backlogs built up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nursing unions say emergency care and cancer treatment will continue during their 48-hour walkout, but thousands of appointments and procedures are likely to be postponed.

The ambulance service says it will respond to the most urgent calls during a daylong strike. But Business Secretary Grant Shapps said the strike could put lives at risk, leaving people with "a postcode lottery when it comes to having a heart attack or a stroke."

Sharon Graham, general secretary of the Unite union representing some ambulance staff, said Sunday there were "no talks at any level whatsoever with the government" about pay. She urged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to "come to the table and negotiate — roll your sleeves up and negotiate on the pay in the NHS — that is what's required."

Pat Cullen, head of the Royal College of Nursing union, also said a "meaningful" pay offer from the government could bring the strike "to a swift close."

The unions are seeking a pay raise for the current year, but the government says it will only talk about the year ahead. Health Secretary Steve Barclay urged unions to call off the strikes, "look forward and engage in a constructive dialogue" about pay for 2023-2024.

Monday's nursing strike affects England. In Scotland and Wales — which have semiautonomous governments in charge of health policy — unions have suspended walkouts while negotiations continue.

Sunak's government also has angered unions by introducing a bill that will make it harder for key workers to strike by setting "minimum safety levels" for firefighters, ambulance services and railways that must be maintained during a walkout.

Grammys Moments: A rap tribute for the ages, Beyoncé triumph

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

As he accepted an innovator's award named for him, Dr. Dre mused about what he had in common with many of the people he saw from the Grammy Awards stage.

"Where would a lot of people in here be without hip-hop?" the renowned rapper, producer and entrepreneur said.

The 2023 Grammy Awards may ultimately be remembered as the year the music industry's top event tried to embrace rap, whose leaders have regarded the institution with suspicion for almost as long as the 50 years of history that were celebrated on Sunday.

It was only four years ago that song of the year winner Childish Gambino boycotted the show over perceived disrespect for rap. Kanye West and Eminem were among past stars with groundbreaking work overlooked for more middling fare and, for years, rappers complained their work was banished from TV.

The 15-minute Questlove-curated travel through time was a joy that brought dozens of stars to the stage, including Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five, Run-DMC, Public Enemy, Ice T, Missy Elliott, Queen Latifah, Method Man, Salt-N-Pepa ... the list goes on, and still there were those you wished were there.

Nearly as important was the eight-minute version of DJ Khaled's "God Did" that closed the show — Khaled took public note of the length — that featured a spellbinding appearance by Jay-Z.

Quavo's tribute to Takeoff of Migos was arguably the highlight of a packed and memorable "in memoriam" segment to artists who died over the past year.

Kendrick Lamar gave an incisive acceptance speech after "Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers" won a Grammy for best rap album, his third trophy in this category.

It was a night it seemed the Grammys finally accepted rap as music's dominant form. Will rappers finally accept the Grammys? That remains to be seen.

QUEEN BEY'S HAUL

Beyoncé took a place in history on Sunday when her four Grammys gave her a career total of 32, better

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than anyone else.

And yet...

The Grammys have a clear pecking order, with four of its awards the most prestigious: song, record and album of the year, and best new artist. Beyoncé has won only one of those awards, when "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" was named top song in 2010.

She's been nominated eight times for record of the year, and never won. Her most memorable Grammy moments came when two peers stood onstage with their own trophies and saluted her: when Adele said Beyoncé's "Lemonade" should have won instead of her in 2017, and Sunday when Lizzo spoke of skipping school in fifth grade to see Beyoncé perform.

Thirty-two trophies. It's still hard to shake an empty feeling.

TRIVIA QUESTION

Whose record did Beyoncé beat? That would be classical composer George Solti.

RAITT'S TRIUMPH

It may take Bonnie Raitt a few days to lose that look of shock. The 73-year-old guitarist won best song for "Just Like That," a piece inspired by a story of a heart transplant, where she tried to emulate the writing style of the late John Prine. It was especially gratifying because Raitt is more of an interpreter. "I don't write a lot of songs, but I'm proud that you appreciate this one," she said. It was 33 years after "Nick of Time" was named album of the year.

NOAH'S NIGHT

Show host Trevor Noah skillfully played the role of a fan, instead of serving snark from the stage, moving through the audience "like a floating Chinese balloon," he said. And why not? With Adele, Lizzo, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Harry Styles and the like around, there was plenty of star power. Noah was neither insulting nor obsequious. And one delightful device — having fans talk about their favorite albums — paid off when a memorable grandma got to announce Styles' album of the year win.

HARRY'S STYLE

OK, while he was performing "As it Was" Styles was dressed a little like one of those holiday tinsel decorations you thought you'd put away. The smooth pop composition clearly served him well. Later, he marveled at the quality of the competition and how hard it is to pick a winner. "You never know with this stuff," he said backstage. "I don't think you can look at any of the nominees and not feel as if they're deserving. I'm really grateful they chose us."

PETRAS' MOMENT

In accepting a Grammy for her duet on Sam Smith's "Unholy," Kim Petras proudly took note of her status as a transgender woman and paid tribute to heroes like the late transgender singer Sophie and Madonna. The latter returned the favor by introducing a performance of the song. Petras and Lizzo, who won record of the year for "About Damn Time," made strong, joyful statements about accepting differences. "I felt on the outside looking in and I stayed true to myself because I wanted to make the world a better place," Lizzo said.

INTRODUCING...

One element that worked less well was an effort to have family or friends introduce performances. You lose the idea of "real people" when Madonna is one of the choices. The best was the first — Catherine Shepherd, the proud wife, and the two children of Brandi Carlile (the kids also debuted in a hotel ad). "I'm a very, very lucky queer," Carlile said backstage.

WHY AM I HERE?

The Rock as one of the Grammy presenters? Jill Biden? James Corden? At least the outgoing talk show host noted the incongruity of him giving an award for dance and electronic music. There's enough musical firepower in the room that would surely relish the opportunity to present an award. And while we're asking why someone was there, Ben Affleck turned himself into an unwanted internet star when the camera panned to him in the audience and it seemed like he'd rather be anywhere else. Don't actors know how to fake looking like they're having a good time?

Iran singer who faces prison wins Grammy for protest anthem

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An Iranian singer who faces possible prison time for his song that's become an anthem to the ongoing protests shaking the Islamic Republic wept early Monday after seeing he'd won a Grammy.

Shervin Hajipour appeared stunned after hearing Jill Biden, the wife of President Joe Biden, announce he'd won the Grammy's new song for social change special merit award for "Baraye." An online video showed Hajipour in a darkened room, wiping tears away after the announcement.

Hajipour's song "Baraye," or "For" in English, begins with: "For dancing in the streets," "for the fear we feel when we kiss." The lyrics list reasons young Iranians have posted on Twitter for why they had protested against Iran's ruling theocracy.

It ends with the widely chanted slogan that has become synonymous with the protests since the September death of Iranian-Kurdish woman Masha Amini: "For women, life, freedom."

Released on his Instagram page, the song quickly went viral. Hajipour then was arrested and held for several days before being released on bail in October. The 25-year-old singer faces charges of "propaganda against the regime" and "instigating the violence," according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the monthslong protests.

The charges Hajipour faces can carry as much as six years in prison all together. The singer is also banned from leaving Iran.

Wearing a shining, off-the-shoulder Oscar de la Renta dress at the Grammy ceremony in Los Angeles, Biden said that a song "can unite, inspire and ultimately change the world."

"This song became the anthem of the Mahsa Amini protests, a powerful and poetic call for freedom and women's rights," Biden said. "Shervin was arrested, but this song continues to resonate around the world with its powerful theme: Women, life, freedom."

Those gathered cheered Biden's remarks. On Instagram, Hajipour simply wrote: "We won."

There was no immediate reaction in Iranian state media or from government officials to Hajipour's win. The singer is among over 19,600 people arrested amid the demonstrations, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran. At least 527 people have been killed amid a violent suppression of the demonstration by authorities.

On Sunday, Iran's supreme leader on Sunday reportedly ordered an amnesty or reduction in prison sentences for "tens of thousands" of people detained amid the protests, acknowledging for the first time the scale of the crackdown.

In pro-Putin Serbia, liberal-minded Russians seek a home

By JOVANA GEC and DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — At a central square in Serbia's capital of Belgrade, dozens of Russians gathered recently to denounce President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, holding up photos of political prisoners from their homeland.

Across the plaza, a billboard touts the Russian propaganda outlet RT, which has launched an online news portal in the country but is banned elsewhere in Europe. Heroic portraits of a bare-chested Putin adorn souvenir T-shirts and coffee mugs, or are painted on city walls.

These conflicting images reflect the complex and delicate relationship these days between Russia and Serbia.

The Slavic country is Moscow's closest ally in Europe, with historic, religious and cultural ties that are bolstered by Kremlin political influence campaigns. Russia backs Serbia's claim over its former province of Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008 with Western support. And Serbia has refused to impose sanctions on Moscow over the invasion.

At the same time, Serbia wants to join the European Union. Populist President Aleksandar Vucic has denounced the invasion, and about 200,000 Russians have flooded into the country in the past year, with

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many seeking a new life in a brotherly land free of Kremlin oppression.

"Here in Belgrade, we are not perceived with hostility, and that means a lot," said Anastasia Demidova, who arrived in the Balkan nation from Moscow three months ago.

"I've been talking to a lot of Serbian people here and other foreigners. When they ask me 'what are you doing here,' I say: 'We are against Putin and for a democratic Russia and we are against the war in Ukraine, obviously,'" she told The Associated Press.

Others say they fled to avoid being drafted or because Western sanctions crippled their businesses or took away their jobs.

As a result, Russian can be heard spoken everywhere in Belgrade, a city of about 2 million. Russian-owned restaurants and bars have sprouted. Private Russian enterprises have mushroomed, especially in the IT sector. The influx has sent the price of real estate soaring.

This reminds some here of the wave of Russians fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and many of those who stayed in Serbia left their mark on its culture and art.

These modern Russians, however, are maintaining links to their homeland, including financial ties, said historian Aleksej Timofejev. Unlike their predecessors, he said, they can't go onward to the West because of the sanctions and still need visas to travel to richer countries in Europe.

"They did not choose this country but came here because it is the only one that would have them," Timofejev added.

The newcomers say they can still feel Moscow's heavy-handed influence, especially when it comes to Serbians' approval for Putin, via media outlets like RT.

Russian activist Petar Nikitin calls it a "coordinated propaganda effort."

Nikitin first came to Serbia in the early 2000s. Back then, "this admiration for the Russian government was a lot more marginal ... and I saw it grow exponentially," he said.

Russians "who recently arrived, who didn't know much about Serbia before, yes, many of them told me they were completely shocked to see this idolization specifically of Putin, and this picture of Russia that is completely divorced from reality," Nikitin said.

Moscow has boosted this sentiment in the pro-Russia media by feeding Serbian anger with the West over Kosovo following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The dispute between Serbia and Kosovo has been a source of tension since the war in 1998-99 that ended when a NATO bombing campaign forced Serbia to pull out of the former Serbian province after a bloody crackdown against Kosovo Albanian separatists and civilians

Serbia's rejection of Kosovo's declaration of independence has Moscow's support — one of the reasons why Belgrade maintains friendly relations with Putin and has refused to join Western sanctions.

While Vucic has criticized the invasion of Ukraine, he puts a uniquely Balkan spin on it.

"We do support territorial integrity of Ukraine, as we do support territorial integrity of Serbia," he told the World Economic Forum in Davos last month. "So ... they ask me, 'Is Crimea part of Ukraine or Russia?' Yes, it's part of Ukraine. Donbas is part of Ukraine. If you ask us."

His country "will stick to that, and we will be more loyal to territorial integrity of U.N. member states than many others that changed their stance on territorial integrity of Serbia," Vucic added, referring to the support for Kosovo's independence from Washington and other countries.

Western officials have stepped up pressure on Vucic to make a decisive turn away from Moscow if Serbia wants to join the EU. They fear that Russia could stir trouble in the Balkans through its Serbian proxies to avert some of the international attention from Ukraine.

Recently, the Russian private military contractor Wagner Group ran advertisements on RT's Serbian-language outlet recruiting Serbs to fight in Ukraine. It is illegal for Serbs to take part in conflicts outside the country, although about a dozen joined Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine after battles broke out there in 2014.

Owned by Putin-linked oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, Wagner has taken a prominent and active role in Ukraine and also has sent its mercenaries to several African countries. Last month, U.S. State Department

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Counselor Derek Chollet held talks with Vucic to voice concerns about Wagner's activities in Serbia.

Nikitin, the Russian activist who has formed a group called Russian Democratic Community, has teamed up with a Serbian lawyer to file a lawsuit demanding an investigation of the mercenary group. That led to increased threats against more liberal Russians from right-wing Serbian organizations with close links to Wagner and Moscow.

"The threats that I receive directly and to my inbox are quite carefully worded — they are quite obvious," Nikitin said. "They range from 'get out of Serbia' to very obscene insults involving my family. And veiled threats that I am soon going to meet people who are dead."

Nikitin said his more liberal-minded countrymen in Serbia are eager to show they don't support Putin's war or his crackdown on opposition groups at home.

"We want to be very open about who we are and why we hold the views that we hold," he said.

Artem, a 33-year-old web developer from St. Petersburg, said that he fled to Serbia with his wife and two pets shortly after the war began on Feb. 24. He spoke with the AP on condition that his last name not be used for "safety reasons."

Speaking at a Belgrade bar that's an unofficial hub for more liberal Russians — its Wi-Fi password is "Nowar2402" — he said he's been helping Ukrainian refugees in Serbia through online aid campaigns, providing information on how to start a new life.

Leaving Russia "was some kind of protest because I didn't agree at all with the war," Artem said. "War for me is not an answer for any conflict or anything."

Fire extensively damages Buddhist temple in Australian city

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — A Buddhist temple has been extensively damaged by fire in the Australian city of Melbourne.

About 80 firefighters fought the blaze at the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple for more than two hours before it was brought under control late Sunday. Spot fires were still being put out Monday.

There were no injuries in the fire visible for several kilometers (miles). The cause of the fire was not yet known, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Foster said.

He told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that the effort to fight the fire was done with cultural sensitivity.

"Not only is it a place of worship, it's a place of gathering for the local Buddhist community, and at all times, we were engaging with members from that community to inform them what we were doing and taking into account their concerns," Foster said.

About 30 residents were evacuated from the area overnight and others were told to close their windows to avoid the smoke.

Sports pitch for level playing field in cricket-mad Pakistan

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — On Islamabad's outskirts, burly men bind together in a scrum on a rugby pitch that has seen better days. The sign bearing the club's name is worn. The floodlights are too costly to use, given high electricity prices and the paltry \$135 total that the club earns in membership fees every month.

Watching the players, coach Mohammed Zahir Uddin said ruefully: "There's only one game in Pakistan."

That would be cricket, the country's most popular sport, a juggernaut when it comes to sponsorship, broadcasting rights and capturing the public's imagination.

Cricket has totally eclipsed other sports, even ones Pakistan excelled at. Field hockey, Pakistan's national sport, once propelled the country to Olympic gold and global glory, but it has waned in popularity and participation. Pakistan dominated the squash world for decades, only to become a shadow of its former self.

Prospects are even bleaker for a sport like rugby, which has no heyday or heroes in Pakistan.

"There's no support from the bodies that there ought to be in terms of funding, spreading the word," said Hammad Safdar, who captains Pakistan's national rugby team. "The majority of sports have the same issue. That's why, in terms of performance, in the later stages when there's a test, we lack because there's

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no foundation.”

Pakistan hosts the South Asian Games next year, the biggest sporting tournament to be held in the country for 20 years. It won 143 medals the last time it hosted, including 38 gold. But years of neglect of sports could affect its medal tally this time.

Advocates of sports under cricket's shadow say they don't have the environment to thrive or take top prizes, with a lack of investment and interest. Even universally loved soccer has its struggles in Pakistan. Infighting and government interference have led to suspensions from the global body FIFA, stunting its growth at home and chances overseas.

Pakistan, with a population of 220 million, has a national government sports budget of around \$15.3 million, far smaller than others in the region. The Pakistan Sports Board, which oversees all sports in the country and their federations, did not respond to interview requests.

Rugby gets no government money but a grant from the global rugby body. If it needs more, it asks the chairman or president of the Pakistan Rugby Union to give from their own pockets.

The national rugby pitch in the eastern city of Lahore is on army land. It lacks changing rooms. It has no seating, so organizers rent chairs for tournaments. Rugby development coach Shakeel Malik concedes it's hard to attract funding without results, but that it's hard to get results without funding.

Cricket, which gets no government funding, has a budget of around \$66 million. It shot into the stratosphere with a 1992 World Cup win by a national team captained by Imran Khan, who later went on to enter politics and served as prime minister from 2018-2022.

Pakistan has never dominated cricket the way it once did in in squash and hockey; it has only two world championships to its name, and the national team is notoriously unpredictable. But it's a big business with infrastructure to nurture talent, a thirst for empire building, rampant commercialism, and a steady supply of domestic and international matches for TV. It's so embedded in Pakistani life that the prime minister approves the appointment of the cricket board chairman.

Its rise in the 1990s coincided with the beginning of the end for hockey and squash.

Pakistan was the superpower of squash for decades, winning the British Open 17 years in a row by 1963. Specifically, one family, the Khans, ruled the sport. The last of the dynasty — Jahangir Khan, a former World No. 1 racket-wielding machine — was unbeaten for hundreds of matches. He won the British Open 10 years in a row until his final victory in 1991.

Khan told The Associated Press that even he doesn't understand how the family amassed as many trophies as they did, without facilities and investment. "Even today, Pakistan's name comes first in squash, and so does this family's name," he said, speaking at the squash complex named after him in Karachi.

He's pained by its decline. Pakistan is now 65th in the world men's squash rankings. Khan said the sport failed to build on his family's legacy.

He argues that mismanagement had undermined the sport and that players need to show more achievement to attract sponsorship. "If people have set a bar, it's up to you to make the most of it and build on it. Funding is not a solution. You produced a world champion when you had nothing."

And there is also cricket's stranglehold. "It's not necessary to have all the talent playing one thing," he said.

In the heyday of field hockey, people turned out in the tens of thousands to watch matches, said Samiullah Khan, a player who helped win Pakistan a stack of medals in the sport at the Olympics, World Cup and Asian Games until the 1990s.

"It hurts my heart" to see the current state of hockey, he said. He said Pakistan's teams didn't adjust to changes like the synthetic turf and rule-changes in Europe that, in his view, turned the sport into "a free-for-all."

"Hockey became like any other sport, like rugby. The power left, the skill left," he said.

But there is hope, and a love that lingers for hockey. In a Karachi suburb, about a dozen young women pad up for practice on a team with the Karachi Hockey Association.

Kashmala Batool, 30, has been playing hockey for almost half her life. "It's our national game," she said. "Despite it not getting support or government funding, the enjoyment we get playing our national game can't be found in any other."

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Shazma Naseem, the goalkeeper, started out in college and has been playing at the national level for five years. She sees the enthusiasm her parents still have for the sport and feels a duty to keep it going.

"It's absolutely our job, to have played hockey so well, to have made our name in it, so that future generations know about hockey, that this is also a game."

Beyoncé emerges as Grammys queen; Styles wins album honor

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Beyoncé sits alone atop the Grammy throne as the ceremony's most decorated artist in history, but at the end of Sunday's show it was Harry Styles who walked away with the album of the year honor.

The Grammys spread its top awards among other artists, leaving Beyoncé off stage at the end of the night. But the superstar was a constant presence throughout the night, even when she wasn't in the room, especially once she won her 32nd award and surpassed late composer Georg Solti in all-time wins.

"I'm trying not to be too emotional," the superstar said after her historic win as her husband Jay-Z stood and applauded her. The singer thanked her late uncle, her parents, Jay-Z and her children for supporting her. "I'm just trying to receive this night. I want to thank God for protecting me. Thank you, God."

The Grammys stage at the end of the night has eluded Beyoncé since 2010, when she won song of the year for "Single Ladies." She added four trophies to her collection for her album "Renaissance."

Styles was emotional accepting his album of the year award, saying he was inspired by everyone in the category. "A lot of different times of my life, I've listened to everyone in these categories. It's so important to remember that there is no such thing as best."

The British singer-actor took home three awards Sunday. "It feels like validation that you're on the right path," said the singer backstage. "When we get in the studio and begin the record, we just make the music we want to make. It feels really nice to feel like 'Oh, that's the right thing to do.'"

Beyoncé missed being in the room when she tied Solti's record early in the telecast. Host Trevor Noah said she was on her way to the ceremony but blamed Los Angeles traffic for not being in person to accept it.

Once Beyoncé — the night's leading nominee — finally arrived, Noah presented her with the best R&B song award at her table.

Beyoncé won for best R&B song for "Cuff It," dance-electric music recording for "Break My Soul," traditional R&B performance for "Plastic Off the Sofa" and dance-electric album for "Renaissance," which was nominated for album of the year.

Lizzo won record of the year for "About Damn Time," delivering a rousing speech that brought many in the audience, including Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Adele, to their feet.

"Me and Adele were having a good time, rooting for our friends. This is an amazing night. This is so unexpected," Lizzo said, dedicating her award to Prince.

"I wanted to make the world a better place, so I had to be that change to make the world a better place. Now, I look around and see these songs are about loving your body and feeling comfortable in your skin and feeling good."

Jazz singer Samara Joy won best new artist, shrugging off challenges by such acts as Wet Led, Anitta and Maneskin. The New Yorker was virtually in tears when she collected the award and noted that her little brother was her date. "I'm so, so grateful. Thank you." She has released two albums as a lead artist and also won the Grammy for best jazz vocal album earlier in the night.

Veteran singer-songwriter Bonnie Raitt shrugged off big-name rivals like Adele, Swift and Beyoncé to win the song of the year award. "I'm so surprised. I don't know what to say," a visibly stunned Raitt said, adding that the song "Just Like That" explores organ donation. It capped a night when Raitt won two other Grammys — for best Americana performance and best American roots song.

A who's who of hip-hop royalty took the stage for an epic, rousing 15 minute tribute to the genre's 50th anniversary. The performance included Grandmaster Flash doing part of his seminal hit "The Message," Run DMC, Chuck D and Flavor Flav along with Ice-T, Queen Latifah, Busta Rhymes and Nelly all taking

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the stage.

It ended with everyone on the stage and LL Cool J shouting "multi-generational! Fifty years!"

The performance was a crowd-pleasing moment for a ceremony that has long had a shaky history of not recognizing rap.

Bad Bunny opened the show with a festive, high-energy performance that brought many of the audience including Swift who rose to her feet and danced near her table at Los Angeles' Crypto.com Arena.

Sam Smith and Kim Petras won best pop duo-group performance for their song "Unholy." Petras said Smith wanted Petras to make the acceptance speech because "I'm the first transgender woman to win this award."

"I want to thank all the incredible transgender legends before me who kicked these doors open for me so I could be here tonight," said Petras, who made a reference to friend and Grammy-nominated musician Sophie, who died after an accidental fall in Athens, Greece in 2021. "You told me this would happen. I always believed in me. Thank you so much for your inspiration, Sophie. I adore you, and your inspiration will forever be in my music."

Petras thanked Madonna for being a tremendous supporter of LGBTQ rights.

"I don't think I could be here without Madonna," Petras said. "My mother, I grew up next to a highway in nowhere Germany. And my mother believed me that I was a girl. I wouldn't be here without her and her support."

During the in memoriam segment, the Grammys recognized the lives of Loretta Lynn, Migos rapper Takeoff and Christine McVie with several star-studded performers paying them homage. The touching performances included Kacey Musgraves singing "Coal Miner's Daughter" in tribute to Lynn; Quavo and the Maverick City Music hit the stage to honor his nephew Takeoff with the song "Without You;" and Sheryl Crow, Mick Fleetwood and Bonnie Raitt performed "Songbird" to remember McVie.

Kendrick Lamar won sixth career trophy for best rap performance for "The Heart Part 5" and also won best rap album for his studio offering, "Mr. Morales & The Big Steppers."

"You know, as entertainers, we say things to provoke thoughts and feelings and emotions," he said. "So making this record is one of my toughest. ... I would like to thank the culture for allowing me to evolve in order to make this. I finally found imperfection with this album."

Viola Davis emerged from Sunday's show an EGOT — a term for those who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony — after her win for best audio book, narration and storytelling recording. The actor gave an emotional speech and emphatically said "I just EGOT" after she marched on stage to collect her award.

"Oh, my God," she said. "I wrote this book to honor the 6-year-old Viola, to honor her, her life, her joy, her trauma, everything," Davis said. "It has just been such a journey."

The show made its return to Los Angeles after the pandemic first delayed, then forced the Grammys to move to Las Vegas last year. Noah hosted the ceremony as well, which saw Jon Batiste take home album of the year.

Biden 2024? Most Democrats say no thank you: AP-NORC poll

By JOSH BOAK and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A majority of Democrats now think one term is plenty for President Joe Biden, despite his insistence that he plans to seek reelection in 2024.

That's according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that shows just 37% of Democrats say they want him to seek a second term, down from 52% in the weeks before last year's midterm elections.

While Biden has trumpeted his legislative victories and ability to govern, the poll suggests relatively few U.S. adults give him high marks on either. Follow-up interviews with poll respondents suggest that many believe the 80-year-old's age is a liability, with people focused on his coughing, his gait, his gaffes and the possibility that the world's most stressful job would be better suited for someone younger.

"I, honestly, think that he would be too old," said Sarah Overman, 37, a Democrat who works in educa-

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tion in Raleigh, North Carolina. "We could use someone younger in the office."

As the president gives his State of the Union address on Tuesday, he has a chance to confront fundamental doubts about his competence to govern. Biden has previously leaned heavily on his track record to say that he's more than up to the task. When asked if he can handle the office's responsibilities at his age, the president has often responded as if he's accepting a dare: "Watch me."

Democratic candidates performed better than expected in the 2022 midterm elections, a testament to Biden's message that he is defending democracy and elevating the middle class. Democrats expanded their control of the Senate by one seat and narrowly lost their House majority even though history indicated there would be a Republican wave.

Overall, 41% approve of how Biden is handling his job as president, the poll shows, similar to ratings at the end of last year. A majority of Democrats still approve of the job Biden is doing as president, yet their appetite for a reelection campaign has slipped despite his electoral track record. Only 22% of U.S. adults overall say he should run again, down from 29% who said so before last year's midterm elections.

The decline among Democrats saying Biden should run again for president appears concentrated among younger people. Among Democrats age 45 and over, 49% say Biden should run for reelection, nearly as many as the 58% who said that in October. But among those under age 45, 23% now say he should run for reelection, after 45% said that before the midterms.

Linda Lockwood, a Democrat and retiree from Kansas City, Kansas, said she is not that worried about Biden's age.

"He seems to be in pretty good condition in my opinion and that's coming from a 76-year-old woman," Lockwood said. "You might be a little more careful going down the steps as you get older, but if your brain is still working, that's the important part."

Already the oldest president in U.S. history, Biden has been dogged by questions about his age as he would be 86 if he serves a full eight years as president. He often works long days, standing for hours, remembering the names of strangers he meets while traveling who want to share a story about their lives with him.

Yet he's been a national political figure for a half-century, having first been elected to the Senate from Delaware in 1972, and the moments when he appears lost on stage or stumbles through speeches can garner more attention than his policies.

On CNN on Sunday, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, acknowledged that "generational arguments can be powerful."

"The most powerful argument of all is results," said Buttigieg, 41. "And you can't argue — at least, I would say you can't argue with a straight face that it isn't a good thing that we have had 12 million jobs created under this president."

Voters like Ross Truckey, 35, have been watching the president carefully. A lawyer in Michigan, Truckey did not vote for Biden or Republican Donald Trump in 2020. He feels as though Biden has been the latest in a string of "subpar" presidents.

"His age and possibly his mental acuity is not where I would want the leader of the country to be," Truckey said. "He, at times, appears to be an old man who is past his prime. Sometimes I feel a little bit of pity for the guy being pushed out in front of crowds."

Biden has repeatedly emphasized in speeches that it's essential for the public to know the totality of what his administration is doing. It's notched four big legislative victories with coronavirus relief, the bipartisan infrastructure law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and tax and spending measures that help to address climate change and improve the IRS' ability to enforce the tax code and help taxpayers.

Yet just 13% have a lot of confidence in Biden's ability to accomplish major policy goals, a possible reflection of the fact that he must now work with a Republican majority in the House that wants to cut spending in return for lifting the government's legal borrowing authority.

The poll also shows only 23% of U.S. adults say they have "a great deal" of confidence in Biden to effectively manage the White House. That has ticked down from 28% a year ago and remains significantly lower than 44% two years ago, just as Biden took office.

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Just 21% have a lot of confidence in Biden's ability to handle a crisis, down slightly from 26% last March. On working with congressional Republicans and managing government spending, roughly half of U.S. adults say they have hardly any confidence in the president, and only around 1 in 10 say they have high confidence.

Republican voters are unwilling to give Biden the benefit of the doubt, hurting his ratings.

John Rodriguez, 76, backed Trump and assumes that Biden is merely doing the bidding of his aides. That creates a challenge for a president who promised to unite the country.

"I believe he's not the one who's calling the shots," said Rodriguez, who lives in Cutler Bay, Florida. "He's a puppet being told where to go, what to say."

But the key obstacle for Biden might be voters such as Vikram Joglekar, 46, who works in the computer industry in Austin, Texas. He backed the president in 2020, only to summarize his feelings about Biden's time in office as "meh."

"It's not up for me to decide whether someone should run or not," Joglekar said. "I don't know who is going to be on the ballot, but I would hope it would be someone better from his party."

Sinema's split from Democrats shows party discord in Arizona

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Kyrsten Sinema won Democrats a U.S. Senate seat from Arizona for the first time in a generation thanks in no small part to unity in her party and division among Republicans.

That Democratic unity of 2018 was on display again in the next two election cycles as the party picked up Arizona's other Senate seat and won the top three state offices.

But that winning formula is in jeopardy ahead of the 2024 election because of Sinema's estrangement and subsequent divorce from the Democratic Party, which could complicate President Joe Biden's path to reelection and the party's hopes for maintaining control of the Senate. She registered as an independent shortly after last year's midterm elections.

Democrats are already voicing fears that a three-way race with Sinema picking up votes from both Democrats and independents could hand the seat to a Republican such as Kari Lake, the failed gubernatorial candidate and one of the country's most prominent election deniers.

"If there were ever a time for her to listen to her constituents for once, it'd be now," said Alex Gomez, executive director of the Latino organizing group Living United for Change in Arizona, which has tangled with Sinema for years. "She needs to step aside. The potential candidacy of a Kari Lake presents a clear and present danger to our democracy."

Sinema has not said whether she will seek reelection, and Lake has not announced a Senate campaign. But the race already has a Democratic candidate in U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego, a Latino military veteran who kicked off his campaign last month after spending years as one of Sinema's chief antagonists.

Gallego says he raised more than \$1 million on his first day in the race, capitalizing on pent-up anger with Sinema among Democrats.

The Senate race is not the only new sign of Democratic division in the state. The Arizona Democratic Party last month had its first contested election for chair in 12 years, pitting a candidate backed by Gov. Katie Hobbs against one backed by most of the state's other elected Democrats.

The party elected longtime union leader Yolanda Bejarano, who was endorsed by U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly, Gallego and others, bucking the tradition of deferring to the preference of a Democratic governor. Hobbs said Thursday she had not yet spoken to Bejarano — nearly a week after the election.

The party discord in Arizona reverberates beyond the state.

Next year, Democrats, who have a narrow 51-49 Senate majority, are defending seats in 23 states — including seven where Donald Trump won at least once. That includes Arizona, where Trump won in 2016 but where Biden became the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state in more than two decades.

Sinema's political career began with roots in the progressive left and antiwar movement. She first ran

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for office as a Green Party candidate and lost badly, later winning a state legislative seat as a Democrat. She remade herself as a moderate in the U.S. House and parlayed that reputation into a Senate victory.

Her 2018 Senate win was fueled by a number of factors, including the state's changing demographics, contempt for Trump among suburban women and Sinema's spending advantage over Republican Martha McSally.

But McSally's 2018 campaign strategists laid some of the blame for her loss on Democratic unity behind Sinema and Republican infighting. With Democrats in lockstep, Sinema had a head start on reaching out to swing voters, while McSally focused on holding the GOP together to win her primary, campaign officials wrote in a memo that circulated widely after the election.

When Sinema was sworn into office in 2019, Trump was in the White House, Republicans were in control of both chambers of Congress and Democrats were unified in opposition.

But her relationship with the party ruptured during Biden's presidency as she teamed up with fellow moderate Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and became a roadblock for parts of the president's agenda and many progressive priorities.

She is one of the Senate's most vociferous defenders of the filibuster rule, which requires 60 of 100 votes to pass most legislation, and which many Democrats say empowers Republicans to overrule the will of the Democratic majority.

Sinema says she's focused on crafting bipartisan deals that can outlive any one party's control of Congress and points to victories, including a massive infrastructure bill and protections for same-sex marriage.

Her transformation from liberal rabble-rouser into Democratic irritant has left the base feeling angry and betrayed just four years after her victory brought Arizona Democrats in from the cold.

"As long as Sinema's off the team, that's all that matters," said Dave Crose, a 67-year-old retired mechanical engineer from Sun City who voted for Sinema in 2018 but has grown disillusioned with her. "That's a bad thing to say, but she screwed everyone in the state, so payback's her hell."

For Democrats, long shut out from the halls of power, winning was enough to paper over ideological divides, but now they have shown they can win and it wasn't a fluke.

"When you have power, everyone wants a piece and there's actually something to fight over," said Barrett Marson, a Republican political consultant in Phoenix aligned with the party's establishment wing.

One thing Democrats have going for them: Republicans aren't likely to be any less divided than they've been since Trump took over the party in 2016.

With the Sinema vs. Gallego drama raising some uncomfortable questions, Democrats in Arizona and Washington have tried to put off picking sides.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said after Gallego's announcement that "it's much too early to make a decision" about the 2024 race.

Kelly also declined to wade too deeply into the dynamics of a potential three-way race, saying "there's plenty of time" to sort it out.

"I'm not going to get ahead of Sen. Sinema on this," he told reporters at the Capitol. "I'm going to work with both of them."

Notably, however, Hobbs subtly suggested she would not be supporting her old friend Sinema. Hobbs and Sinema are both former social workers who campaigned together for the state Legislature a decade ago, Sinema getting elected to the Senate and Hobbs to the House.

Congratulating the new Arizona Democratic Party leadership team on Twitter, Hobbs wrote that she looks forward to helping the party "win back our US House & Senate seats."

Grammys fashion: Lizzo, Doja Cat, Styles wow on red carpet

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lizzo wowed in a bright orange Dolce & Gabbana opera coat adorned with flowers and a huge hood as the wild and wacky Grammys red carpet did not disappoint Sunday. Tattered streetwear, T-shirts and denim mixed with blinged-out couture, wild patterns and plenty of skin.

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Lizzo walked gingerly as she navigated her heavy coat with a long train. After awhile, she dropped the coat to her shoulders to reveal a busty sequin corset gown underneath in a softer orange. The coat was entirely embroidered with handmade silk flowers, and the gown was silk with crystal mesh Swarovski details. She accessorized with crystal embellished heels and sheer fingerless gloves.

"Lizzo is a floral garden fantasy in her ruffle orange 3D robe and matching corset dress underneath," said Holly Katz, a stylist and host of the Fashion Crimes podcast. "And we love to hear her roar!"

Taylor Swift, channeling her *Midnights* era, wore a long two-piece sparkly skirt with a high-neck, long-sleeve crop top, all by Roberto Cavalli. They were, yes, midnight blue. She added statement diamond earrings by Lorraine Schwartz, her hair in an updo.

Fashion lover Harry Styles walked the carpet in a rainbow harlequin pattern jumpsuit adorned with Swarovski crystals. He was shirtless underneath. His low-cut, multicolored Egonlab look drew cheers. Egonlab is a young brand out of Paris.

"The man seems like he's having an enormous amount of fun with fashion, and even if that doesn't mean wearing harlequin overalls for most of us, the end result — the sheer joy of it — is something we should all aim for," said Esquire's style director, Jonathan Evans.

Cardi B., meanwhile, wore a bombshell, sculptural electric blue gown with huge shoulders and a head-piece over one eye.

"I'm trying, I'm trying," she told photographers as she carefully walked down the carpet.

Cardi's look was from Gaurav Gupta's latest collection, "continuing to prove she intrinsically understands the delicate style dynamics of the Grammys carpet. It's not about being silly, but rather making a statement," said Bianca Betancourt, digital culture editor for Harper's Bazaar.

To present the award for best rap album, Cardi donned a silver metallic assemblage from the archive of Paco Rabanne. Rabanne died Friday in France at age 88. The top and skirt were done by Julien Dossena in 2021. The matching hood that covered her eyes dates to 2020.

Anitta also made a splash in black Versace from 2003.

"She went toward a more gothic aesthetic," Betancourt said. "The flowing gown was sublimely tailored and showed the global star doing red carpet elegance in her own way. It was still sexy, still youthful, but still elevated. It didn't look obviously vintage, which is a testament to Donatella's artistry."

Machine Gun Kelly, who often pushes into edgy fashion, was in a silver double-breasted laminated foil suit with a Swarovski crystal harness. It was custom Dolce & Gabbana. He was accompanied by Megan Fox in creamy Zuhair Murad. Her gown had a corset bodice and heart embroidered applique.

Sam Smith was in fire engine red. They were accompanied by Kim Petras, and drag queens Violet Chachki and Gottmik in the same color. Smith wore a top hat with a veil. They, too, wore matching gloves, a trend of the night.

Monochrome was a major theme, Betancourt said.

"It's a great way to experiment with more avant-garde looks while still maintaining a sense of stylistic structure," she said. "Lizzo and Kacey Musgraves also opted for monochrome and textured looks from Dolce & Gabbana and Valentino."

The marathon carpet kicked off with some notable looks. Doja Cat, always pushing her fashion envelope, showed up in a vinyl, one-shoulder and skintight black gown with long matching gloves from Atelier Versace. Bebe Rexha sizzled in hot pink with twists from head to toe and a va-va-voom halter bodice, proving that Barbiecore is going strong. The look was Moschino by Jeremy Scott.

Musgraves, in Valentino, also took the Barbie note with a feathery cape in a lighter pink hue over a catsuit.

There were golden crowns (Matt B), glittery mouth bling (Alligator Jesus) and epic tattoos (Alisha Gaddis). And lots of slouchy and roomy looks that spoke to many of the men, as did an embroidered denim shorts ensemble for Benny Blanco.

"While there weren't any giant, unmissable, overwhelmingly popular red-carpet trends on the men's fashion front, that actually proved to be a positive this year. It gave the smaller trends a little bit more room to shine," Evans said.

His most compelling? The double-breasted suit, or jacket.

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"It's not just a 2023 thing, of course, but the popularity of the DB tends to ebb and flow, and it seems like this year could be a very good one for the silhouette. LL Cool J, Jack Harlow, Saint JHN and Scott Evans all wore a version of it. They all looked fantastic, and the really great thing is that men in all walks of life can emulate their outfits and look equally fantastic," he said.

Evans also had thoughts on all that denim.

"Miguel was decked out in it. Benny Blanco, too. The looks were seemingly made with the word 'divisive' in mind, but they smacked of a sort of youth-culture cool that embraces that word instead of shying away from it. Love 'em or hate 'em, those outfits seem like a bellwether of a more denim-forward world in the near future, so take note," he said.

But back to Doja Cat's vinyl.

"Who can't stop talking about Doja Cat donning 30,000 red Swarovski crystals for Paris Fashion Week? Well, she certainly doesn't disappoint at the Grammys as she totally channeled the queen of darkness," Katz said. "The Mia Farrow 60's haircut was a perfect match for this look."

Betancourt was also a Doja fan.

"The look was gritty, sexy and much like Doja herself, forward-thinking. Her makeup also deserves a notable mention. It was an exquisite cat eye (pun intended) by Ernesto Casillas with a juicy metallic glossed lip that echoed the early aughts, but done without the kitsch most 2000s-inspired looks often perpetuate," she said.

Viola Davis, meanwhile, completed her EGOT by winning a Grammy at the Grammys pre-telecast ceremony in a Naeem Kahn red, silver and blue tiered sequin short-sleeved gown.

Shania Twain isn't up for a Grammy. That, she said, freed her to have fun with fashion. Twain's hair was red and her Harris Reed wide-belled pantsuit was adorned with huge black polka dots against white. She topped it off with a towering, matching wide-brim hat.

"Here I am with all my new fun things to wear," she said. Reed is a young British American designer she wanted to support. Her goal: "I just wanted to add some pop and cheer."

Twain, said Katz, "definitely scored in the avant-garde category but does sort of look like she just stepped out of Alice in Wonderland."

Laverne Cox WAS "Wakanda Forever" in her custom strapless leather Kim Kassar embellished warrior figure dress and African-inspired jewelry, Katz said. "Paying homage to the African culture through fashion is always in style."

Cox's leather dress by Kim Kassar honors the vision of the late fashion editor Andre Leon Talley. There was another vibe on her mind: "Egyptian/Cleopatra."

Prabal Gurung whipped up a custom sunny yellow chiffon look for Kelsea Ballerini with light-as-air back pieces she unfurled on the carpet. Amanda Gorman was in a top color of the night: black. Gorman, wearing Prada, twirled her long, sheer overlay worn over a mini-dress on the red carpet.

Ballerini's look, Katz said, was "so ethereal and dreamy on the red carpet."

Asian stocks sink after US jobs data fan rate hike fears

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets sank Monday after strong U.S. jobs data fanned fears of more interest rate hikes to cool inflation.

Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul retreated. Tokyo gained. Oil prices edged higher.

Wall Street wilted Friday after official data showed U.S. employers hired twice as many people in January as the previous month. That was good news for workers but dampened hopes the Federal Reserve might decide no more rate increases are needed to slow economic activity.

The numbers "look set to inevitably burst the bubble on Fed pivot bets" because they "suggest a re-acceleration in wage pressures," said Tan Boon Heng of Mizuho Bank in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index fell 0.9% to 3,233.97 while the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo advanced 1.1% to 27,801.97. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong sank 2.3% to 21,163.79.

The Kospi in Seoul declined 0.9% to 2,459.07 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 retreated 0.2% to 7,542.00.

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Singapore gained while Jakarta retreated. New Zealand financial markets were closed for a holiday.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 fell 1% on Friday to 4,136.48 after the government reported the economy added 517,000 jobs in January. That was double December's 260,000 and more than double the 185,000 expected by economists.

Despite that, the S&P 500 turned in its fourth weekly gain in the past five. It is 15.6% above its low point in October.

Average hourly wages were 4.4% higher in January than a year earlier. That was lower than December's 4.8% raise but above expectations. Central bankers worry wage growth can push up consumer prices.

The data dampened investor hopes that lower inflation might persuade the Fed and other central banks to ease off plans for more rate increases. They worry central bankers might be willing to tip the global economy into recession to stop inflation that is near multi-decade highs.

Some traders expect the Fed to cut rates late this year, despite warnings by officials that more increases are planned. Officials of the European Central Bank have issued similar warnings.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.4% to 33,926.01. The Nasdaq composite sank 1.6% to 12,006.96.

Also Friday, a separate report showed U.S. service industries returned to growth in January. It was a stronger reading than expected but suggested pricing pressures may be easing.

In energy markets, U.S. benchmark crude gained 17 cents to \$73.56 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract tumbled \$2.49 on Friday to \$73.39. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, advanced 25 cents to \$80.19 per barrel in London. It lost \$2.23 the previous session to \$79.94.

The dollar rose to 131.88 yen from Friday's 131.07 yen. The euro fell to \$1.0796 from \$1.0805.

Balloon bickering over Biden's actions, China's intentions

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers on Sunday accused China of deliberately surveilling sensitive U.S. military sites with a suspected spy balloon and said the Biden administration had given Beijing an intelligence opening by not downing the balloon during its high-altitude drift through American airspace.

China, meanwhile, accused the U.S. of indiscriminate use of force when the American military shot down the balloon. Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng said he lodged a formal complaint with the U.S. Embassy on Sunday over the "U.S. attack on a Chinese civilian unmanned airship by military force."

The balloon's presence in the sky above the United States before a military jet shot it down over the Atlantic Ocean with a missile Saturday further strained U.S.-China ties. America's top diplomat abruptly scrapped a trip to Beijing and China's defense ministry said in a statement after the balloon fell into the waters off the Carolina coast that it "reserves the right to take necessary measures to deal with similar situations."

"Clearly this was an attempt by China to gather information, to defeat our command and control of our sensitive missile defense and nuclear weapon sites," said the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, among the members of Congress on the Sunday news shows. "And that certainly is an urgency that this administration does not recognize."

U.S. defense and military officials said the balloon entered the U.S. air defense zone north of the Aleutian Islands on Jan. 28 and moved largely over land across Alaska and then into Canadian airspace in the Northwest Territories on Monday. It crossed back into U.S. territory over northern Idaho on Tuesday, the day the White House said President Joe Biden was first briefed on it.

"It defies belief to suggest there was nowhere" between Alaska and the Carolinas where the U.S. could have safely shot down the balloon, said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said the full Senate will get a briefing next week on the balloon, including details about its surveillance capabilities, and that the administration is considering measures against the Chinese for "their brazen activities." He said the GOP criticism was political and

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premature, and that the U.S. had "sent a clear message to China that this is not acceptable."

A senior administration official said other Chinese balloons transited the U.S. at least briefly on three different occasions during the Trump administration and once previously since Biden took office. The official said that the Trump balloon transits only became known after Trump left office and that intelligence agencies would offer briefings to former officials from the last administration on China's global surveillance programs.

Biden issued the shutdown order but had wanted it to happen earlier, on Wednesday. He was advised that the best time for the operation would be when it was over water, U.S. officials said. Military officials determined that bringing down the balloon over land from an altitude of 60,000 feet would pose an undue risk to people on the ground.

"The message they (the Chinese) were trying to send is what they believe internally, and that is that the United States is a once great superpower that's hollowed out, that's in decline," said Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "And the message they're trying to send the world is, 'Look, these guys can't even do anything about a balloon flying over U.S. airspace. How can you possibly count on them if something were to happen in the Indo-Pacific region?'"

By Wednesday the balloon was over Montana, home to Malmstrom Air Force Base, which has fields of nuclear missile silos.

The Chinese "didn't go and look at the Grand Canyon," Turner said. "They went and looked at our nuclear weapon sites and the missile defense sites throughout the country."

On Thursday the Pentagon publicly exposed the balloon, and after that, "China maneuvered the balloon to leave the U.S.," Schumer told reporters Sunday. A U.S. official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity confirmed that the balloon changed course at that point.

That it could be maneuvered ran counter to China's contention that the balloon — claimed to be a civilian airship used mainly for meteorological research — had limited "self-steering" capabilities and had "deviated far from its planned course" because of winds.

"This was not an accident. This was deliberate. It was intelligence, you know?" said retired Adm. Mike Mullen, a former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman.

Asked whether elements of the Chinese military may have wanted to disrupt Secretary of State Antony Blinken's planned visit, Mullen responded: "Clearly, I think that's the case."

He said "this really damages a relationship between us and China" and "puts a big dent in moving forward in a constructive way, which we really need to do."

To Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., who leads a new House committee on China, the message conveyed by Beijing is "look what we can do to you and get away with. Your corporations, your career politicians, they will come crawling back."

The flight came to an end at about 2:39 p.m. EST Saturday, when an F-22 fighter jet fired a missile at the balloon, puncturing it while it was about 6 nautical miles off the coast near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, defense officials said.

The debris landed in 47 feet of water, shallower than officials had expected, and it spread out over roughly 7 miles. Officials estimated the recovery efforts would be completed in a short time, not weeks.

A U.S. official said those involved in the recovery were planning to take the remnants of the downed balloon to the FBI lab in Quantico, Virginia, for further analysis. The official wasn't authorized to discuss the plan by name and requested anonymity.

Defense officials who briefed reporters have said the U.S. was able to collect intelligence on the balloon as it flew over the country. They said the military concluded that the technology on the balloon didn't give the Chinese significant intelligence beyond what it could already obtain from satellites, though the U.S. took steps to mitigate what information it could gather as it moved along.

The Pentagon has said a second balloon had been flying over Latin America. On Sunday, Colombia's Air Force said in a statement that an object matching the characteristics of the Chinese balloon entered the

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country's airspace, at a height of around 55,000 feet, on Friday morning. The Air Force said it monitored the object's flight path until it left the country and at no time did it pose a national security risk.

In neighboring Venezuela, people on social media reported seeing a balloon, but the government did not confirm its presence. In a statement, however, President Nicolas Maduro's government condemned the U.S. for downing the balloon that had crossed the states, saying such actions against what China has said is a civilian aircraft that flew off course was an affront to international norms.

Turner was on NBC's "Meet the Press," Rubio was on ABC's "This Week" and CNN's "State of the Union," Mullen was on ABC and Gallagher appeared on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

Officials urge evacuation near derailment, fearing explosion

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio (AP) — Officials monitoring the smoldering, tangled wreckage of a train derailment in northeastern Ohio urgently warned hundreds of nearby residents who had declined to evacuate to do so Sunday night, saying a rail car was at risk of a potential explosion that could launch deadly shrapnel as far as a mile.

They warned of "the potential of a catastrophic tanker failure" after a "drastic temperature change" was observed in that rail car, according to a statement from Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's office that said teams were working to prevent an explosion at the scene in East Palestine. It did not specify what was in that car or whether it was among those that had been carrying hazardous materials.

Authorities urged anyone within a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) radius of the site to leave immediately. Many had, but local officials indicated more than 500 residents had declined to evacuate, the statement said.

Federal investigators had announced earlier Sunday that a mechanical issue with a rail car axle caused the fiery derailment near the Pennsylvania state line Friday night.

Michael Graham, a board member of the National Transportation Safety Board, said at a news conference that the three-member train crew received an alert about the mechanical defect "shortly before the derailment" but said the board was still working to determine which rail car experienced the issue.

About 50 cars derailed in East Palestine as a train was carrying a variety of products from Madison, Illinois, to Conway, Pennsylvania, rail operator Norfolk Southern said. No injuries to crew, residents or first responders were reported.

Graham said investigators identified the exact "point of derailment" but did not disclose the location Sunday. He said information will be included in a preliminary investigative report expected in the next month or so.

East Palestine officials said emergency responders were monitoring but keeping their distance from the fire, and that remediation efforts could not begin while the cars smoldered.

Mayor Trent Conaway, who declared a state of emergency in the village, said one person was arrested for going around barricades right up to the crash during the night. He warned that more arrests would follow if people did not stay away.

"I don't know why anybody would want to be up there; you're breathing toxic fumes if you're that close," he said, stressing that monitors of air quality away from the fire showed no levels of concern and the town's water is safe because it is fed by groundwater unaffected by some material that went into streams. Environmental protection agency crews were working to remove contaminants from streams and monitor water quality.

Sheriffs went door-to-door Sunday to count residents remaining and urge people within the evacuation area to leave. Schools and village offices will be closed at least through Monday, and businesses within the evacuation zone are not allowed to open Monday, officials said.

Norfolk Southern said 20 of the more than 100 cars on the train were classified as carrying hazardous materials — defined as cargo that could pose any kind of danger "including flammables, combustibles, or environmental risks."

The NTSB said only 10 cars carrying hazardous materials derailed, and five of them were carrying vinyl chloride, not 14 as was said earlier. Officials stressed late Saturday that they had not confirmed the release

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of vinyl chloride other than from pressure release devices operating as designed.

Vinyl chloride, used to make the polyvinyl chloride hard plastic resin in a variety of plastic products, is associated with increased risk of liver cancer and other cancers, according to the federal government's National Cancer Institute.

"Short-term exposure to low levels of substances associated with the derailment does not present a long-term health risk to residents," according to a "Frequently Asked Questions" post on the village Facebook page. "Vinyl chloride and benzene may cause cancer in people exposed in the workplace to high concentrations for many years; however, there is no indication that any potential exposure that occurred after the derailment increases the risk of cancer or any other long-term health effects in community members."

Officials said Sunday afternoon that cars involved also carried combustible liquids, butyl acrylate and residue of benzene from previous shipments, as well as nonhazardous materials such as wheat, plastic pellets, malt liquors and lube oil.

The evacuation order covered homes of 1,500 to 2,000 of the town's 4,800 to 4,900 residents, but officials said it was unknown exactly how many were actually affected. Most of those who had gone to an emergency shelter were no longer there by Sunday.

Norfolk Southern opened an assistance center in the village to gather information from affected residents. Village officials said 75 people went to the center Saturday and about 100 had been there Sunday morning.

Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan martial ruler in 9/11 wars, dies

By JON GAMBRELL and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a bloodless coup and later led a reluctant Pakistan into aiding the U.S. war in Afghanistan against the Taliban, has died, officials said Sunday. He was 79.

Musharraf, a former special forces commando, became president through the last of a string of military coups that roiled Pakistan since its founding amid the bloody 1947 partition of India. He ruled the nuclear-armed state after his 1999 coup through tensions with India, an atomic proliferation scandal and an Islamic extremist insurgency. He stepped down in 2008 while facing possible impeachment.

Later, Musharraf lived in self-imposed exile in Dubai to avoid criminal charges, despite attempting a political comeback in 2012. But poor health plagued his last years. He maintained a soldier's fatalism after avoiding a violent death that always seemed to be stalking him as Islamic militants twice targeted him for assassination.

"I have confronted death and defied it several times in the past because destiny and fate have always smiled on me," Musharraf once wrote. "I only pray that I have more than the proverbial nine lives of a cat."

Musharraf's family announced in June 2022 that he had been hospitalized for weeks in Dubai while suffering from amyloidosis, an incurable condition in which proteins build up in the organs. They later said he also needed access to the drug daratumumab, which is used to treat multiple myeloma. That bone marrow cancer can cause amyloidosis.

Shazia Siraj, a spokeswoman for the Pakistani Consulate in Dubai, confirmed his death and said diplomats were providing support to his family.

The Pakistani military also offered its condolences as did Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the younger brother of the prime minister Musharraf overthrew in 1999.

"May God give his family the courage to bear this loss," Sharif said.

Less than two years after Musharraf seized power, Pakistan's border with Afghanistan would soon draw the U.S.'s attention and dominate Musharraf's life.

Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden launched the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks from Afghanistan, sheltered by the country's Taliban rulers. Musharraf knew what would come next.

"America was sure to react violently, like a wounded bear," he wrote in his autobiography. "If the perpetrator turned out to be al-Qaida, then that wounded bear would come charging straight toward us."

By Sept. 12, then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell told Musharraf that Pakistan would either be "with

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us or against us." Musharraf said another American official threatened to bomb Pakistan "back into the Stone Age" if it chose the latter.

Musharraf chose the former. A month later, he stood by then-President George W. Bush at the Waldorf Astoria in New York to declare Pakistan's unwavering support to fight with the United States against "terrorism in all its forms wherever it exists."

Pakistan became a crucial transit point for NATO supplies headed to landlocked Afghanistan. That was the case even though Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency had backed the Taliban after it swept into power in Afghanistan in 1994. Prior to that, the CIA and others funneled money and arms through the ISI to Islamic fighters battling the 1980s Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan saw Taliban fighters flee over the border back into Pakistan, including bin Laden, whom the U.S. would kill in 2011 at a compound in Abbottabad. They regrouped and the offshoot Pakistani Taliban emerged, beginning a yearslong insurgency in the mountainous border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The CIA began flying armed Predator drones from Pakistan with Musharraf's blessing, using an airstrip built by the founding president of the United Arab Emirates for falconing in Pakistan's Balochistan province. The program helped beat back the militants but saw over 400 strikes in Pakistan alone kill at least 2,366 people — including 245 civilians, according to the Washington-based New America Foundation think tank.

Though Pakistan under Musharraf launched these operations, the militants still thrived as billions of American dollars flowed into the nation. That led to suspicion that still plagues the U.S. relationship with Pakistan.

"After 9/11, then President Musharraf made a strategic shift to abandon the Taliban and support the U.S. in the war on terror, but neither side believes the other has lived up to expectations flowing from that decision," a 2009 U.S. cable from then-Ambassador Anne Patterson published by WikiLeaks said, describing what had become the diplomatic equivalent of a loveless marriage.

"The relationship is one of co-dependency we grudgingly admit — Pakistan knows the U.S. cannot afford to walk away; the U.S. knows Pakistan cannot survive without our support."

But it would be Musharraf's life on the line. Militants tried to assassinate him twice in 2003 by targeting his convoy, first with a bomb planted on a bridge and then with car bombs. That second attack saw Musharraf's vehicle lifted into the air by the blast before touching the ground again. It raced to safety on just its rims, Musharraf pulling a Glock pistol in case he needed to fight his way out.

It wasn't until his wife, Sehba, saw the car covered in gore that the scale of the attack dawned on him. "She is always calm in the face of danger," he recounted. But then, "she was screaming uncontrollably, hysterically."

Born Aug. 11, 1943, in New Delhi, Musharraf was the middle son of a diplomat. His family joined millions of other Muslims in fleeing westward when predominantly Hindu India and Islamic Pakistan split during independence from Britain in 1947. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in riots and fighting during the Partition.

Musharraf entered the Pakistani army at age 18 and made his career there as Islamabad fought three wars against India. He'd launch his own attempt at capturing territory in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir in 1999 just before seizing power from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Sharif had ordered Musharraf's dismissal as the army chief flew home from a visit to Sri Lanka and denied his plane landing rights in Pakistan, even as it ran low on fuel. On the ground, the army took control and after he landed Musharraf took charge.

Yet as ruler, Musharraf nearly reached a deal with India on Kashmir, according to U.S. diplomats at the time. He also worked toward a rapprochement with Pakistan's longtime rival.

Another major scandal emerged under his rule when the world discovered that famed Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan, long associated with the country's atomic bomb, had been selling centrifuge designs and other secrets to countries including Iran, Libya and North Korea, making tens of millions of dollars. Those designs helped Pyongyang arm itself with nuclear weapons, while centrifuges from Khan's designs

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still spin in Iran amid the collapse of Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Musharraf said he suspected Khan but it wasn't until 2003 when then-CIA director George Tenet showed him detailed plans for a Pakistani centrifuge that the scientist had been selling that he realized the severity of what happened.

Khan confessed on state television in 2004 and Musharraf pardoned him, though he was confined to house arrest after that.

"For years, A.Q.'s lavish lifestyle and tales of his wealth, properties, corrupt practices and financial magnanimity at state expense were generally all too well known in Islamabad's social and government circles," Musharraf later wrote. "However, these were largely ignored. ... In hindsight that neglect was apparently a serious mistake."

Musharraf's domestic support eventually eroded. He held flawed elections in late 2002 — only after changing the constitution to give himself sweeping powers to sack the prime minister and parliament. He then reneged on a promise to stand down as army chief by the end of 2004.

Militant anger toward Musharraf increased in 2007 when he ordered a raid against the Red Mosque in downtown Islamabad. It had become a sanctuary for militants opposed to Pakistan's support of the Afghan war. The weeklong operation killed over 100 people.

The incident severely damaged Musharraf's reputation among everyday citizens and earned him the undying hatred of militants who launched a series of punishing attacks following the raid.

Fearing the judiciary would block his continued rule, Musharraf fired the chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court. That triggered mass demonstrations.

Under pressure at home and abroad to restore civilian rule, Musharraf stepped down as army chief. Though he won another five-year presidential term, Musharraf faced a major crisis following former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2007 at a campaign rally as she sought to become prime minister for the third time.

The public suspected Musharraf's hand in the killing, which he denied. A later United Nations report acknowledged the Pakistani Taliban was a main suspect in her slaying but warned that elements of Pakistan's intelligence services may have been involved.

Musharraf resigned as president in August 2008 after ruling coalition officials threatened to have him impeached for imposing emergency rule and firing judges.

"I hope the nation and the people will forgive my mistakes," Musharraf, struggling with his emotions, said in his televised address.

Afterward, he lived abroad in Dubai and London, attempting a political comeback in 2012. But Pakistan instead arrested the former general and put him under house arrest. He faced treason allegations over the Supreme Court debacle and other charges stemming from the Red Mosque raid and Bhutto's assassination.

The image of Musharraf being treated as a criminal suspect shocked Pakistan, where military generals long have been considered above the law. Pakistan allowed him to leave the country on bail to Dubai in 2016 for medical treatment and he remained there after facing a later-overturned death sentence.

But it suggested Pakistan may be ready to turn a corner in its history of military rule.

"Musharraf's resignation is a sad yet familiar story of hubris, this time in a soldier who never became a good politician," wrote Patterson, the U.S. ambassador, at the time.

"The good news is that the demonstrated strength of institutions that brought Musharraf down — the media, free elections and civil society — also provide some hope for Pakistan's future. It was these institutions that ironically became much stronger under his government."

FACT FOCUS: Egg shortage breeds chicken-feed conspiracies

By JOSH KELETY Associated Press

Social media users claim to have found a new culprit for sky-high egg prices: chicken feed.

The theory gained steam on Facebook, TikTok and Twitter in recent weeks, with some users reporting that their hens stopped laying eggs and speculating that common chicken feed products were the cause.

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Some went a step further to suggest that feed producers had intentionally made their products deficient to stop backyard egg production, forcing people to buy eggs at inflated prices.

"One of the largest egg producers in the country cut a deal with one of the largest feed producers in the country to change their feed formula so it no longer contains enough protein and minerals for your chickens to produce eggs," one Facebook user wrote in a post shared more than 2,000 times. "They are now price gouging eggs to make bank."

But poultry experts say there's no evidence for such claims. Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: Chicken feed companies have altered their products to stop backyard hens from laying eggs and drive up demand for commercial eggs.

THE FACTS: U.S. egg prices in grocery stores more than doubled over the past year due to an outbreak of bird flu, combined with increasing labor and supply costs.

Some backyard chicken owners may have separately found their chickens underperforming, but experts say the issues are unrelated. While feed quality can affect hens' egg-laying abilities, state agricultural officials told The Associated Press they have not heard of any widespread issues with feed affecting egg production, and several major feed suppliers say they haven't changed their formulas.

Experts say there are far more mundane explanations for the poultry's meager production.

"Is there a broad conspiracy? No, there's not a broad conspiracy," said Todd Applegate, a professor in poultry science at the University of Georgia. "Beyond feed, there are a lot, probably even more so, things from the management and from the bird's environment that creates different things that would cause her to either go out of production or lower her production."

More than 43 million of the 58 million birds slaughtered over the past year to control the bird flu virus have been egg-laying chickens, The Associated Press has reported.

"Because of high path avian influenza, we've had to depopulate millions of laying hens. And when you take that many chickens out of production, there's fewer eggs," said Ken Anderson, a poultry industry specialist at North Carolina State University. "And when there's fewer eggs, the price goes up."

Democratic U.S. Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island and a farmer-led advocacy group have called for an investigation into potential egg price-gouging by producers. But there is no evidence that altered chicken feed is driving steep egg prices.

Agricultural officials in multiple states, including North Carolina and Georgia, told the AP they have received no reports of widespread problems.

"Our members have not really heard any exact reports of any correlation between the feed and egg production," said Austin Therrell, executive director of the Association of American Feed Control Officials, a group of local, state and federal agencies responsible for regulating animal feeds.

Therrell noted, however, that officials have fielded questions from people who saw feed-related claims on social media.

Other factors could explain the individual reports of low backyard egg yields, experts say. Limited daylight hours in the winter can reduce or stop hens' egg production, as can cold weather, said Applegate. Improperly stored feed can become compromised and affect egg production, too.

"Backyard flock producers don't necessarily follow lighting programs to support peak egg production," Anderson said. "A lot of backyard flock people utilize natural daylight."

Many social media users claimed that specific feed products, such as those offered by Purina Animal Nutrition and Tractor Supply, a chain of farm supplies stores, were at fault. Some said their hens started laying again after they switched feeds or made their own. But the companies deny that their products are to blame.

"We confirm there have not been formulation changes to Purina poultry feed products," Brooke Dillon, a spokesperson for Land O'Lakes, the parent company of Purina Animal Nutrition, wrote in an email. Similarly, Mary Winn Pilkington, a spokesperson for Tractor Supply, said that its suppliers confirmed there has been "no change to the nutritional profile" of their feed products.

Feed products have been recalled in the past for improper nutrition, according to Adam Fahrenholz, an

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associate professor of feed milling at North Carolina State University. But while feed nutrition issues, like insufficient protein, can reduce egg production, he found no merit in online claims of a massive conspiracy.

"I don't find it plausible from the standpoint of an intentional, large scale, you know, planned event at all," Fahrenholz added.

The conspiracy that feed companies are deliberately trying to sabotage backyard egg supplies found an audience thanks to a broader distrust of government officials and experts, said Yotam Ophir, an assistant professor at the University at Buffalo who focuses on misinformation. It's common for people to look for scapegoats during periods of social anxiety, he said. The claims join other recent conspiracies alleging a coordinated effort to undermine the nation's food supply.

"The official narrative is kind of reminding us that we are sometimes vulnerable to the randomness of nature," Ophir said.

Amid crisis, Haitians find solace in an unlikely place: soup

MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — For Wilfred Cadet, buying soup on Sunday is the equivalent of going to church.

Seated on plastic chairs next to a street food stand tucked in an alleyway, the 47-year-old Haitian slurps orange-colored soup out of a metal bowl next to his 9-year-old son.

Haitians mill past them cradling larger plastic containers, each eager to get a giant spoonful of the stew boiling in two human-sized pots behind them.

Made of pumpkin, beef, carrots, cabbage – ingredients produced on the island – soup jomou is a cultural staple in Haiti.

And in a moment of deepening crisis in the Caribbean nation, it's one of the few points of enduring national pride.

To this day, when you mention the soup, Haitians are quick to crack a smile.

"It's our tradition, our culture. It makes people proud. No matter what happens (in Haiti), the soup is going to stay around," said Cadet.

During the colonial period, slaves were banned from eating the spicy dish, and would have to prepare it for French slave owners.

But Haitians claimed soup jomou as their own in 1804 when they staged one of the biggest and most successful slave rebellions in the Western Hemisphere.

The uprising put an end to slavery in Haiti far before much of the region, and the dish gained the nickname "independence soup."

In 2021 – the same year the country spiraled into chaos following the assassination of its president – the soup was added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, the first cuisine Haiti has on the list.

"It is a celebratory dish, deeply rooted in Haitian identity, and its preparation promotes social cohesion and belonging among communities," reads the UNESCO entry.

It's traditionally eaten on Sunday mornings, and on Haitian Independence Day in early January.

That's when customers begin filing through a pair of black metal gates into 50-year-old Marie France Damas' makeshift restaurant at 7:30 a.m.

Tucked behind rows of parked cars, a brick wall with a painted sign reading "Every Sunday: Soup Jomou" and a pile of local pumpkins, Damas labors away over her two big pots just like she has for the past 18 years.

Her husband weaves between plastic tables taking orders while her daughter chops vegetables behind her. It's a family affair, but Damas is clear.

"I'm the boss of the soup," she said with a grin.

The business has allowed her to put her children through school and give a good life to her family in a place with some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the region.

To each Haitian, the cuisine means something different.

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For Cadet and his son, it represents one moment of an escape from the day-to-day pandemonium of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

It has also allowed Cadet to pass on a cherished part of Haitian culture at a time when they're slowly fading away. Celebrations like Carnival that once took center stage on the island have withered due to deep gang violence tearing apart the nation.

"The violence in the country is making everyone leave, and over time, we're going to lose a lot of cultural traditions," Cadet said. "My son, of course, (will go). Right now he doesn't like Haiti."

He hopes that when his son goes, he'll remember their Sunday mornings together.

To others, like 35-year-old Maxon Sucas, it's a way to reconnect with family and home in the countryside. He grew up in a rural town in western Haiti in a farming family cultivating the very vegetables used to make the soup.

He came to Port-au-Prince 13 years ago to support his family, and works as a manager at a nightclub.

He would once visit his family six to eight times a year, but because of kidnappings and gang control of the countryside, he's now unable to go home.

So Sunday mornings, he drinks the soup just like he once did as a kid, and he thinks about his daughter who he sometimes goes weeks without speaking to.

"She's three years old and it hurts me that I can't see her," Sucas said. "(When I eat soup *joumou*) I remember my family."

As he gets ready to leave the restaurant alone, cradling a large Tupperware filled with steaming soup, he pauses.

"When I go home today, I'll call her. And when I do, I'll ask if she ate the soup," he adds.

US officials offer Congress briefing on Trump, Biden papers

By NOMAAN MERCHANT, MICHAEL BALSAMO, and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials have offered to brief congressional leaders on their investigation into the classified documents found at former President Donald Trump's Florida residence as well as President Joe Biden's Delaware home and former private office, people familiar with the matter said Sunday.

A briefing could come as soon as this week. But it may not meet demands from lawmakers who want to review the documents taken not just from Mar-a-Lago but also from the locations belonging to Biden and the Indiana home of former Vice President Mike Pence.

Six months after federal agents first conducted an unprecedented search of a former president's home for classified documents, the White House faces bipartisan pressure to share what it found with lawmakers who say they are concerned about the potential damage to national security and intelligence sources. Separate special counsels are investigating the documents found in the possession of Trump and Biden.

Officials have declined to answer most questions in public or private about what they found, citing the ongoing criminal investigations and a separate "risk assessment" of the possible damage to intelligence sources.

Rep. Mike Turner, who heads the House Intelligence Committee, told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the administration notified him it would brief on the documents this week.

"This administration needs to understand we do have national security urgent matters," said Turner, R-Ohio. He also called on the White House to brief him on the Chinese balloon shot down Saturday.

"What's interesting is that the moment this balloon became public, I got a notice not from the administration that I'm going to get a briefing on this balloon, but they have to rush to Congress now to talk to us about Donald Trump's documents," he said, adding that a discussion of Biden and Pence's records was expected to be included.

Three people familiar with the matter confirmed a congressional briefing was offered to the "Gang of Eight" — the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and Senate and of both intelligence committees. The people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

Any briefing is not expected to include direct access to the documents that were seized, the people said.

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Sens. Mark Warner, D-Va., and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, asked for that access in a letter last week to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines.

The director of national intelligence's office and Department of Justice both declined to comment Sunday.

The Justice Department says roughly 300 documents with classified markings, including at the top-secret level, have been recovered from Mar-a-Lago after being taken there after Trump left the White House. Last August, FBI agents executed a search warrant at the property after developing evidence that led them to believe that Trump and his representatives had not returned all the classified files.

The material taken at that time included roughly 13,000 government documents, including about 100 bearing classification markings. Some of the material was so sensitive that Justice Department prosecutors and FBI counterintelligence investigators required additional security clearances to review them.

A special counsel, Jack Smith, is investigating whether to bring charges against Trump or anyone else related to the documents. Prosecutors have revealed that they are investigating possible violations of multiple criminal statutes, including willful retention of national defense information and obstruction. A grand jury in Washington has been hearing evidence and federal prosecutors have interviewed multiple Trump associates. It is not clear how much longer that investigation will last.

Trump has claimed that the materials were declassified and that he had the power to do so just by thinking about it, though his lawyers have not repeated that claim. They tried to have an independent arbiter conduct an outside review of the documents, though a federal appeals court late last year ended that work and said Trump's team was not entitled to that assessment.

Biden's lawyers say they contacted authorities after first discovering "a small number of documents with classified markings" on Nov. 2, 2022, in a locked closet at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement. The documents were found as Biden's attorneys were clearing out the offices.

A second batch of documents — again described by Biden's lawyers as a "small number" — were found in a storage space in Biden's garage near Wilmington, Delaware, along with six pages located in Biden's personal library in his home.

FBI agents on Jan. 20 located six additional items that contained documents with classified markings and also took possession of some of Biden's handwritten notes, according to Biden lawyer Bob Bauer. The FBI subsequently searched Biden's vacation home in Delaware but found no classified documents, Bauer said afterward.

Northeast temperatures soar a day after bone-numbing cold

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

Temperatures in many areas of the Northeast U.S. climbed to the mid-40s Fahrenheit on Sunday, a day after the region suffered through temperatures that plummeted into the negative teens and felt like minus 45 to minus 50 degrees with the wind chill.

Atop 6,288-foot Mount Washington in New Hampshire, the temperature rose to a relatively balmy 18 degrees (8 Celsius) a day after the actual temperature nosedived to minus 47 F (minus 44 C) and the wind chill was measured in excess of minus 108 degrees.

The warming weather extended to Texas, where thousands of Austin residents were still without power five days after an ice storm knocked out electricity to nearly a third of the city. By Sunday, more than 90% of the city had power, according to Austin Energy. But the lights were still out for 40,000 customers and there was no timetable for completing repairs.

Katy Manganella, 37, grew so fed-up that when Austin Energy came to her neighborhood Sunday with a charging station for residents — but still no repair trucks — she paced in front of the station holding a poster that read, "This pregnant lady is over it!"

"It's been pretty miserable," said Manganella, a therapist who is seven months pregnant. "How is there no plan for this?"

Back in the Northeast, there was some collateral damage from the extreme cold and high winds.

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Boston Medical Center closed its emergency department after a pipe froze and burst on Saturday night. It is expected to remain closed until Tuesday.

"All patients in the affected areas of the Emergency Department were safely moved to other areas of the hospital," the center said in a tweet.

A Providence, Rhode Island armory being used as a warming center had some of its windows blown out by raging winds on Friday into Saturday, but repairs were soon completed. No one at the Cranston Street Armory was ever in danger, Matthew Sheaff, a spokesperson for Gov. Dan McKee, said in an email Sunday. People simply moved to other rooms, he said.

Boston's Boch Center Wang Theater was forced to cancel two sold-out shows by the Impractical Jokers when a sprinkler pipe in the boiler room burst at about 5 p.m. Saturday, the theater said on social media.

The building was evacuated and the shows canceled when the fire department and theater management determined the system could not be quickly repaired. The shows were rescheduled for late April.

James "Murr" Murray of the Impractical Jokers posted his own apology on Twitter.

"To all of our Boston fans, so sorry about tonight. We were five minutes from showtime, with a full theater, at the first show tonight, and the pipes burst from the cold in Boston and flooded the entire basement of the theater," he said in a short video.

The above average temperatures were expected to stick around awhile, said Bob Oravec, the lead forecaster at the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland.

"We're having much more milder flow across a good part of the country and we do expect the temperatures to be above average for the upcoming week across the good part of the country, especially the Northeast," Oravec said.

Program's head says Iowa school shooting won't deter him

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

The founder of an educational program for at-risk youth in Des Moines says he will remain "all in on helping kids that are not reachable in so many peoples' eyes" after he was wounded in last month's shooting that killed two students.

Will Keeps, 49, a former Chicago gang member who moved to Iowa in his 20s and later founded the Starts Right Here program, made his first public comments about the shooting this weekend in a video the police department posted online.

"We went all in on helping kids that are not reachable in so many peoples' eyes," he said. "Our youth is looking to us to not run. If they constantly keep seeing us say, 'Oh, we can't, we're done,' what do you think they're going to do? They going to be done. So become a beast. We need you to fight, become a warrior. And we need to do it together."

Keeps, a rapper whose given name is Will Homes, had his right arm in a cast held up by a blue sling in the video and kept a walker sitting next to his chair. He was just released from the hospital last week.

Students Gionni Dameron, 18, and Rashad Carr, 16, were killed in the Jan. 23 shooting at the program, which provides help to students under a contract with Des Moines Public Schools. Two other teens have been charged with murder in the shooting. Police have said all four teens were involved with gangs, although the families of the victims denied that.

Keeps said he continues to encounter the kind of violence he experienced as a youth in Chicago when he saw rival gang members kill his friend and he was himself severely beaten.

"I've lived it and I've seen it every day of my life. I'm not going to sit up here and ignore the fact that we're killing each other. And we're killing each other as easy as seeing a fly on the wall and swatting it or seeing an ant on the ground and stomping on it," he said. "Our youth is in trouble, and we constantly kept doing the same thing over and over and over and over again, and it ain't working."

Police have charged Preston Walls, 18, and Bravon Michael Tukes, 19, both of Des Moines, with two counts of first-degree murder, one count of attempted murder and one count of criminal gang participation. Bail was set at \$2.5 million for each.

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Police say Walls, a Starts Right Here participant, entered a common area of the building Jan. 23 and opened fire before fleeing in a car driven by Tukes. The two belong to a gang and committed the shootings "in connection with that gang membership," according to police.

Walls waived his preliminary hearing and is awaiting an arraignment that is scheduled for next month, according to online court records. His attorney has declined to comment.

Tukes' preliminary hearing is set for Tuesday. The lawyers who have been appointed to represent him were not reachable Sunday.

Ukraine defense minister expects help from West on warplanes

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's defense minister expressed confidence Sunday that Western allies would agree to the country's latest weapons request — warplanes to fight off Russian forces that invaded nearly a year ago.

Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told a news conference in Kyiv that Ukraine has already received everything from its "wish list to Santa," except planes.

"There will be planes, too," Reznikov predicted. "The question is just what kind exactly.... Consider that this mission is already completed."

So far, Ukraine has won support from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets. But several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could provoke the Kremlin and draw their countries deeper into the conflict, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and wreaked massive destruction.

Kyiv says such jets are essential to challenging Russia's air superiority and ensuring success in a Russian offensive that Reznikov predicted could begin around the war's one-year anniversary, Feb. 24.

"Not all Western weapons will arrive by then, but we have the resources and reserves to help stabilize and sustain the offensive," Reznikov told reporters.

Since the war began, Western leaders have balked at some of Ukraine's requests, such as for longer-range missiles and tanks, only to agree later. The warplanes are the latest example.

Ukraine has relocated its warplanes and concealed air defense assets, hampering Moscow's efforts to gain full control of the skies. After suffering early losses, the Russian air force has avoided venturing deep into Ukraine's airspace and mostly focused on close front line support.

German-made tanks are on the way to Ukraine. Reznikov said his forces would begin training on Leopard tanks in Europe on Monday, before their delivery to Ukraine. So far, Canada, Poland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States have announced they will supply tanks to Ukraine.

The Kremlin has said Western countries' supply of increasingly sophisticated and more weapons will only prolong the conflict, and it has characterized NATO as a direct participant. Reznikov, commenting on the supply of Western weapons and the state of the Ukrainian army, took the rhetoric further on Sunday, telling reporters: "I absolutely boldly claim that we have become a de facto NATO country. We only have a de jure part left."

Ukraine has applied to join NATO, as have two of Russia's other neighbors, Finland and Sweden.

On the battlefield, Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said four people were injured Sunday when a Russian S-300 missile fell near an apartment block in Kharkiv city, and another was hurt when a missile hit a university building. Video showed the building hit was the National Academy for Urban Economy, about 700 meters from the city's central square.

Meanwhile, heavy fighting continued in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, one of four regions that Russia illegally annexed last year even though its forces do not fully control the area. Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said five civilians were wounded in rocket attacks during the night in the city of Druzhkivka and that the town of Avdiivka and its outskirts were also fired on.

In the Donetsk city of Bakhmut, the epicenter of the fiercest fighting in Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said Sunday it had repelled Russian attacks. The founder of the mercenary group Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said in a Telegram post that Kyiv's forces were not retreating and that "there are fierce battles

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for every street, every house, every stairwell.”

In the Black Sea port of Odesa, workers labored to connect temporary generators shipped in to restore electricity. The city and surrounding area were plunged into darkness over the weekend following a large-scale network failure.

Grid operator Ukrenergo said that the failure involved equipment “repeatedly repaired” after Russia’s savage strikes on Ukraine’s energy grid, and that residents should brace themselves for lengthy blackouts.

As of Sunday afternoon, about 280,000 customers — 40% of the customers — remained without power, said prime minister Denis Shmyhal.

‘Knock at the Cabin’ knocks off ‘Avatar’ at the box office

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For the first time in almost two months, the box office doesn’t belong to blue people.

After seven weeks as the top film in theaters, “Avatar: The Way of Water” was finally knocked out of the No. 1 spot by the M. Night Shyamalan thriller “Knock at the Cabin” and the octogenarian comedy “80 for Brady.”

“Knock at the Cabin,” a home invasion horror film with an apocalyptic riff, dethroned James Cameron’s 3-D sci-fi epic with \$14.2 million in ticket sales at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. The Universal Pictures release stars Dave Bautista as one of four strangers who approach a family vacationing in a rural cabin.

The opening for “Knock at the Cabin” came up shy of some of Shyamalan’s recent releases. His last film, 2021’s “Old,” about a beach that rapidly ages those who visit it, launched with \$16.9 million and ultimately collected \$90.1 million worldwide. His 2019 film “Glass,” the third installment in the director’s “Unbreakable” trilogy, opened with \$40.3 million on its way to grossing \$247 million globally. Every other film directed by Shyamalan has opened higher than “Knock at the Cabin.”

But “Knock at the Cabin” still marks Shyamalan’s seventh film as director to open No. 1. With a modest budget of \$20 million, “Knock at the Cabin” should easily turn a profit. The film, which drew mostly positive reviews from critics (68% on Rotten Tomatoes), added another \$7 million internationally.

Taking second place was “80 for Brady,” a comedy about four friends (Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Rita Moreno and Sally Field) who take a trip to the 2017 Super Bowl. It opened with an estimated \$12.5 million. Shortly after announcing his retirement from football (again), Tom Brady attended the film’s premiere.

Paramount Pictures employed a unique strategy in releasing “80 for Brady.” While many films have sought to capitalize on higher ticket prices through large-format or 3-D screenings or surge pricing, which films like “The Batman” have tried, Paramount went the other direction on “80 for Brady.” The studio partnered with exhibitors, including the largest chains, to play “80 for Brady” at matinee prices to help lure its largely older audience. (Half of ticket buyers were over the age of 55.)

It seemed to work. At a time when comedies have struggled mightily in theaters, “80 for Brady” (with a production budget of \$28 million) had one of the best openings for a live-action comedy in years. Discount pricing is to continue for the rest of the film’s run.

“Avatar: The Way of Water” slide to third with \$10.8 million domestically in its eighth weekend. The film’s No. 1 streak matched the run of 2009’s “Avatar.” In the last four decades, only those two by Cameron and his “Titanic” (1997) have had such sustained reigns atop the box office.

“The Way of Water” continues to perform especially strongly overseas, where its \$27.9 million this weekend pushed its overall total to \$2.17 billion worldwide. That puts it at fourth highest gross of all-time; Cameron — with two “Avatar” films and “Titanic” — now accounts for three of the top four.

“BTS: Yet to Come in Cinemas” took in \$5.1 million to land in fifth place. The BTS concert film is drawn from their October 2022 performance in Busan, South Korea — a send-off show before the group began a two-year hiatus. It opened in 1,111 locations.

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

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1. "Knock at the Cabin," \$14.2 million.
2. "80 for Brady," \$12.5 million.
3. "Avatar: The Way of Water," \$10.8 million.
4. "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," \$8 million.
5. "BTS: Yet to Come in Cinemas," \$5.1 million.
6. "A Man Called Otto," \$4.2 million.
7. "M3gan," \$3.8 million.
8. "Missing," \$3.7 million.
9. "The Chosen Season 3 Finale," \$3.6 million.
10. "Pathaan," \$2.8 million.

Biden's State of the Union to tout policy wins on economy

By ZEKE MILLER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will use his second State of the Union address on Tuesday to remind Americans of how their lives have been improved over his first two years in office, as he tries to confront pessimism in the country and navigate the tricky politics of a newly divided Washington.

Rather than laying out major new policy proposals, Biden was expected to devote much of his speech to highlighting his efforts over the past two years to create jobs, fight inflation and improve the nation's infrastructure. The speech comes as Biden is honing his pitch to voters ahead of his expected announcement in the next few months that he will seek another term in office despite voter frustrations about the direction of the nation.

"Next week, I'll be reporting on the state of the Union," Biden said Friday after a stronger-than-expected jobs report that saw the unemployment rate drop to the lowest level in more than 53 years. "But today, I'm happy to report that the state of the Union and the state of our economy is strong."

Biden's remarks from the House rostrum will take place in a sharply different context from a year ago. Republicans now control the chamber, rendering it unlikely that any significant legislation reaches Biden's desk. The newly empowered GOP is itching to undo many of Biden's achievements and raising the specter of persistent investigations — including into the recent discoveries of classified documents from his time as vice president at his home and former office.

"Jobs are up, wages are up, inflation is down, and COVID no longer controls our lives," Biden told the Democratic National Committee on Friday. "But now, the extreme MAGA Republicans in the House of Representatives have made it clear they intend to put it all at risk. They intend to destroy it."

The president, meanwhile, is shifting his focus from legislating to implementing the massive infrastructure and climate bills passed in the last Congress — and to trying to make sure Americans credit him for the improvements.

"These things don't sell themselves," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Sunday on NBC. "And it's one of the reasons I'm really looking forward to that State of the Union address. I will say that there have been so many accomplishments under this administration. It can be difficult to list them in a distilled way."

While large-scale bipartisanship remains unlikely, Biden was set to reissue his 2022 appeal for Congress to get behind his "unity agenda" of actions to address the opioid epidemic, mental health, veterans' health and cancer.

Biden will also call on lawmakers to responsibly raise the debt limit and keep the government funded. The president has remained opposed to negotiating to avoid default, while Republicans are pushing for unspecified deep spending cuts to reduce the deficit.

Biden, according to two administration officials who requested anonymity to preview the speech, was also expected to discuss his decision to shoot down a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon Saturday, as part of a broader section on countering China's more assertive economic and military actions around the world.

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His address last year came just days after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine and many in the West doubted Kyiv's ability to avoid a swift routing. Now the war is on the cusp of entering its second year, and under Biden the U.S. and allies have sent tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to bolster Ukraine's defenses. Now the president must make the case — both at home and abroad — for sustaining that coalition as the war drags on.

Meanwhile, inflation, which rose precipitously last year in part because of soaring energy prices from the war, has begun to ease.

Still, only a quarter of U.S. adults say things in the country are headed in the right direction, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research; about three-quarters say things are on the wrong track.

Similarly, views of the national economy remain deeply negative, with 24% calling the national economy good and 76% calling it poor. Forty-one percent of Democrats and 8% of Republicans call the economy good. The figures are similar to when Biden delivered his State of the Union address last year, but an adjustment from Biden's first year in office when Americans were more optimistic; about half said they thought the country was headed in the right direction when the president took office.

At the same time, 57% say their personal financial situation is good. That's unchanged since December but has eroded slightly since earlier last year. No less than 62% of Americans had called their personal financial situation good in AP-NORC polls conducted from late 2019 through spring of 2022.

Two years after Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol by pro-Trump rioters, a protective fence was reinstalled Sunday around the Capitol ahead of Biden's address.

After the speech, Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and his Cabinet plan to hold over 30 events in two days to drive the message home to the American people in their communities. Biden will visit Wisconsin to discuss job creation on Wednesday and on Thursday will be in Tampa, Florida to talk about his efforts to lower prescription drug costs and protect Social Security and Medicare.

"During the State of the Union, President Biden will outline how the past two years has seen historic job growth, falling inflation, higher wages, and record investments coming back to America," the White House said. "The economic travel blitz showcases how the president's vision is creating jobs, rebuilding our infrastructure, lowering costs for families, tackling climate change, investing in our future and delivering for families too often left behind."

The travel follows Biden's stops last week in Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia focused on rail and water infrastructure projects funded by the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law.

Cubans respond with zeal to new US migration policy

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — In barely a week, 25-year-old engineer Marcos Marzo went from riding his small electric motorcycle past the low buildings of Havana's Vedado district to traveling the mega-highways of Florida, amazed by the towering high-rises and giant supermarkets.

A close relative told Marzo on Jan. 21 that he had applied online to sponsor the young engineer's trip to Florida as required by the new parole program for Cuban migrants set up by the Biden administration. The next day the sponsorship had been confirmed and the day after that it was approved.

With his printed authorization in hand and a small blue suitcase, Marzo climbed aboard a plane to Hialeah last Friday, shaken by the speed of it all.

"It has been a very hard, that in seven days your life changes so drastically, it fills you with hope, but at the same time it fills you with dread," Marzo told The Associated Press before leaving for what he knew would be a personal watershed.

Overwhelmed by thousands of Cubans crowding its southern border after making the dangerous trip through Central America and an increase in makeshift boats crossing the Florida Straits, the United States in early January approved a policy change that makes migrants request a permit, or parole, online before arriving with the sponsorship of a relative or acquaintance in the U.S.

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Cubans, who qualify for the program along with Nicaraguans, Haitians and Venezuelans, have responded with zeal, launching a search for sponsors and long lines to obtain documents. The program's backers hope it will help would-be migrants avoid the risks of the route through Mexico -- plagued by traffickers -- and bring order to the migrant flow.

"This option has come like a light," said Marzo, who had been living with his parents in Havana. Now in the U.S., his dream is to do a master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and work as an engineer, which he says is his passion.

According to figures from U.S. border authorities, in the 2021-2022 fiscal year -- which began in October last year and ended in September -- officials had a record 224,000 encounters with Cuban migrants on the Mexico border. In October 2022 there were 29,878 Cuban migrants stopped, in November 35,881 and in December 44,064.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard intercepted 6,182 Cubans trying to arrive by sea in fiscal year 2021-2022. Add to that 4,795 in the past three months.

All the figures are records and come amid a serious economic crises on the island caused by the coronavirus pandemic, inefficiencies in economic reforms and a radical tightening of U.S. sanctions, which seek to pressure its government to change its model. Blackouts, shortages, inflation, long fuel lines and dollarization marked parts of 2021 and 2022 in Cuba, while the country saw its first street demonstrations in decades with thousands of people demanding an end of the power outages.

Until Jan. 5, Cubans who arrived at the northern border of Mexico obtained permits that granted them entry into U.S. territory, assuming there was a credible fear that prevented them from returning to the island. Later they usually ended up with refugee benefits and a year after that the protection of the Cuban Adjustment Act.

Then the Biden administration unveiled its new policy: 30,000 migrants will be accepted each month from Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Haiti. The migrants can stay for up to two years but must have a sponsor already in place in the United States. Those who risk reaching the borders without permission would be deported and not be able to enter U.S. territory for five years.

There are still questions about the program, including how many people from each of the four countries will be accepted.

And the program is not without controversy in Cuba amid the migrant boom in recent months, since many people had already began their journeys toward the United States on the previous route. Some had even sold houses and cars to make the journey through Central America, which begins with a flight to Nicaragua and continues up through Mexico to the U.S. border. It is a route plagued by dangers and human traffickers.

Yudith Cardozo, a 46-year-old homemaker, said the new parole program is "a unique opportunity" that could save lives.

"Nicaragua is a total risk, Mexico, all that journey is a total risk," she said.

Marzo acknowledged that he had considered migrating by the route of "the volcanoes," as Cubans popularly call the Central American journey, but his parents talked him out of it. The number of people who have died on the journey is unknown.

Cardozo, speaking while waiting in front of a government office to obtain birth certificates and a criminal record certificate, said a relative in the U.S. had initiated the process as sponsor her, her 16-year-old son and her husband, but in three weeks they had gotten no response.

Many Cubans wanting to migrate cannot apply for the program because they lack a sponsor in the U.S.

On social media, memes have spread rapidly about Cubans rediscovering distant cousins or previously unknown uncles in the United States, and the U.S. Embassy warned Cubans to be careful to avoid fraud and even human trafficking.

Meanwhile, Cubans are crowding public offices to request passports and other documents, in some cases forming lines before dawn. The AP found that the postage stamps needed for the process have become scarce.

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Some experts defend the program but acknowledge that without an upturn in the Cuban economy it is unlikely to reduce the record number of departures.

Biden's widespread use of humanitarian parole has been criticized forcefully by advocates for more restrictive immigration policies, including Stephen Miller, a former senior adviser to President Donald Trump. Texas and 19 other Republican-led states have sued halt the policy, arguing it is effectively an amnesty for 360,000 people a year. Many on the left welcome the policy but caution that it cannot be used a substitute for asylum. .

The parole program "will help to a certain extent to make Cuban migration safer, more orderly and legal," said William LeoGrande, a political scientist at the American University in Washington. "But the number of Cubans trying to come to the United States right now is so huge that the parole program is not big enough to meet the demand."

How the cases in Alex Murdaugh's murder trial are shaping up

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

Two weeks into the double murder trial of South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh, prosecutors haven't presented any direct evidence that he killed his wife and son at their home in June 2021.

There is no confession, no surveillance camera footage, no recording of the victims' final moments.

If found guilty of murdering his wife, Maggie, 52, and their son, Paul, 22, Murdaugh faces 30 years to life in prison without parole. The disgraced lawyer, who also faces about 100 other charges ranging from stealing money from clients to insurance fraud, has adamantly denied fatally shooting his wife and son.

Murdaugh's lawyers said he was visiting his ailing mother on the night of the murders and police wrongly focused on him from the start, ignoring the possibility that anyone else killed them.

HOW ARE PROSECUTORS MAKING THEIR CASE?

Prosecutors are trying to build a mountain of circumstantial evidence so high it removes any reasonable doubt with jurors that Murdaugh is guilty.

In seven days of testimony, prosecutors have presented crime scene photographs, guns collected from Murdaugh's home, cellphone data and a video of Murdaugh wearing different clothes less than three hours before the time that he said he discovered the bodies at their Colleton County home.

They've also shown a video the son took five minutes before the victims suddenly stopped using their cellphones in which family friends say they can hear the voices of all three Murdaughs. Alex Murdaugh told investigators early in the case that he wasn't there.

They contend Murdaugh shot the two to distract attention from his other crimes, for which he is awaiting trial.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CRIME SCENE EVIDENCE?

The evidence at the scene is key to unraveling what happened before Maggie and Paul Murdaugh were found shot with at least one bullet to the head by two different guns.

State agents drove two hours from Columbia to swarm the Murdaugh home the night of the killings, taking photos of blood spots, shoe prints and weapons casings. They collected guns, tested Murdaugh's hands for gunshot residue and took DNA swabs.

"The crime scene is kind of a temporary thing. Once the crime scene has processed, you can't go back to it. So ... you really try to cover absolutely everything while you're there," said Kenneth Moses, a forensic scientist who led the crime scene investigations unit at the San Francisco Police Department and now works as a consultant, mostly for criminal defendants.

But there were things that weren't done. In cross-examination, agents have said they didn't test shower and sink drains for blood. They did not search the home of Murdaugh's mother for months even though that's where he was before he said he found the bodies. And they didn't preserve tire tracks.

Defense lawyers are looking for a mistake, or potential mistake, that will resonate with a jury, Moses said.

It's "different than police, who don't care about juries at all. They're looking to make an arrest," Moses said.

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WHAT ABOUT CELLPHONE EVIDENCE?

Murdaugh wasn't charged with murder until 13 months after the killings. Through testimony, finally getting data from Paul Murdaugh's phone appears to be a key development around that time.

Agents testified they couldn't pull off the data off Paul Murdaugh's phone until advances in technology got past the security features Apple puts on iPhones.

The phone contained a 50-second video Paul Murdaugh took about 8:45 p.m. near the dog kennels where both bodies were found. His friends testified they heard all three Murdaugh's voices. Alex Murdaugh told police at least twice he was not at the kennels that night.

But cellphone evidence appears to have helped the defense, too.

Alex Murdaugh turned his cellphone over to investigators and evidence has it at his SUV still parked at the house at the same time his wife's cellphone was being thrown on the side of the road a half-mile (800 meters) from the property, defense lawyers said.

WHO IS ALEX MURDAUGH?

Both sides are trying to get their version of Murdaugh, who comes from a family that's well-known in local judicial circles, before the jury.

The defense wants to portray a loving family man and has asked any witness who knew the Murdaughs about their relationships. All have said Murdaugh and his wife appeared happy together and Alex Murdaugh was a doting father.

Prosecutors are trying to show an attorney living a double life who was so scared it would be discovered he stole millions of dollars that he committed the killings to try to buy time to cover up his other crimes. They asked every officer who encountered Murdaugh after he found the bodies of his wife or son if he was crying and all said he seems upset and distraught, but with no tears.

WHAT DOES THE DEFENSE SAY?

Defense lawyer Dick Harpootlian contends prosecutors incorrectly locked in on Murdaugh's guilt from the start and have tried to jam bits of evidence that can be explained away or leave an incomplete picture into a story that frames the wrong man.

"There's no direct evidence. There's no eyewitnesses. There's nothing on camera. There's no fingerprints. There's no forensics tying him to the crime. None," Harpootlian said.

Europe bans Russian diesel, other oil products over Ukraine

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Europe imposed a ban Sunday on Russian diesel fuel and other refined oil products, slashing energy dependency on Moscow and seeking to further crimp the Kremlin's fossil fuel earnings as punishment for invading Ukraine.

The ban comes along with a price cap agreed by the Group of Seven allied democracies. The goal is allowing Russian diesel to keep flowing to countries like China and India and avoiding a sudden price rise that would hurt consumers worldwide, while reducing the profits funding Moscow's budget and war.

Diesel is key for the economy because it is used to power cars, trucks carrying goods, farm equipment and factory machinery. Diesel prices have been elevated due to recovering demand after the COVID-19 pandemic and limits on refining capacity, contributing to inflation for other goods worldwide.

The new sanctions create uncertainty about prices as the 27-nation European Union finds new supplies of diesel from the U.S., Middle East and India to replace those from Russia, which at one point delivered 10% of Europe's total diesel needs. Those are longer journeys than from Russia's ports, stretching available tankers.

Prices also could be driven up by reviving demand from China as the economy rebounds after the end of draconian COVID-19 restrictions.

The price cap of \$100 per barrel for diesel, jet fuel and gasoline is to be enforced by barring insurance and shipping services from handling diesel priced over the limit. Most of those companies are located in Western countries.

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It follows a \$60-per-barrel cap on Russian crude that took effect in December and is supposed to work the same way. Both the diesel and oil caps could be tightened later.

"Once we have these price caps set, we can squeeze the Russian price and deny them, deny (President Vladimir) Putin money for his war without a price spike that's going to hurt Western economies and developing economies," said Thomas O'Donnell, a global fellow with the Washington-based Wilson Center.

The diesel price cap will not bite immediately because it was set at about what Russian diesel trades for. Russia's chief problem now will be finding new customers, not evading the price ceiling. However, the cap aims to prevent Russian gains from any sudden price spikes in refined oil products.

Analysts say there might be a price bump initially as markets sort out the changes. But they say the embargo should not cause a price spike if the cap works as intended and Russian diesel keeps flowing to other countries.

Diesel fuel at the pump has been flat since the start of December, costing 1.80 euros per liter (\$7.37 per gallon) as of Jan. 30, according to the weekly oil market report issued by the European Union's executive commission. Pump prices in Germany, the EU's largest economy, fell 2.6 cents to 1.83 euros per liter (\$7.48 per gallon) as of Jan. 31.

The ban provides for a 55-day grace period for diesel loaded on tankers before Sunday, a step aimed at avoiding ruffling markets. European Union officials say importers have had time to adjust since the ban was announced in June.

Russia earned more than \$2 billion from diesel sales to Europe in December alone as importers appear to have stocked up with added purchases ahead of the ban.

Europe has already banned Russian coal and most crude oil, while Moscow has cut off most shipments of natural gas.

Tyre Nichols' mom, chief: Women on two sides of a tragedy

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Tyre Nichols' mother was just steps away from her son but couldn't hear his anguished cries.

Beaten and broken, struggling to survive, Nichols had called out for her as five Memphis Police Department officers punched him, kicked him, and hit him with a baton after a traffic stop on Jan. 7.

Nichols, 29, who lived with his mom and stepdad, had slipped from the grasp of police after he was pulled over, dragged from his car and hit with a stun gun. Caught minutes later near their home and beaten savagely by five officers, he screamed, "Mom! Mom!"

Moments later, the police knocked on the mother's door, but not to alert RowVaughn Wells that her child had been savagely beaten, according to Rodney Wells, her husband and Nichols' stepfather. They said Nichols had been arrested for driving under the influence and was being taken to the hospital. Police said they could not go to the hospital because their son was under arrest.

So they waited.

Memphis Police Director Cereyn "CJ" Davis, a mother herself, didn't find out what her officers had done to Nichols until later either. The lack of police supervisors on the scene would be noted by many after Nichols died Jan. 10.

The fact that no one felt compelled to fill her in until the following day raised questions about the culture of her department she would have to answer in the coming days, even as she was asking them herself.

"There were failures of who should render aid, who should have notified, who went to the mother's house, how they communicated," Davis told the Associated Press in a Jan. 27 interview. "Why did the chief get notified at 4 o'clock in the morning and the incident occurred at 8 o'clock the previous night?"

It was around that same time of 4 a.m. that RowVaughn Wells received a call from a doctor at the hospital where he had been taken, Rodney Wells said. The doctor told them to get to the hospital immediately.

When she got there, she found Nichols on life support. While Wells was seeing her son's battered body

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for the first time, Davis' police department was swinging into damage control.

The coming hours and days in Memphis would set the tone for America's latest reckoning over police brutality, with RowVaughn Wells and Cerelyn Davis on opposite sides of the same tragedy. Their lives would be altered, in dramatically different ways.

Wells and her family seethed, cried and mourned for Tyre Nichols, the happy-go-lucky skateboarder and amateur photographer who came to Memphis from California about a year ago. She ultimately hung on to the hope her son's fate might mean something, taking its place as it did in the long line of young Black men who have died at the hands of police.

Davis, the first Black woman to run the Memphis Police Department, faced heavy criticism. As she and other city officials came to grips with what had happened, they gradually took steps to hold the officers accountable, share the horror of the case with the public, and try to minimize the possibility that the incident could set off unrest in Memphis and beyond.

But she would be called out in vivid terms at Nichols' funeral as a beneficiary of the progress that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was in Memphis to fight for when he was shot to death more than half a century earlier.

At 6:03 a.m. on Jan. 8, the police department posted a vague statement on social media saying that Nichols had two "confrontations" with police. He had "complained of having a shortness of breath, at which time an ambulance was called to the scene," the statement said.

Wells knew better by then. She had seen him bruised, swollen, hooked up to machines.

Memphis' fire department later revealed that 27 minutes elapsed from the time emergency medics arrived on the scene to the moment when an ambulance took him to a hospital.

"When I walked into that hospital room, my son was already dead," Wells said during a Jan. 23 news conference.

Doubts about the police department's initial account only grew. A photo of a bruised Tyre in the hospital was distributed in the media. Activists questioned the department's account and pushed for release of the arrest video.

Nichols' family hired lawyer Ben Crump, known for representing the families of others struck down by police, including George Floyd. Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police in 2020 led to nationwide protests and raised the volume on calls for police reform.

Wells cried throughout a Jan. 17 memorial service for her son but would not speak publicly until later.

Gradually, a fuller portrait of Nichols emerged. He had lived with his mom and stepfather and made boxes at FedEx alongside Rodney Wells. He had two brothers, a sister and a 4-year-old son. He was an amateur photographer who loved sunsets and skateboarding.

Tyre had his mother's name tattooed on his arm.

"This man walked into a room, and everyone loved him," said Angelina Paxton, a friend who traveled from California for the service.

That same day, Memphis officials pledged to release video of the attack.

The five officers were fired Jan. 20 after an internal police investigation revealed violations of police rules, including excessive use of force, and failure to intervene and render aid.

In a statement, Davis called their actions "egregious."

The family met with authorities to see the video — horrific footage RowVaughn Wells said she was unable to watch at that meeting. Later, she warned parents to avoid showing it to their children.

Wells said she was inside her house at the time of the beating, waiting for Tyre to get home and give his customary cheerful greeting of "Hello parents!"

"For a mother to know that their child was calling them in their need, and I wasn't there for him, do you know how I feel right now?" Wells told media during a Jan. 27 news conference.

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"I wasn't there for my son. I was telling someone that I had this really bad pain in my stomach earlier, not knowing what had happened," she said. "But once I found out what happened, that was my son's pain I was feeling."

She also shared how an ordinary day had turned horrible.

Tyre, on the day of the arrest, had seen her pulling out some chicken before he left the house at around 3 p.m. to snap pictures of the sunset at a suburban park, she said.

"He said, 'Mom, are you cooking chicken tonight?' I said 'Yes.'"

"He said, 'How are you cooking it?'"

With sesame seeds.

"He loved that."

In a late-night video statement released Jan. 25, Davis said she had met with the Nichols family and offered her condolences. She promised to continue investigating other officers' actions.

"I am a mother, I am a caring human being, who wants the best for all of us," Davis said. "This is not just a professional failing. This is a failing of basic humanity."

Officers Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith were charged the next day — 19 days after Nichols' arrest. It's a length of time that Crump said should be a "blueprint" for other police agencies to follow when dealing with similar situations.

When asked about the charges, Rodney Wells told the AP that the family was "fine with it."

He also said his wife thought Davis was doing an "excellent" job.

Friday, Jan. 27 was the day Memphis and the nation had waited for — the video release.

Hours before it was posted by the city, Davis told the AP that the footage failed to show what still remains a mystery — why Nichols was stopped in the first place.

Officers were "already amped up, at about a 10," she said, when the video started. The members of the crime-suppression team known as the Scorpion unit were "aggressive, loud, using profane language and probably scared Mr. Nichols from the very beginning,"

"We don't know what happened," Davis said. "All we know is the amount of force that was applied in this situation was over the top."

Rodney Wells, Davis and community leaders had called for protests to be peaceful, in honor of King's belief in nonviolent action.

Protesters blocked an interstate bridge, but there was no violence. No property damage. No arrests.

Davis disbanded the Scorpion unit on Jan. 28, after "listening intently" to the Nichols family, community leaders and other officers on the team.

Crump said the Nichols family considered the move "appropriate and proportional to the tragic death of Tyre Nichols."

He also called it "a decent and just decision for all citizens of Memphis."

Tyre Nichols was laid to rest on Feb. 1. The funeral at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, delayed by icy weather, featured a rousing choir, a eulogy by the Rev. Al Sharpton and a visit by Vice President Kamala Harris.

Also present were relatives of Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, Botham Jean, Jalen Randle and Floyd — Black people who also had been cut down by police.

Harris praised Nichols' parents for their extraordinary strength, courage and grace throughout the ordeal.

In his eulogy, Sharpton said he had taken his daughter Ashley early that morning to the site of the former Lorraine Motel, a Black-owned business where King was shot on April 4, 1968. The motel is now the National Civil Rights Museum.

Sharpton noted the civil rights movement led by King opened doors for Black city workers in Memphis

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and elsewhere and said the five Black officers insulted King's legacy by beating Tyre to death.

Sharpton called out the officers and Davis, reminding them of those who marched, went to jail and died while fighting for racial equality.

"You didn't get on the police department by yourself. The police chief didn't get there by herself," he said.

Despite her grief, RowVaughn Wells spoke, too. Speaking from a lectern in the large church, she wiped away tears and said she believed her son "was sent here on an assignment from God."

"And I guess now his assignment is done. He's been taken home."

Someone in the audience yelled that Nichols was going to change the world.

"Yes," his mother said, nodding. "Yes."

And then, once again, she praised Davis for acting swiftly.

Today in History: FEB 6, Elizabeth II celebrates 70 years

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 6, the 37th day of 2023. There are 334 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 6, 1952, Britain's King George VI, 56, died at Sandringham House in Norfolk, England; he was succeeded as monarch by his 25-year-old elder daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth II.

On this date:

In 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, the United States won official recognition and military support from France with the signing of a Treaty of Alliance in Paris.

In 1788, Massachusetts became the sixth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1815, the state of New Jersey issued the first American railroad charter to John Stevens, who proposed a rail link between Trenton and New Brunswick. (The line, however, was never built.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, Fort Henry in Tennessee fell to Union forces.

In 1899, a peace treaty between the United States and Spain was ratified by the U.S. Senate.

In 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, was born in Tampico, Illinois.

In 1922, Cardinal Archille Ratti was elected pope; he took the name Pius XI.

In 1933, the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the so-called "lame duck" amendment, was proclaimed in effect by Secretary of State Henry Stimson.

In 1993, tennis Hall of Famer and human rights advocate Arthur Ashe died in New York at age 49.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed a bill changing the name of Washington National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Carl Wilson, a founding member of The Beach Boys, died in Los Angeles at age 51.

In 2000, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched her successful candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

In 2008, the Bush White House defended the use of the interrogation technique known as waterboarding, saying it was legal — not torture as critics argued — and had saved American lives.

Ten years ago: The U.S. Postal Service proposed eliminating Saturday mail delivery, an announcement that immediately drew protests from some lawmakers. At least nine people were killed by a tsunami that smashed into villages in the Solomon Islands, flattening dozens of homes in the South Pacific island chain. Toy maker Hasbro Inc. announced that Monopoly fans had voted online to add a cat token to the board game, replacing the iron.

Five years ago: Casino mogul Steve Wynn resigned as chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts amid sexual misconduct allegations. SpaceX's big new rocket blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center on its first test flight, carrying a red sports car on a route that would take it to the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Poland's president signed legislation making it a crime to blame Poland for Holocaust crimes committed by Nazi Germany.

One year ago: Queen Elizabeth II celebrated the 70th anniversary of her ascendance to the British throne, an unprecedented reign that made her a symbol of stability as the United Kingdom navigated an

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age of uncertainty. (She would die seven months later at age 96, and her son became King Charles III.)

Today's birthdays: Actor Mamie Van Doren is 92. Actor Mike Farrell is 84. Former NBC News anchorman Tom Brokaw is 83. Singer Fabian is 80. Actor Gayle Hunnicutt is 80. Actor Michael Tucker is 78. Producer-director-writer Jim Sheridan is 74. Actor Jon Walmsley is 67. Actor Kathy Najimy is 66. Rock musician Simon Phillips (Toto) is 66. Actor-director Robert Townsend is 66. Actor Barry Miller is 65. Actor Megan Gallagher is 63. Rock singer Axl Rose (Guns N' Roses) is 61. Country singer Richie McDonald is 61. Singer Rick Astley is 57. Rock musician Tim Brown (Boo Radleys) is 54. Former ABC News anchor Amy Robach is 50. Actor Josh Stewart is 46. Actor Ben Lawson is 43. Actor Brandon Hammond is 39. Actor Crystal Reed (TV: "Teen Wolf") is 38. Actor Alice Greczyn (GREH'-chihn) is 37. Actor Anna Diop is 35. R&B singer/actor Tinashe is 30.