

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar 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

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

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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“If you do not enjoy a moment, you lose it forever. If you enjoy it, it is yours forever.”

Debasish Mridha

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.

Thursday, Feb. 9

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes and gravy, mixed vegetables, fruit.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken sandwich, fries.

Boys Basketball at Redfield (JV game 6 p.m. followed by varsity)

Girls Basketball hosts Elk Point-Jefferson. JV game at 4 p.m. followed by varsity)

FFA Alumni meeting, 7 p.m., Ag Room

The Bulletin by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

imated to be displaced.

- Donald Trump blasted the Club for Growth after his name was left off the guest list for the conservative anti-tax organization's annual donor retreat.

- About 200 Afghan legal workers who worked alongside the Justice Department in an effort to reform Afghanistan's legal system remain stranded in that country as their refugee applications in the U.S. go unanswered, legal officials told Newsweek.

- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un brought his daughter to a banquet hall filled with military officials to mark the 75th founding anniversary of the army in the latest sign that the middle-school-aged girl is being groomed as his successor.

- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Netherlands and Denmark both pledged with Germany to send more than 100 Leopard-1A5 battle tanks and support to Ukraine. Russian forces are highly unlikely now to attempt to cross the Dnieper River in Kherson as it could be "extremely complex and costly," the U.K. defense ministry said.

- President Joe Biden laid out his vision for the next two years during his State of the Union speech, but the Republican-led House could block several of his key priorities, experts said. He earned a standing ovation as both Republicans and Democrats showed their support for ensuring funding for Medicare and Social Security.

- The death toll in Turkey and Syria from the earthquake this week has surpassed 11,000, making it the deadliest natural disaster of the century. Many are still feared to be beneath the rubble, while thousands of people are esti-

Funding Available for Local Communities to Enhance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) announced today that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) 2023 grant application is now open.

Public outdoor recreation projects sponsored by city, county, township, and tribal governments are eligible to receive the grant money.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides up to 50 percent reimbursement for approved outdoor recreation projects that seek at least \$10,000 in grant assistance. Grants will be awarded for development or renovation of public outdoor recreation facilities or the acquisition of park land.

The application deadline is April 28, 2023.

LWCF funds are federal dollars that are apportioned to states by Congress to fund public outdoor recreation projects.

Application packets are available on the Game, Fish, and Parks website. For more information contact Grants Coordinator Randy Kittle at 605.773.5490 or by email at randy.kittle@state.sd.us

Groton City Council tables electric rate increase talk, reviews baseball/softball complex project

by Elizabeth Varin

A potential electrical rate increase was put on hold until the next City Council meeting after concerns about transparency were presented.

The Groton City Council tabled the second reading of an ordinance that would increase electric rates for most electric services by 1 penny per kilowatt hour. The increase follows an increase in electrical costs from one of the city's providers.

Doug Hamilton, who spoke earlier at the meeting about the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation's new concession stand project, brought up the fact that he had not seen the ordinance about the potential rate change published anywhere.

Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich said the city published the minutes that included the first reading of the ordinance, but is not required to publish the ordinance itself until after the second reading had occurred. At that point, it would be published in the newspaper and would be available on the city's website.

Hamilton countered that it would be a courtesy to the residents to publish an ordinance like that.

"Evidently not a soul in town will know until they get their bill," Hamilton said.

Council members were concerned about residents not knowing about the issue.

The rate change has been discussed before and has also been put off for as long as possible, said Councilman Kevin Nehls. The council has been concerned about putting the rate change into effect, especially during winter months. That is why the council had pushed so the change wouldn't take effect until March 1, Nehls said.

He added there should be more transparency in the process, though.

Mayor Scott Hanlon thanked Hamilton for bringing this to the council's attention. The City Council will have to look into getting information out to the public regarding what is included in ordinances, he added.

The second reading of the ordinance is set to be discussed again at the City Council's February 21 meeting, which will take place at City Hall.

Changes may also be coming to the baseball and softball complex on the west side of town.

Jarod Fliehs, vice president of the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation, presented a building plan for a new concession stand and bathroom facility. The building would have roughly the same footprint at the complex, but would be larger.

"Right now the bathrooms and concession stands are too small for what we need out there," Fliehs said.

Currently the building does not provide enough storage, leaving some items housed in the pump house, he said. The bathrooms are also not big enough for the demand at the facility.

Changes may be needed sooner rather than later, Fliehs said.

Foundation members have recently been told that Groton will host the 2024 State Junior Legion Tournament, he said. That will expedite the timeline for the project.

Fliehs said he hopes that concrete work on the project can begin in the fall of 2023 as the foundation does not want the concession stand and bathrooms out of commission in the summer months. Work can then continue through the winter to get the building up.

Based on construction bids the foundation has compiled, the project is estimated to cost around \$163,000, Fliehs said.

The foundation has already received some donations from trusts and members of the community, said Doug Hamilton, foundation treasurer and Legion liaison. After the upcoming fundraiser, the Dueling Duos scheduled for April 1 at the Groton Legion, the foundation could have nearly \$50,000 to put toward the project.

The council and foundation representatives discussed possible grant funding to shore up the gap in funding.

Councilman Nehls asked about how much the foundation would need from the city to complete the

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project.

If the project starts in the fall and continues through the winter, Fliehs replied, funding could come from both the 2023 and 2024 fiscal year budgets.

Hamilton added once the word gets out that the city and foundation are committed to the project, more monetary donations could come in.

The city will look into possible grant funding for the project, and Finance Officer Heinrich said he would reach out to the foundation with what he finds.

Concerns were presented, both at the start of the meeting and during the baseball and softball facility discussion, about replacing the electrical hookups at the City Park.

Currently only one of the hookups for campers at the park is 50 amp, Mayor Hanlon said. The city needs to fix that to potentially bring in more campers and allow for more use at the park.

Hanlon asked the finance office to look into getting the issue fixed.

The two-and-a-half hour meeting was adjourned, but not before the City Council approved hiring a new police officer. The council discussed the hire in executive session. Afterward, the council approved hiring Benjamin Smith at \$28 per hour with a probationary 50 cent increase after six months.

The council continued discussion about 2023 summer salaries, but voted to table the topic until the council's next meeting.

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Conde National League

Feb. 6 Team Standings: Tigers 19, Cubs 15, Pirates 14, Giants 13, Braves 12, Mets 11

Men's High Games: Ryan Bethke 216, Chad Furney 210, Aaron Severson 203, Butch Farmen 200

Men's High Series: Ryan Bethke 562, Butch Farmen 524, Chad Furney 523

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 176, Sam Bahr 152, Vickie Kramp 150

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 491, Sam Bahr 425, Vickie Kramp 396

You're Invited!

RESET
women's conference

ROSE HILL CHURCH
12099 ROSE HILL RD, LANGFORD SD
SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023
9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

*Women and girls of all generations
are welcome to enjoy a day to reset.*

GUEST SPEAKERS
PASTORS LISA PALMER
AND MICAH LOMBARDI, A
MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEAM



REGISTER ONLINE
THIS IS A FREE EVENT.
REGISTER BY SCANNING
THE QR CODE OR AT
ROSEHILLEFC.COM

CHILDCARE WILL BE AVAILABLE

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The newly formed junior drum line received a standing ovation after its performance Tuesday night at the boys basketball game. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

GHS Boys' Basketball

Groton Area beats North Central

Groton Area's boys basketball team defeated North Central Tuesday night in Groton, 62-21. The Tigers led at the quarters tops at 22-6, 36-10 and 51-21.

Lane Tietz led the Tigers with 12 points, one rebound, two assists and two steals. Jacob Zak had nine points, four rebounds, two assists, two steals and two blocks. Tate Larson had eight points, seven rebounds, three assists and one steal. Gage Sippel had eight points and three rebounds. Cole Simon had six points, two rebounds and three steals. Logan Ringgenberg had five points, three rebounds, one steal and one block. Cade Larson had three points and two assists. Taylor Diegel had three points, two rebounds and two assists. Keegan Tracy had three points, two rebounds and two assists. Tyson Parrow had three points. Ryder Johnson had two points, two rebounds, one assist and one steal. Holden Sippel had one rebound and one assist. Blake Pauli had one assist.

Groton Area made 16 of 25 two-pointers for 64 percent, nine of 19 three-pointers for 47 percent, three of eight free throws for 38 percent, had 27 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 16 assists, 10 steals, eight team fouls and three blocks.

Cole Bukaske and Bastien Delalande each led the Thunder with seven points while Raynor Sprague had three and Dawson Walz and Spencer Buechler each had two points. North Central made five of 25 field goals for 20 percent, eight of 11 free throws for 72 percent, had nine team fouls and 19 turnovers.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 17-0, 29-7 and 39-13 en route to a 47-19 junior varsity game win. Ryder Johnson led the Tigers with nine points followed by Logan Ringgenberg with 10, Keegan Tracy had eight, Turner Thompson and Taylor Diegel each had four points and adding two points apiece were Dillon Abeln, Blake Pauli, Holden Sippel, Gage Sippel and Logan Pearson.

Cooper Oxner led the Thunder with 11 points while Daniel Bonen and Harrison Beyers each had four points.









Both games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The junior varsity game was sponsored by Larry and Val Flihs. The varsity game was sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, 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, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting.

- Paul Kosel









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Girls Region 1A Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	<u>PTS</u>
1	 Sisseton	13	2	.867	44.133
2	 Groton Area	11	5	.688	42.250
3	 Milbank	10	5	.667	42.133
4	 Aberdeen Roncalli	8	8	.500	41.125
5	 Waubay/Summit	8	9	.471	39.059
6	 Redfield	6	10	.375	38.625
7	 Tiospa Zina	5	11	.312	38.312
8	 Webster Area	6	11	.353	38.294

Boys Region 1A Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	<u>PTS</u>
1	 Waubay/Summit	13	2	.867	43.333
2	 Groton Area	9	4	.692	42.000
3	 Tiospa Zina	8	7	.533	41.467
4	 Milbank	7	6	.538	41.231
5	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	7	.562	40.688
6	 Redfield	8	8	.500	39.812
7	 Webster Area	4	12	.250	37.812
8	 Sisseton	1	16	.059	36.294

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Things are getting busier out here in Washington! This past week, our committee assignments were announced, which marks the beginning of a lot of work to come over the next two years. You'll have to keep reading to see where I landed! We also met with several leaders from around the world, and leaders within our school and agriculture communities in South Dakota. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Members of the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association and school board members with the Associated School Boards of South Dakota.

Meetings this past week: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al-Hussein Ibn Abdulllah of Jordan; Several Romanian Members of Parliament including Senator Titus Corlățean, Chairman of the Romanian Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, Former Prime Minister of Kosovo; Sandra L. Thompson, Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency; Robert Fisher, Senior Vice President of Federal Government Affairs at Verizon; Catherine MacGregor, CEO of ENGIE; and Mouloud Said, Representative of Western Sahara to the United States. I also had the opportunity to meet with delegations from several African nations: Burundi, Kenya and the Togolese Republic.

We had our weekly Senate Bible Study (Philippians 1:6 was our verse of the week). On Thursday morning, we also hosted the National Prayer Breakfast. For the past few years, I've served in leadership helping to organize this event. Our leadership group privately met with the president and vice president before the ceremony to welcome them to the National Prayer Breakfast.

Each year, the National Prayer Breakfast provides an opportunity for us to come together, Republicans and Democrats alike, and pray for the success of our nation. The tradition of the National Prayer Breakfast dates back to President Dwight Eisenhower, who at the time confided in his close friend, Senator Frank Carlson, that the White House was the "loneliest house" he had ever lived in. Senator Carlson responded: "Mr. President, I think this may be the right time for you come meet with our prayer group." And that's just what President Eisenhower did. In this group, he found individuals who were willing to offer their non-partisan support to our president, the leader of the free world, because they knew that's what was best for the country. The job of the president isn't easy and you often find yourself in the midst of difficult political situations. However, as the president, you should still be able to count on our prayers for the success of our country. The National Prayer Breakfast provides an opportunity for us to recognize our common bonds and to offer our prayers for one another, our president and our nation.

Met with South Dakotans from: Mitchell, Mobridge, Pierre, White River and Woonsocket.

Topics discussed: Our nation's debt ceiling, foreign purchases of land in the United States, spectrum (more information on this in the coming weeks) and our new committee assignments.

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Legislation introduced: This past week, I reintroduced the PASS Act. This bipartisan legislation would blacklist China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from investing in, purchasing or otherwise acquiring American farmland and ag businesses.

Securing our land is critical to maintaining our national security. This bill, which I introduced with Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) has received good support on Capitol Hill and within the agricultural community in South Dakota. We are hopeful we can get the PASS Act included in a larger package and see this important piece of legislation signed into law. You can read more about the PASS Act [here](#).

Resolution passed: My friend Senator John Thune and I passed a resolution this week honoring the SDSU Jackrabbit football team for their national championship win against the NDSU Bison. You can read the resolution [here](#). Go Jacks!

Committees assigned: Committee assignments for the 118th Congress were announced this week. I will be serving on the following committees:

- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Select Committee on Intelligence
- Veterans' Affairs
- Indian Affairs

You can read more about each committee [here](#). I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve on these five key committees on behalf of the people of South Dakota.

Votes taken: 3 - we are a month into the new Congress and Democrats are off to a slow start. These votes were non-controversial. Two of them were for positions on the Board of Directors for the U.S. Institute of Peace. The other was a resolution supporting the observation of January as National Trafficking and Modern Slavery Prevention Month, a resolution that would normally move through unanimous consent and not require a formal vote and the usage of floor time. While it could be easy to get frustrated at the dysfunction, it's important to remember that every day our Senate Democrat colleagues propose a light schedule, the less damage their proposals can inflict on our nation.

Classified briefings: With my new assignment on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I will begin to receive a much higher volume of classified briefings. Most of our meetings are all classified business – I had three classified Intel meetings already this past week! We also had our bi-weekly cyber education seminar and a Senate Armed Services Committee briefing on the Chinese surveillance balloon and conflict in Ukraine.

Unlike some in the Executive Branch, don't expect to find any classified documents in my home or next to my Corvette. These documents belong in a secure compartmentalized information facility (or SCIF) and nowhere else!

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen and Rapid City, including having a booth all week at the Black Hills Stock Show.

Steps taken this week: 51,305 steps (or 24.05 miles).

Groton Area January Students of the Month



Jackson Dinger
Senior



Claire Heinrich
Junior



Brooklyn Hansen
Sophomore



Lucas Carda
Freshman



Emerlee Jones
8th Grade



Sydney Locke
7th Grade



Kolton Antonsen
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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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
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
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 Moberge-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



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GDI Subscribers can watch for free



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Medical students, community protest potential merger between Sanford and Fairview

BY: GRACE DENG - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 11:23 AM

MINNEAPOLIS — Medical students, health care workers and community members gathered outside a University of Minnesota building on Friday, braving a wind chill of minus 14 degrees to rally against a planned merger between Sanford Health and Fairview Health Services.

"The values of Fairview and Sanford are very different from the University of Minnesota," said Brianna Wenande, a second-year U of M medical student who attended the protest. "We care about basic science research and helping patients, and ultimately, Sanford and Fairview ... care about profits."

Medical students at the rally said the merger could impact University of Minnesota's standards: The top 175 medical schools are ranked by U.S. News & World Report, and Sanford School of Medicine in South Dakota doesn't make the rankings, whereas the University of Minnesota Medical Center is the third best primary care school and the 43rd best medical school for research.

Sanford has pledged to follow through on the university's commitments for the next two years, but students say they're also concerned about the future of ongoing research at the university once Sanford's pledge is up.

Austen Ott, a second-year medical student who wants to become a rural family physician, worried rural hospitals would close due to the merger.

"Closure of the hospitals out in these areas not only impacts the people who live there directly, but it has kind of a domino effect because people aren't able to live out in these places," Ott said.

The rally was led by medical students from Students for a National Health Plan, but health care workers from various other organizations were there in support, such as the Minnesota Nurses Association. Some people were simply there to support the cause, like Mary Pogatshnik, a 50-year-old Spanish professor at the University of Minnesota.

"Health care costs will go up for everybody," Pogatshnik said. "A lot of people who are already rich will get richer and quality of health care will go down."

A 2013 merger proposed between the health care giants fell apart due to opposition from former Attorney



Medical students and community members gather outside of a University of Minnesota building to protest a potential merger between Sanford and Fairview. (Grace Deng/Minnesota Reformer)

General Lori Swanson and state lawmakers. Swanson didn't want Sanford, an out-of-state organization, to run the Fairview-owned University of Minnesota hospital and potentially use taxpayer dollars to expand into other states.

Second-year student Christina Lan, who spoke at the rally, said she doesn't believe the CEOs because of the history of past mergers — and how much the CEOs both make. M Health Fairview's CEO made \$3.55 million in 2019 and the former Sanford CEO — who was given \$49 million upon retirement in 2021 — was paid \$5.1 million in 2020.

"It's really hard for me to take the words of people who are amassing such wealth and really believe they care about the community when they're profiting through this," said Lan, who added that she always planned to work in Minnesota after graduation — but isn't sure she wants to if the merger happens.

The University of Minnesota recently announced that it's seeking to regain ownership of its health care facilities from Fairview by building a new hospital, but medical students at the rally said that it doesn't address their concerns.

The students want Attorney General Keith Ellison to block the merger. Ellison has held several public listening sessions about the merger and has asked for a delay of the merger, but has not yet moved to block the merger entirely. Students are hope to see passage of a bill in the state Legislature (HF 402) that allows the state Department of Health to block a health care system merger if it does not "benefit the public good" or "improve health care outcomes."

Grace Deng is a reporting intern with the Minnesota Reformer. They're in their final year at Northwestern University, where they study journalism, legal studies and Asian American Studies. The Seattle native has previously been a statehouse intern with USA TODAY Network Ohio and an editorial fellow with Washingtonian Magazine.

Black Hills foundation awarded \$3 million for housing work

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 9:53 AM

The Bush Foundation, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, is awarding more than \$3 million to the Black Hills Area Community Foundation to address affordable housing problems in Rapid City, according to a news release.

The award includes a \$1 million grant to support a Strategic Housing Initiative, a \$2 million investment in the Rapid City Strategic Housing Trust Fund, and a \$150,000 grant to evaluate, report and strategize around affordable housing work.

The award is the Bush Foundation's largest program-related investment in South Dakota.

The Rapid City Strategic Housing Trust Fund is a revolving loan fund designed to increase the inventory of affordable housing by providing low-interest loans to developers for multi-family housing.

"We are so excited to continue to work with the Bush Foundation through our Housing Initiative," said Liz Hamburg, CEO of the Black Hills Area Community Foundation, in the news release. "This is a long-term investment from the Bush Foundation that helps us continue the work of the Strategic Housing Initiative and spread the local housing trust fund model across the region."

Bill would require trespassing hunters and anglers to pay landowners

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 11:07 AM

A bill that would require hunters and anglers to pay a landowner for trespassing on their property, in addition to fines already enforced by the state, passed the South Dakota House Ag and Natural Resources Committee on an 8-5 vote Tuesday at the Capitol in Pierre.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Neal Pinnow, R-Lemmon, aims to deter unauthorized hunting and fishing on private land. Any hunter or angler found to be hunting, fishing or trapping on private property would be required to pay \$150 for unknowingly doing so, and \$500 for knowingly doing so.

"This at least recognizes something was taken from them and attempts to compensate them for that loss," Pinnow said of landowners.

Those fines would be atop the fines the state already charges trespassing hunters – anywhere from \$100 for a game bird to \$10,000 for a trophy elk.

Pinnow said the Department of Game, Fish and Parks told him there are fewer than 75 fines for hunters intentionally trespassing each year in the state. The state does not fine for unintentional trespassing, but a landowner can sue a hunter for doing so.

The bill not only received support from landowners, but also some hunter and angler groups.

With all the GPS mapping technology available, there is no justification for unknowingly trespassing onto private land, according to Paul Lepisto, South Dakota's conservation coordinator for the Izaak Walton League of America.

"To say you don't know where you're at is not a valid excuse anymore," Lepisto said.

While the bill received no opponent testimony, some committee members expressed concerns.

For example, in South Dakota, a hunter can shoot a pheasant in a ditch alongside private land. If the bird falls onto the private land, the hunter can retrieve it. Rep. Randy Gross, R-Elkton, asked how a hunter with the bird in hand would prove he didn't shoot it on private land.

"If I understand, this bill presumes they're guilty," Gross said.

The bill will now move to the full House for a vote.

Conservation bill passes 13-0

Additionally, a bill that would return any interest earned in the state's \$2.4 million conservation districts fund back to that fund passed 13-0.

The interest accrued in the fund currently goes to the state's general fund.

The bill aims to ensure the state conservation districts' fund remains sustainable and able to support its intended purpose, which is to conserve and protect the state's natural resources.

There are 68 conservation districts that utilize the fund for habitat restoration and conservation efforts in South Dakota.

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.



Inside the state Capitol in Pierre. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Bills regulating medical marijuana 'pop-up' clinics pass House committee

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 2:35 PM

Two bills regulating medical marijuana "pop-up clinics" passed the House Health and Human Services committee Tuesday morning at the Capitol in Pierre.

The bills, one that would regulate pop-up clinic locations and another that would regulate advertisements and restrict telehealth meetings to obtain a medical marijuana card, passed through the committee 10-2 and 9-4, respectively. Both bills are sponsored by Fred Deutsch, R-Florence.

The issue of the clinics popped up at the Legislature's Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee last year. Pop-up clinics have appeared in several businesses across the state, including the Hampton Inn in Wauertown, the St. Charles Lounge in Pierre and even a strip club, Deutsch said.

"I don't see my doctor in a strip club," Deutsch said. "I don't know if any of you do, but I don't. And I don't think any South Dakotan should."

Chris Qualm, of the Department of Health, told the committee last October that hundreds of patient applications come in over the course of a few days whenever a pop-up clinic takes place. The department said that's how it typically finds out a pop-up clinic happened.

The bill would limit the medical marijuana assessment of a patient to be in a "licensed health care facility," such as clinics and hospitals, Deutsch said. Proponents include lobbyists from the South Dakota police chiefs and sheriffs associations, as well as Protecting South Dakota Kids, a political action committee that successfully opposed the legalization of recreational marijuana in the November general election.

However, opponents argue the bill is "arbitrary," citing examples of mobile dentists, clinics and other medical evaluations used across the state that aren't limited to brick and mortar clinics. Opponents included lobbyists from various marijuana industry associations.

Opponents also said the bill would push more people to turn to the black market for products and reduce the number of facilities where practitioners could practice, which would raise the cost for patients and make it more difficult for patients to find medical care.

Kittrick Jeffries, lobbyist for Dakota Cannabis Consulting, told legislators that many physicians in South Dakota at larger health care systems don't prescribe medical marijuana to patients because of an "insurance issue" since the drug isn't federally legal.

Opponents also said HB 1154 is an alternative bill that would address Deutsch's concerns without "unintended consequences." In regards to pop-up clinic locations, the bill would ban medical assessments in spaces licensed for alcohol sales. The bill has not yet had a hearing.

Deutsch said HB 1154 would not address the problems with pop-up clinics.

"There's not a better bill coming," Deutsch said. "I've studied their bill. It's not better. It's much worse."

The second bill to pass the committee was HB 1129, which would ban advertisements for medical marijuana that would guarantee a card, offer telehealth appointments or offer financial incentives to make an appointment.

Based on the bill, any practitioner or business that distributes such advertisements would be prohibited from certifying medical marijuana cards for up to six months and would have to remove the advertisement.

A lobbyist for the South Dakota Cannabis Industry Association, Jeremiah Murphy, said the bill was a duplicate of language already in statute.

The bills will now head to the House floor.

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

U.S. Senate Democrats unveil legislation to ban high-capacity gun magazines

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 3:14 PM

WASHINGTON — New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez, along with 27 of his U.S. Senate colleagues, introduced legislation Tuesday to ban high-capacity magazines, which can be used on the type of semi-automatic firearm that is typically used in most mass shootings.

“High-capacity magazines were designed for one purpose and one purpose only — high-capacity killing — and have been used in some of the deadliest mass shootings in America,” Menendez said in a statement.

The push for a ban on the importation, sale, manufacturing, transfer or possession of gun magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition builds on prior bipartisan gun control legislation that passed Congress and was signed into law last year.

While that gun control legislation was historic, it did not ban assault rifles or high-capacity magazines, which have been used in mass shootings across the country from Uvalde, Texas, where 19 elementary school children and two teachers were killed, to Atlanta, where six women of Asian descent were shot and killed across several spas.

However, House GOP lawmakers are opposed to most gun control legislation supported by Democrats and with a Republican-controlled House, it’s unlikely any gun control legislation would be brought to the floor. Democrats have a slim 51-vote majority in the Senate, and would need to pass any legislation with a 60-vote threshold.

So far this year, there have been 60 mass shootings, according to the Gun Violence Archive, which tracks gun violence across the U.S.

A recent mass shooting in Monterey Park, California renewed calls from the White House and Democrats to push for a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California introduced a ban on assault weapons in late January that has garnered 41 cosponsors, but none are Republicans.

In the Monterey Park mass shooting on Jan. 21, the eve of Lunar New Year, a gunman used two semi-automatic pistols and an extended high-capacity magazine to kill 11 people and injure nine others. Brandon Tsay, who disarmed the shooter and is credited with preventing further deaths, is a White House guest for Tuesday night’s State of the Union address.

“This is a commonsense bill that will provide greater peace of mind to communities and families across the country that have felt the despair of losing a loved one, friend, or neighbor in a mass shooting with guns equipped with high-capacity magazines,” Menendez said.

The bill, known as the Keep Americans Safe Act, if passed into law would also authorize a buyback program for high-capacity magazines, using grants, and require any devices manufactured after the law passes to have serial numbers engraved on them and the date of manufacture in order to help law enforcement identify restricted magazines.

The bill would also grandfather in high-capacity magazines that were purchased before the law goes into effect. There would also be “limited exceptions for devices possessed before enactment, for certain current and former law enforcement personnel, for certain Atomic Energy personnel and other purposes, for tubular devices that can only accept .22 rimfire ammunition, and for certain authorized testing or experimentation,” according to a fact sheet from Menendez’s office.

Ariana covers the nation’s capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

State clears police and jail staff in young mother's death, seeks info on meth dealer

Family says autopsy, investigation don't bring closure

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 7:11 PM

Attorney General Marty Jackley wants the public's help to find the source of the methamphetamine that may have killed Abbey Lynn Steele.

The state Division of Criminal Investigation conducted an inquiry into Steele's death at the request of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, which runs the jail where Steele's heart stopped on Nov. 16, and the Rapid City Police Department, which employs the officer who arrested her on warrants for missed court appearances hours before she was resuscitated and transported to Monument Health.

Her family chose to disconnect her from life support based on doctors' assessments of her chances of survival. She died several days later, on Dec. 2.

"The investigation and the review of all the cameras and statements indicated that neither the police officer nor the jail staff did anything wrong," DCI spokesman Tony Mangan told South Dakota Searchlight.

Steele's death certificate, filed in mid-December in Pennington County, lists methamphetamine toxicity and pneumonia as causes of death. The autopsy and investigation indicate that the drug was "likely" the reason for what the Tuesday news release described as Steele's "medical emergency" at the jail.

"We are requesting the public's assistance for further information on any individuals that may be responsible for providing the methamphetamine that has caused Abbey's death," Jackley said in a prepared statement. "I would like to further extend my sympathies to the Abbey Steele family."

Selling methamphetamine that kills its user is a crime punishable by up to life in prison in South Dakota. The DCI reviewed body and car cam footage from the Rapid City officer who arrested Steele, as well as footage from the Pennington County Jail. The footage has not been released.

The DCI also interviewed the officer and jail staff, and reviewed the autopsy results. In addition to methamphetamine, Steele's blood tested positive for oxycodone, marijuana metabolite and amphetamine.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office released a statement on Steele's death, noting that the cause was "accidental."

"This is a tragedy. We grieve for the family at the loss of Abbey Steele," said Sheriff Brian Mueller.

The law enforcement statements are unlikely to satisfy calls for justice on Steele's behalf from members of the Native American community and other supporters, who formed a justice coalition that now meets



Supporters of Abbey Steele's family stand outside the Pennington County Jail on Dec. 6, 2022. (Courtesy photo)

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regularly in Rapid City to advocate for changes to the ways local law enforcement interacts with Indigenous residents.

The conclusion of the DCI inquiry into Steele's death does not bring closure for her family, either.

On Monday, her mother told South Dakota Searchlight that she does not trust the official version of events. Amy Steele said her daughter had a prescription for oxycodone because of an emergency cesarean section birth, and that Abbey had swallowed some of the pills before arriving at the jail. Law enforcement investigators told Amy Steele that they'd administered narcan twice at the jail, she said, to counteract the overdose.

"I'm still not understanding how my daughter died," Amy Steele said. "The doctor told me that my daughter was brain dead, and she told me that it was the oxy that killed her. Now the coroner is telling me pneumonia. So I have no closure."

Amy Steele said she's suspicious about her daughter's treatment at the jail. Inmates who saw Abbey that day told Amy that Abbey "kept pushing the button for help."

Amy Steele said the family is working with a civil rights attorney in Rapid City to determine if legal action may be warranted. The lawyer declined to be named, but confirmed that his office is investigating on behalf of the Steele family.

"I'm going to do whatever it takes to get justice for my daughter," Amy Steele said.

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

Legislator tables own bill that would define 'life of mother' during abortion

Bill would have clarified when abortion is legal

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 7, 2023 5:24 PM

Taylor Rehfeldt wakes up afraid for herself, her unborn child and her family every morning.

The registered nurse and Republican state representative from Sioux Falls is four months into a high risk pregnancy. She's excited to welcome her third child, but also worried about current South Dakota law.

After suffering a stroke in 2014, Rehfeldt has an elevated risk of blood clots while pregnant. She is taking precautions to keep both herself and her child healthy until delivery, but state law is vague about when and how a doctor should intervene if something life-threatening occurs.

"I wake up fearful of my pregnancy and what it would mean for my children, my husband and my parents if something happened to me and the doctor could not perform life saving measures," Rehfeldt said in tearful testimony during Tuesday's House Health and Human Services Committee hearing at the Capitol in Pierre.



Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls. (Courtesy of Taylor Rehfeldt)

Current state law says abortion is only legal when "there is appropriate and reasonable medical judgment that performance of an abortion is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant female."

Rehfeldt, the assistant House majority leader, is the prime sponsor of HB 1169, which would further define the "life of the pregnant female" exception. The bill would allow abortions when a physician determines that continuing the pregnancy would put the mother at serious risk of death or "of a substantial and irreversible physical impairment of one or more major bodily functions." The bill would also instruct physicians to submit abortion information to the state Department of Health.

But Rehfeldt requested the committee table her bill after her testimony. Since introducing the bill, it became more "contentious" than she'd anticipated, and she didn't believe the bill would have enough support to make it through the Legislature.

Wave of unanticipated opposition

Rehfeldt told South Dakota Searchlight she didn't want to bring the bill through the legislative process if she didn't believe it could become law.

But she vowed to keep trying.

"I'm not giving up on this. I'm not going to let it go, and I'll continue to work on this," Rehfeldt told South Dakota Searchlight. "This puts more of a fire on me to continue to have these conversations."

She heard from legislators who opposed the bill because they view it as an expansion of South Dakota's trigger law. That law took effect when the U.S. Supreme Court determined in June that abortion policy should be returned to the states, overturning 50 years of federal abortion rights under the Roe v. Wade decision. The trigger law does not include exceptions for rape or incest.

Rehfeldt said she'd worked on multiple amendments in conjunction with the anti-abortion group South Dakota Right to Life, but the group informed her Monday that it was opposing the bill.

The lobbying group is one of the strongest in Pierre. It helped defeat Gov. Kristi Noem's six-week abortion ban during the last legislative session.

"They're very powerful and rightfully so," 2022 House Majority Leader Kent Peterson, R-Salem, told

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SDPB last year. "They're a very strong organization and people respect their opinion on all matters that they weigh in on."

Right to Life Executive Director Dale Bartscher said he would not comment on HB 1169 since it was tabled. Rehfeldt plans to continue working on the bill over the summer.

"I would have never thought the idea of preserving the life of the mother would be debatable or even considered not pro-life by some," Rehfeldt testified. "Who could think that being pro-life could mean we do not protect women?"

'A doctor's oath is to protect both'

Rehfeldt constructed the bill with Sens. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, and Sydney Davis, R-Burbank, after health care practitioners requested greater clarification of when abortions would be legal in South Dakota. Tobin and Davis are also registered nurses.

"Most physicians are fearful — rightfully so since it would be classified as a Class 6 felony if they act outside of the interpreted meaning of that sentence," Rehfeldt said.

As the law stands now, Rehfeldt doesn't know when her doctor can intervene.

"We are not willing to provide clarification for doctors who are caring for the lives of not just one but two patients," Rehfeldt testified. "I think some people have lost touch with the reality that in a pregnancy, there are two patients. Both a mom and a baby. A doctor's oath is to protect both."

South Dakota should not have laws in place that are unclear to doctors, she added.

"No one wants to talk about a woman bleeding from pregnancy. No one wants to talk about an infection that threatens her life," Rehfeldt said. "No one wants to talk about a case like mine, where I could have a clot that makes me disabled."

Rehfeldt tells South Dakotans to talk to physicians, legislators

Rehfeldt plans to have conversations with legislators and the public in the next year to educate them about the complexities of pregnancy in health care, why these aren't "always black and white decisions," and "how life means something different to many different people."

Rehfeldt urges pregnant South Dakotans or those who could become pregnant to have conversations with their health care providers about what the current law means for them as a patient, and how their provider interprets the law.

She also urged women to call their legislators and share their stories.

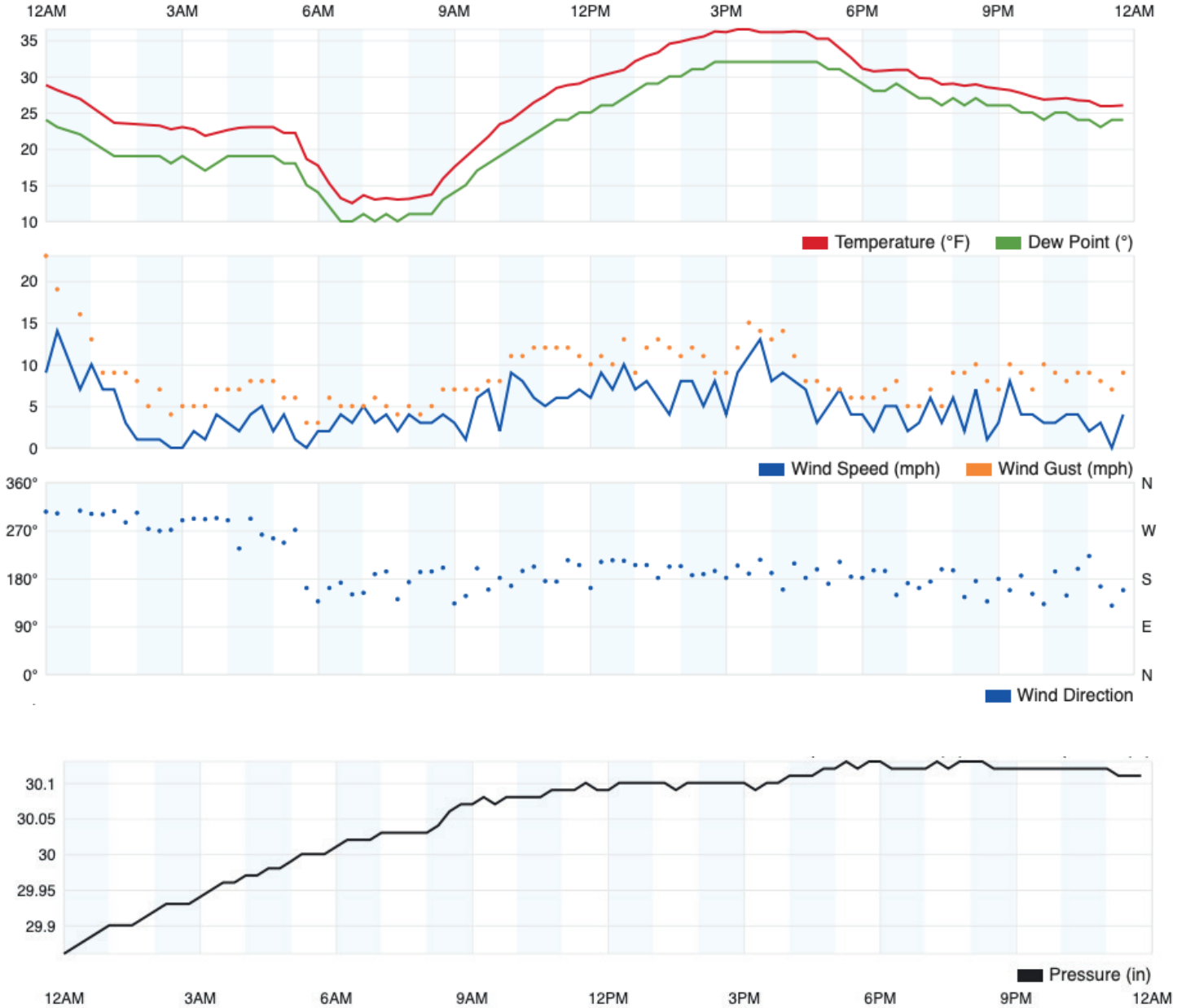
"Health care providers can only talk in general terms because they need to maintain patient privacy," Rehfeldt said. "We need people to tell their stories and need to be heard, or it's going to be difficult to get these issues addressed."

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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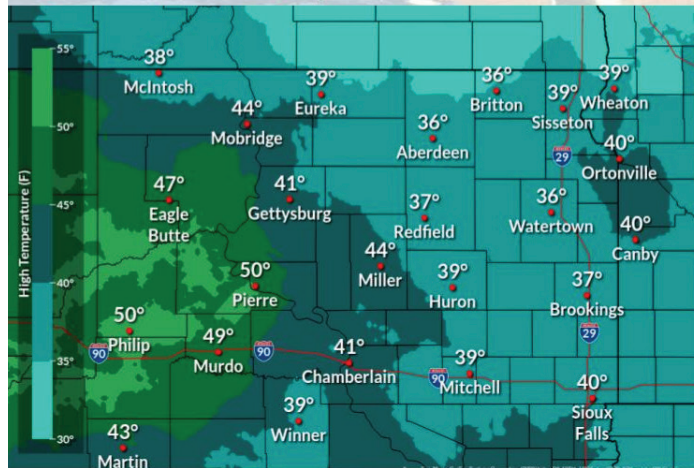
Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Sunny	Chance Winty Mix and Blustery	Windy. Chance Snow then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 35 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 30 °F↓	Low: 1 °F	High: 24 °F	Low: 14 °F	High: 32 °F

Mild Again Today! Changes on Thursday...

Another mild day is in store, with plenty of snow melt across the region. Windy conditions, along with cooler temperatures and areas of light snow coming on Thursday!

Dashed box indicates when light snow may fall, leading to a trace to locally 1" of accumulation

High Temps Today ↓ Max Wind Gusts Wed-Fri ↘



	2/8 Wed				2/9 Thu				2/10 Fri							
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am
Aberdeen	13	9	9	16	26	33	43	51	49	43	28	20	14	10	9	12
Britton	18	16	9	7	17	29	38	47	47	43	26	17	12	9	9	13
Eagle Butte	20	30	29	31	37	41	45	44	40	32	23	15	14	14	14	18
Eureka	10	10	18	25	29	36	44	44	43	36	22	14	10	7	7	15
Gettysburg	10	14	24	31	35	39	40	44	44	39	29	17	14	10	12	17
Kennebec	12	9	17	35	35	39	40	43	44	41	29	17	13	10	9	15
McIntosh	22	25	28	31	38	45	47	44	35	29	16	12	13	12	13	17
Milbank	18	14	7	9	14	25	35	45	48	45	41	35	25	17	13	8
Miller	10	7	12	24	29	32	36	44	45	41	29	17	15	13	10	15
Mobridge	10	15	16	21	26	33	39	40	39	31	17	10	9	9	9	15
Murdo	15	15	28	33	36	41	43	44	44	37	24	16	12	13	13	17
Pierre	10	12	20	28	31	36	36	39	40	35	25	13	8	8	9	14
Redfield	10	7	7	16	24	31	39	48	48	43	33	21	14	10	8	10
Sisseton	18	15	9	12	21	30	36	44	46	44	38	31	23	15	12	9
Watertown	16	15	9	9	15	25	35	45	48	47	39	29	21	14	10	8
Webster	17	15	9	12	24	33	43	53	54	49	39	29	18	14	10	9
Wheaton	13	9	9	7	13	21	31	39	41	40	37	30	22	16	10	8

NWS Aberdeen, SD February 8, 2023 5:17 AM

*Table values in mph

Don't see your city? Check out weather.gov/forecastpoints

We'll see another day of highs in the 30s and 40s across the region, with readings around 50 degrees across portions of central SD. Plenty of sunshine to start the day, with increasing clouds from west to east during the afternoon and evening, so more melting snow today! Changes are in store tonight into Thursday as a storm system crosses the region. North to northwest winds will increase tonight into Thursday morning, with gusts over 40 mph possible. Also, there will likely be areas of light snow moving across the region, but accumulations are forecast to be only around an inch or less. There may be pockets of lowered visibility in areas of falling snow and gusty winds. Temperatures will also be a bit cooler on Thursday, with highs ranging from the upper 20s to mid 30s.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36.5 °F at 3:15 PM

Low Temp: 12.5 °F at 6:45 AM

Wind: 23 mph at Midnight

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 08 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 2000

Record Low: -46 in 1895

Average High: 27

Average Low: 4

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.16

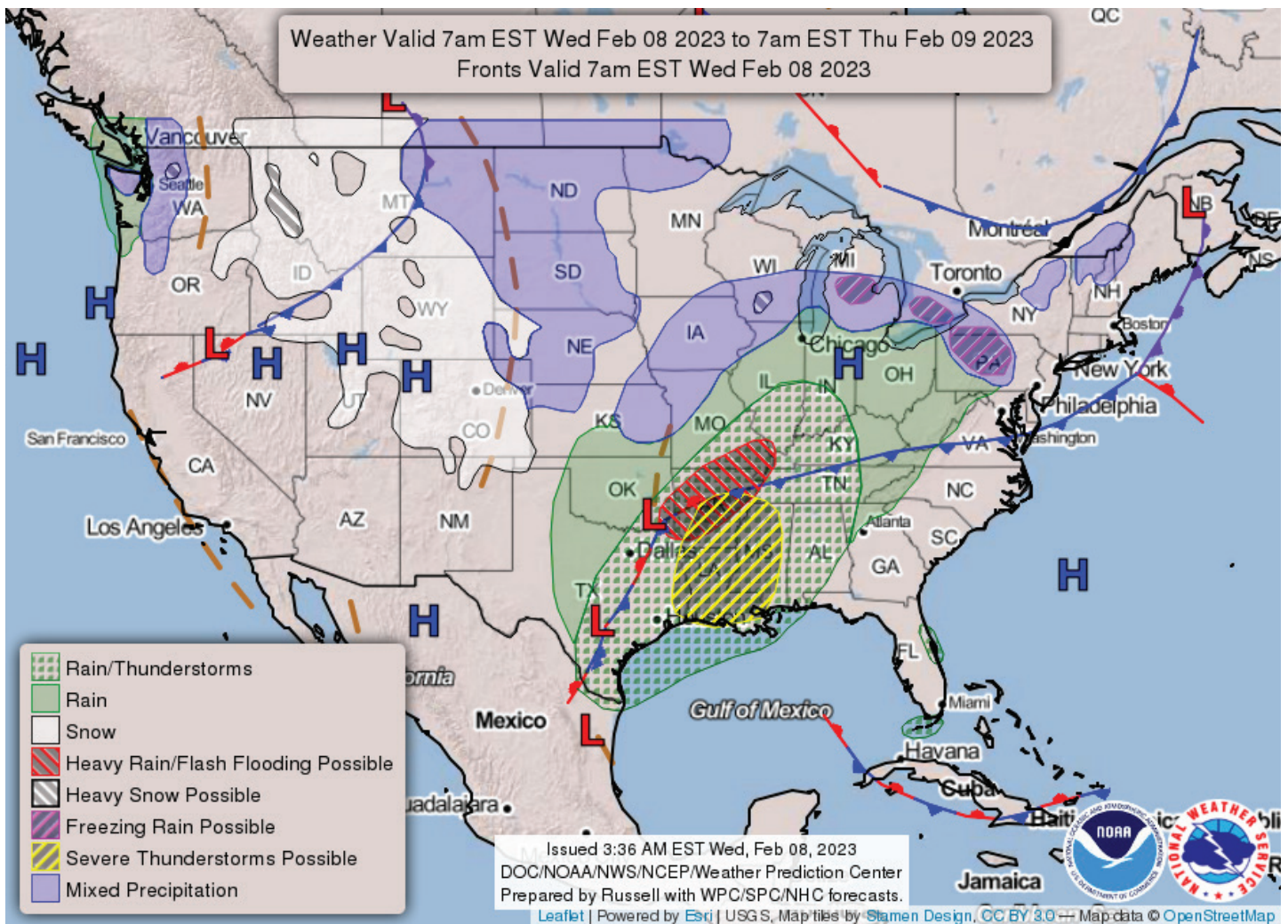
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.71

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 5:50:34 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41:06 AM



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Today in Weather History

February 8-9, 1909: Sioux Falls and the surrounding area experienced one of the largest snowfalls on record. Officially the storm dropped 21" of snow in Sioux Falls. Unfortunately, the snowfall was accompanied by high winds, which created large drifts.

February 8, 2000: A very warm air mass was over central and northeast South Dakota, where record highs were set in Aberdeen, Pierre, and Sisseton. Aberdeen rose to 62 degrees, Sisseton rose to 53 degrees, and Pierre rose to a warm 69 degrees.

1835 - A severe cold wave gripped the southeastern U.S. The mercury dipped to 8 above at Jacksonville FL, and to zero at Savannah GA. Orange trees were killed to the roots. (David Ludlum)

1956: From February 1-8, heavy snow fell over the Panhandle of Texas. Snowfall amounts include 43 inches in Vega, 24 inches in Hereford, and 14 inches in Amarillo. The storm caused 23 deaths and numerous injuries. It snowed continuously for 92 hours in some locations.

1936 - The temperature at Denver CO plunged to a record 30 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1968: The highest 1-day snow at the Savannah Airport in South Carolina occurs on this date when 3.6 inches of snow fell. Records began in 1871.

1985 - Blue Canyon, CA, set a 24-hour February snowfall record by receiving 42 inches of snow from February 7th-8th.

1987 - A powerful storm produced blizzard conditions in the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 86 mph at Janesville WI and Cleveland OH received 12 inches of snow. North winds of 50 to 70 mph raised the water level of southern Lake Michigan two feet, and produced waves 12 to 18 feet high, causing seven million dollars damage along the Chicago area shoreline. It was the most damage caused by shoreline flooding and erosion in the history of the city of Chicago. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Hibbing MN reported a morning low of 30 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989: Mammoth traffic jams in the Los Angeles area as freak snow struck California. The snow was reported from the beaches of Malibu to the desert around Palm Springs.

1989 - A winter storm over California produced snow from the beaches of Malibu to the desert canyons around Palm Springs, and the snow created mammoth traffic jams in the Los Angeles Basin. Sixteen cities in the western U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Marysville CA reported an all-time record low reading of 21 degrees above zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across the south central and eastern U.S. Twenty-two cities, including five in Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 53 degrees at Flint MI surpassed their previous record by ten degrees, and the high of 66 degrees at Burlington IA exceeded their old record by eight degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: Snow falls on the Jordanian capital and surrounding regions, blocking roads and closing schools. Parts of northern Iran and Tehran were paralyzed after being hit by several days of record snowfall, with dozens of flights canceled and critical roads also cut off.

2009 - Snow falls at levels above elevations of 11,000 feet on the Big Island's Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The Weather Doctor

2013: A nor'easter produced heavy snowfall over the New England states. In Boston, Massachusetts, total snowfall reached 24.9 inches, the fifth-highest total ever recorded in the city. New York City officially recorded 11.4 inches of snow at Central Park, and Portland, Maine, set a record of 31.9 inches. Hamden, Connecticut, recorded the highest snowfall of the storm at 40 inches.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

UNQUESTIONED CONFIDENCE

Character breeds confidence. When we cannot have complete confidence in others, doubts arise and questions surface. We worry and wonder, watch and wait for things to go wrong. We sense an uneasiness and do not know what to expect. Perhaps that is why Solomon wrote, "Her husband has full confidence in her (this wife of noble character) and lacks nothing of value."

"Full confidence" is a broad, sweeping term and covers all of the activities in a home. It includes raising children, managing the family's finances and the reputation of the family - whatever is included in developing the image of the family in the community. Everything is included in the term "full confidence."

"Full confidence" is a remarkable term because it is the same term that is used or applied to the term "confidence in the Lord." Throughout the entire Old Testament, it is only used twice in reference to having "confidence" in another person.

This value of having such "confidence" in one's wife is important because it frees up the husband to become involved in occupational, civic, and religious duties. The husband of a "wife of noble character" can commit himself to what God has called him to do because his household is in good, competent and safe hands.

Notice, too, that the husband "lacks nothing of value." The home is in "good hands" and the "resources," - financial, reputation or character - will increase because of God's blessings!

Prayer: Lord, there is a great need in Kingdom work for wives to know You, love You and serve You faithfully. Bless them for their service and the sacrifices they make. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. Proverbs 31:11



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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paypal.me/paperpaul



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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.07.23

9 15 46 55 57 4

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.06.23

3 4 20 32 35 6

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,670,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 38 Mins 54
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.07.23

3 7 18 31 32 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 8 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.04.23

7 10 14 30 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$42,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 38 Mins 54
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.06.23

14 19 58 59 68 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 37 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.06.23

5 11 22 23 69 7

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 37 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 65, Ipswich 45

Beresford 71, Garretson 41

Bon Homme 57, Burke 41

Brookings 69, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 48

Canistota 55, Menno 34

Chester 75, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 35

Colman-Egan 80, Wilmot 49

Crow Creek 52, Chamberlain 51

Dakota Valley 59, Vermillion 54

DeSmet 68, Flandreau 30

Dell Rapids 62, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 60

Deubrook 69, Great Plains Lutheran 63

Elk Point-Jefferson 76, Canton 65

Florence/Henry 67, Castlewood 31

Freeman Academy/Marion 69, Gayville-Volin 50

Groton Area 62, North Central Co-Op 21

Hanson 73, Freeman 46

Harrisburg 61, Marshall, Minn. 56

Hitchcock-Tulare 71, Highmore-Harrold 66

Hot Springs 59, Douglas 34

James Valley Christian 69, Mitchell Christian 43

Kadoka Area 42, New Underwood 40

Lakota Tech 73, Hill City 61

Lyman 63, Kimball/White Lake 57

Madison 62, McCook Central/Montrose 40

McIntosh 60, Solen, N.D. 39

McLaughlin 77, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 45

Milbank 68, Sisseton 36

Miller 47, Aberdeen Roncalli 39

Mitchell 60, Aberdeen Central 47

Newcastle, Wyo. 53, Lead-Deadwood 50

Northwestern 60, Webster 49

Parkston 55, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 34

Pierre 68, Huron 59

Rapid City Christian 87, Belle Fourche 53

Sioux Falls Jefferson 60, Watertown 44

Sioux Falls Lincoln 77, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59

Sioux Falls Washington 52, Brandon Valley 38

Sioux Valley 57, Deuel 47

St. Thomas More 75, Red Cloud 46

Sturgis Brown 62, Spearfish 58, OT

Sully Buttes 48, Herreid/Selby Area 44

Todd County 107, Bennett County 24

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 65, Wagner 61, OT
Viborg-Hurley 69, Parker 28
Warner 47, Redfield 40
Waubay/Summit 59, Estelline/Hendricks 48
Wessington Springs 62, Wolsey-Wessington 52
White River 73, Little Wound 31
Winner 76, St. Francis Indian 38

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

'Dances With Wolves' actor charged in Canada in 2018 rape

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Canadian police confirmed Tuesday they are pursuing a criminal case against a former "Dances With Wolves" actor who was arrested last week and charged in Nevada with sexually abusing and trafficking Indigenous women and girls.

Nathan Chasing Horse, who also goes by Nathan Lee Chasing His Horse, was taken into custody Jan. 31 near the North Las Vegas home he shares with his five wives. He has been charged with eight felonies in Nevada, including sexual assault, sex trafficking and child abuse.

Authorities have said the crimes date to the early 2000s and span multiple states, including South Dakota, Montana and Nevada, where Chasing Horse has lived for a decade.

Prior to his arrest, the 46-year-old had been the focus of a monthslong probe by Las Vegas police prompted by a tip last October from Canadian law enforcement, who had identified Chasing Horse as a suspect in a 2018 rape in the British Columbia village of Keremeos, near the Washington state border.

Sgt. Kris Clark of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police confirmed Tuesday in an email to The Associated Press that Chasing Horse has been charged with one count of sexual assault in connection with the 2018 crime. He said an arrest warrant for Chasing Horse in Canada was issued two days after his arrest in Nevada, but declined to release further details.

California attorney Alexandra Kazarian, who has been retained by Chasing Horse to replace his public defender, did not immediately respond Tuesday to email and phone requests for comment regarding the new case in Canada.

Chasing Horse's previous public defender, Michael Wilfong, has not commented on any of the allegations.

As the number of criminal cases against Chasing Horse grows, his estranged daughter spoke Tuesday in support of the victims.

In a statement, Quannah Chasinghorse, a model who has appeared on the covers of Vogue Mexico and Vogue Japan, distanced herself from her father, saying she's had minimal contact with him and was raised by her mother and stepfather, who died in 2017.

"I stand with the victims of Nathan Lee Chasing His Horse," she said. "I honor the immense courage it takes for survivors to tell their stories, especially publicly."

Chasing Horse played the role of Sioux tribe member Smiles a Lot in Kevin Costner's 1990 Oscar-winning film.

Since then, he has built a reputation among tribes across the United States and in Canada as a self-proclaimed "medicine man."

Las Vegas police said Chasing Horse abused that position, describing him in their search warrant as the leader of a cult known as The Circle who took underage wives over two decades.

He also was banished from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, in 2015 following similar allegations.

Chasing Horse remains held without bail at a jail in downtown Las Vegas. He is scheduled to appear in court Wednesday, when a judge is expected to address his custody status after hearing testimony from investigators, victims and Chasing Horse's relatives.

States push to enshrine protections for tribal children

By AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Leo Thompson received plenty of love, food and shelter from the non-Native American family who raised them, but missed out on any exposure to their Indigenous culture, heritage, ancestors and community.

"The only time they acknowledged my heritage was when they'd make passive comments like, 'Oh, you know, you've always liked that Native American stuff,'" said Thompson, who lives in Missoula, Montana. "That stuff that they so casually referred to is not casual at all. It's the practices of my ancestors. It's the very same culture that's healed my soul. Reconnecting with my heritage as an adult has been a long and arduous journey."

Montana is one of a handful U.S. states — along with Wyoming, Utah and North Dakota — considering legislation this year to keep more Native American children from enduring similar experiences by including provisions of the U.S. Indian Child Welfare Act in state law.

The states are driven by concerns that Supreme Court challenges have put the federal law in jeopardy. During a hearing last year, the justices seemed likely to leave in place most of the law that gives preference to Native American families in foster care and adoption proceedings involving Native children. The law also requires child welfare agencies to provide services to help Native families move toward reunification.

Ten other states have similar laws in place, including New Mexico, whose law took effect this year, and they too could be affected, depending on how the justices rule. Most federally recognized tribes want the act upheld, fearing that an adverse ruling could dismantle a whole range of federal laws based on their political relationships with the U.S. government.

Thompson, who uses she/they pronouns, shared their story during a recent legislative hearing on a bill sponsored by Montana Democratic Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy.

The federal Indian Child Welfare Act was passed by Congress in 1978 in response to the alarming rate at which Native American and Alaskan Native children were taken from their homes by public and private agencies. From 1887-1969, Native children were placed in boarding schools that used abusive practices to assimilate them into white society. Many were adopted by non-Native families, often depriving them of their tribal and cultural heritage.

The law has helped change that, but there is still work to do.

In Montana, nearly 11% of all children are Indigenous but they made up 37% of those in foster care in 2021, according to the National Indian Child Welfare Association. About 9% of North Dakota children are Indigenous, but account for 44% of the children in foster care, the association said.

"I have witnessed and experienced the benefits of keeping a child within the care of their family where he stays connected, rooted and knows who he is and where he comes from," Sharen Kickingwoman, with the ACLU of Montana, testified. "We know from our experiences and research that affirming Indigenous identity, especially for youth, is some of the strongest things you can do to enhance resilience amidst adverse childhood experiences."

Wyoming's effort is furthest along, having passed the Senate 20-11. In Utah, tribes and statewide officials support the proposal, yet lawmakers held it in a legislative committee during the final week of January amid questions about whether it was needed yet and despite a request by Navajo Nation leaders to pass it.

Bills in Montana and North Dakota have had committee hearings but no votes, while a South Dakota bill was rejected this week.

One aspect of the case awaiting a Supreme Court ruling argued that the Indian Child Welfare Act amounts to federal overreach, and that such protections should be enacted in state law. Another argument is the act provides race-based protections that violate the equal protection guarantee in the Constitution. Native Americans argue the measure is a government-to-government agreement between the U.S. and sovereign tribal nations that, like the U.S., determine citizenship in ways that aren't based on race.

No one testified against the proposed policy during a Montana hearing, while supporters testified about the importance of family relationships within tribes.

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Kickingwoman, a member of the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet nations, said Native societies are built around kinship. Kickingwoman said she's been honored to provide guardianship to many of her relatives, including her cousin's son, who she said by mainstream society's standards would be considered a distant relative," but to her is a son.

"A lot of our extended families and friends are close kin in relation to us," she said. "What may be on paper seen as a second or third cousin really is a brother or sister, maybe a niece or a nephew."

Keegan Modrano, a policy director with the ACLU of Montana who is Muscogee Creek, also was raised by a non-Native family, and was therefore deprived of being raised with their cultural practices, language or people.

"I can not fully ever completely express the incompleteness I feel living my life," Modrano told the committee.

"My younger self wants nothing more than a Native father figure in my life. My younger self wants nothing more than a Native mother, for cousins and kin, aunties and uncles," they said. "I cannot rest and I will fight every day so that no other Indian child feels that loss or experiences child removal or the foster care system."

Hope fading as deaths in Turkey, Syria quake pass 11,000

By MEHMET GUZEL, GHAITH ALSAYED and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

GAZIANTEP, Turkey (AP) — With hope fading to find survivors, stretched rescue teams toiled Wednesday in Turkey and Syria, searching for signs of life in the rubble of thousands of buildings toppled by a catastrophic earthquake. The death toll passed 11,000 in the deadliest quake worldwide in more than a decade.

Amid calls for the Turkish government to send more help to the disaster zone, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan toured a "tent city" in hard-hit Kahramanmaraş where people forced from their homes are living. He conceded shortfalls early on in the response but vowed that no one would "be left in the streets."

Search teams from more than two dozen countries have joined tens of thousands of local emergency personnel, and aid pledges have poured in from around the world. But the scale of destruction from the 7.8 magnitude quake and its powerful aftershocks was so immense — and spread so wide, including in areas isolated by Syria's ongoing civil war — that many are still waiting for help.

At times rescuers were using excavators, at others they picked gingerly through debris to find survivors or the dead. With thousands of buildings toppled, it was not clear how many people might still be trapped underneath the rubble.

In the Turkish city of Malatya, bodies were placed side by side on the ground, covered in blankets, while rescuers waited for funeral vehicles to pick them up, according to former journalist Ozel Pikal who saw eight bodies pulled from the ruins of a building.

Pikal, who took part in the rescue efforts, said he believed at least some of the victims froze to death as temperatures dipped to minus 6 degrees Celsius (21 Fahrenheit).

"Today isn't a pleasant day because as of today there is no hope left in Malatya," Pikal said telephone. "No one is coming out alive from the rubble."

Road closures and damage in the region made it hard to access all the areas that need help, he said, and there was a shortage of rescuers where he was. Meanwhile, cold hampered the efforts of those who were there, including volunteers.

"Our hands cannot pick up anything because of the cold," said Pikal. "Work machines are needed."

The region was already beset by more than a decade of civil war in Syria that has displaced millions in that country and left them reliant on humanitarian aid and sent millions more to seek refuge in Turkey.

Turkey's president said the country's death toll passed 8,500. The Syrian Health Ministry, meanwhile, said the death toll in government-held areas has climbed past 1,200, while at least 1,400 people have died in the rebel-held northwest, according to volunteer first responders known as the White Helmets.

That brought the overall total to 11,000 since Monday's earthquake and multiple strong aftershocks. Tens of thousands more are injured.

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A 2011 earthquake near Japan that triggered a tsunami left nearly 20,000 people dead.

Syrian officials said the bodies of more than 100 Syrians who died during the earthquake in Turkey were brought back home for burial. Mazen Alloush, an official on the Syrian side of the border, said 20 more bodies were on their way, adding that all of them were Syrian refugees who fled civil war.

More than two days after the quake, concerns grew for those still trapped, though stories of rescues gave many hope. A crying newborn still connected by the umbilical cord to her deceased mother was rescued in Syria on Monday. In Turkey's Kahramanmaras, rescuers pulled a 3-year-old boy, Arif Kaan, from the rubble.

"For now, the name of hope in Kahramanmaras is Arif Kaan," a Turkish television reporter proclaimed as the dramatic rescue was broadcast to the country.

Polish rescuers told TVN24 that low temperatures were working against them, though two firefighters said that the fact that people were caught in bed under warm covers by the pre-dawn quake could help.

The cold also made life miserable for those who lost their homes. Many survivors in Turkey have had to sleep in cars, outside or in government shelters.

"We don't have a tent, we don't have a heating stove, we don't have anything. Our children are in bad shape. We are all getting wet under the rain and our kids are out in the cold," Aysan Kurt, 27, said. "We did not die from hunger or the earthquake, but we will die freezing from the cold."

Erdogan, on this tour of quake-hit areas, acknowledged that there were problems early on in the response but said it had improved.

He said the government would distribute 10,000 Turkish lira (\$532) to affected families.

The quake comes at a sensitive time for Erdogan, who faces presidential and parliamentary elections in May amid an economic downturn and high inflation. Perceptions that his government mismanaged the crisis could severely hurt his standings.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of Turkey's main opposition party, blamed the devastation on Erdogan's two-decade rule, saying he had not prepared the country for a disaster and accusing him of misspending funds.

In Syria, aid efforts have been hampered by the ongoing war and the isolation of the rebel-held region along the border, which is surrounded by Russia-backed government forces. Syria itself is an international pariah under Western sanctions linked to the war.

The European Union said Wednesday that Syria had finally asked for humanitarian assistance to deal with the victims of the devastating earthquake and insisted the bloc's sanctions against the government had no impact on its potential to help.

On Wednesday, Syria's Prime Minister Hussein Arnous visited neighborhoods in the northern city of Aleppo that saw buildings collapse because of the earthquake.

"Our priority now is to rescue the people who are still under the rubble," he said.

In rebel-held parts of northwest Syria, rescuers pulled a man, a woman and four children from the rubble in the towns of Salqeen, Harem and Jinderis, according to the White Helmets group.

The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999.

Zelenskyy visits UK for first time since Russia's invasion

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a rare trip out of his country Wednesday, daring to visit Britain in a bid for more advanced weapons as Kyiv braces for an expected Russian offensive and hatches its own plans to retake land held by Moscow's forces.

Zelenskyy arrived on a Royal Air Force plane at London Stansted airport north of the U.K. capital. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak greeted him on the tarmac, tweeting a photo of him embracing the Ukrainian leader.

"The United Kingdom was one of the first to come to Ukraine's aid. And today I'm in London to personally thank the British people for their support," Zelenskyy said on Instagram.

A large convoy of vehicles left the airport and headed straight to Downing Street in central London. Both

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leaders posed briefly for photos in front of the famous black door that leads into the U.K. prime minister's residence.

Staff inside 10 Downing St. could be heard applauding as the Ukrainian leader entered.

At the start of the leaders' meeting, Zelenskyy thanked Britain for its "big support from the first days of full-scale invasion."

Zelenskyy will later address Parliament. It's his first trip to the U.K. since Russia's invasion began nearly a year ago and only his second confirmed journey outside Ukraine during the war.

Zelenskyy will also meet with King Charles III and U.K. military chiefs during his visit.

The U.K. is one of the biggest military backers of Ukraine and has sent the country more than 2 billion pounds (\$2.5 billion) in weapons and equipment.

The visit comes as Sunak announced that Britain will train Ukrainian pilots on "NATO-standard fighter jets." Ukraine has urged its allies to send jets, though the U.K. says it's not practical to provide the Ukrainian military with British warplanes.

More than 10,000 Ukrainian troops have also been trained at bases in the U.K., some on the Challenger 2 tanks that Britain is sending.

"I am proud that today we will expand that training from soldiers to marines and fighter jet pilots, ensuring Ukraine has a military able to defend its interests well into the future," Sunak said. "It also underlines our commitment to not just provide military equipment for the short term, but a long-term pledge to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine for years to come."

Coinciding with the visit, the U.K. government announced a new round of sanctions against six entities that the U.K. said supplied equipment to the Russian military.

CST, a manufacturer of Russian drones and parts for helicopters used against Ukraine, were among those sanctioned. Others targeted included five individuals linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin's luxury residences, including Boris Titov and Aerostart owner Viktor Myachin.

Zelenskyy addressed the U.K. Parliament remotely in March, two weeks after the start of the invasion. He echoed World War II leader Winston Churchill's famous "never surrender" speech, vowing that Ukrainians "will fight till the end at sea, in the air. We will continue fighting for our land, whatever the cost."

Before Sunak took office, Zelenskyy had formed a bond with Boris Johnson, who was one of Ukraine's most vocal backers while he was U.K. prime minister. Sunak took office in October and has pledged to maintain the U.K.'s support.

It will be Zelenskyy's second known trip visit abroad since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. He visited the U.S. in December.

Zelenskyy may be seeking Western pledges of more advanced weapons before potential spring offensives by both Russia and Ukraine.

In Brussels, there were increasing expectations that the Ukrainian leader might also make his first visit to European Union institutions since the war began.

Leaders from 27-nation bloc will be gathering for a summit in Brussels on Thursday. That would enable Zelenskyy to meet with all major leaders of the bloc in one day. Zelenskyy has often addressed EU summits only through video calls from Ukraine.

The EU's legislature has also slated a special plenary session in Brussels for Thursday in the hopes that Zelenskyy will come following his trip to Britain.

The London visit came as Russian forces blasted areas of eastern Ukraine with more artillery bombardments, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday, in what Kyiv authorities believe is part of a new thrust by the Kremlin's forces before the invasion anniversary.

Russian forces over the past day launched major shelling attacks on areas near the front line in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, killing a 74-year-old woman and wounding a 16-year-old girl in the border town of Vovchansk, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

Russian forces in Ukraine are focusing their efforts on "waging a counteroffensive" in the country's industrial east, with the aim of taking full control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that make up the Donbas, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said.

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Russian troops launched assaults near Bakhmut and Vuhledar, two mining towns in the Donetsk region that have been among Moscow's key targets, Ukrainian officials said.

Seizing Bakhmut could severely disrupt Ukraine's military supply routes. It would also open a door for Moscow's forces to drive toward key Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk.

Ukrainian authorities say the Kremlin's goal is to complete full control of the Donbas, an expansive industrial area bordering Russia. That would give Russian President Vladimir Putin a major battlefield success after months of setbacks and help him rally public opinion behind the war.

Military analysts say that after a Ukrainian counteroffensive that started last summer and recaptured large areas from Russia, the war has been largely static in recent months.

Moscow, meanwhile, believes Ukraine is preparing its own battlefield push.

The Russian-installed leader of the occupied Luhansk region said Wednesday the situation in some areas is "very difficult" because Kyiv is mustering forces for a counterattack.

Leonid Pasechnik told Russian state TV that the situation is "very difficult" in areas around a key Russian supply route. "Unfortunately, the enemy is accumulating sufficient reserves there, forces to counterattack, to return the lost territories," he said.

It wasn't possible to verify the claims by the two sides.

Toxic gases connected to Ohio train derailment cause concern

By BRITTANY PETERSON and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

Days after crews released and burned toxic chemicals transported by a wrecked train in Ohio, residents remain in the dark about what toxic substances could be lingering in their evacuated neighborhoods.

About 50 cars, including 10 carrying hazardous materials, derailed in a fiery crash Friday night in East Palestine, according to rail operator Norfolk Southern and the National Transportation Safety Board.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine earlier ordered evacuations in the area of the derailment that has been smoldering since Friday night. Some Pennsylvania residents living nearby also weren't being allowed in their homes.

Vinyl chloride was slowly released into the air Monday from five of the 10 derailed cars before crews ignited it to get rid of the highly flammable, toxic chemicals in a controlled environment, creating a dark plume of smoke.

The impact of burning vinyl chloride is a concern.

WHAT IS VINYL CHLORIDE?

The gas is used to make the polyvinyl chloride hard plastic resin in plastic products. It is found in products such as credit cards, furniture and car parts, but is most notably used in PVC plastic piping, a common material for plumbing.

IS IT DANGEROUS?

Vinyl chloride is associated with increased risk of liver cancer and other cancers, according to the federal government's National Cancer Institute.

The effect was studied in PVC pipe makers, who breathed in vinyl chloride and developed rare liver cancers, said Ruth Lunn, who studies carcinogens at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

"If you worked longer, you had a higher risk, and if your exposure levels were high, you had a higher risk," Lunn said.

Vinyl chloride is dozens of times less toxic per molecule than the U.S.-banned insecticide DDT but more dangerous per part than ammonia and natural gas, according to federal regulations that dictate acceptable levels in the air.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT BURNS?

Officials warned the controlled burn would send phosgene and hydrogen chloride into the air. Phosgene is a highly toxic, colorless gas with a strong odor that can cause vomiting and breathing trouble and was used as a weapon in World War I.

Phosgene is considered safe at 0.1 parts per million during an eight-hour exposure, or 0.2 ppm for a 15-minute exposure. The eight-hour exposure threshold would have to be even lower when measuring

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inside people's homes, where residents often spend more than eight consecutive hours.

Hydrogen chloride is a colorless to yellowish gas with a strong odor and its primary effect on humans is skin, eye, nose and throat irritation. It is considered safe at 5 ppm for an eight-hour exposure.

WHAT IS BEING MONITORED?

James Justice of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said a network of air station monitors inside and outside the evacuation zone was collecting samples and that none of their readings found anything to be concerned about. "We want to make sure that's not going to change," he said.

Justice said the agency is still working with experts to determine safe levels for various gases before reopening the evacuation zone. The incident response team did not specify what substances they are monitoring.

The gases that experts suspect are in the area are heavier than air, which means they could be sitting in low-lying areas if not completely dissipated.

National Guard members wearing protective gear are taking readings inside homes, basements and businesses, Major General John Harris Jr. said.

The EPA also sampled nearby rivers to determine whether there has been any water contamination and is awaiting results.

WHEN WILL THE RISK BE OVER?

Whatever chemicals are in the air, gases largely dissipate fairly rapidly when out in the open, said George Gray, a public health professor at George Washington University. "Sunlight can change that, the movement of air can change that, temperature can change that."

Residents are concerned about long-term effects of low grade exposure.

"There's all that smoke and all those chemicals in there," said Mason Shields, who lives in East Palestine and visited an aid center outside the evacuation zone. "I'm wondering if it's even going to be safe for people to return within the next week or month or however long."

Stella Jean quits Milan Fashion Week over lack of inclusion

By COLLEEN BARRY AP Fashion Writer

MILAN (AP) — The only Black designer belonging to Italy's fashion council is withdrawing from this month's Milan Fashion Week citing a lack of commitment to diversity and inclusion, and on Wednesday announced a hunger strike out of concern that other minority designers associated with her will suffer a backlash.

Stella Jean told The Associated Press that the Italian National Fashion Chamber had significantly cut back support for the We Are Made in Italy collective of young designers of color working in Italy after she made an impassioned speech about the personal price she had paid for highlighting racial injustice in Italy during a runway show last September.

Along with Stella Jean, the WAMI collective is withdrawing from fashion week, which they were to open with a digital presentation.

Italian Fashion Chamber President Carlo Capasa told the AP that he regretted Stella Jean's decision, adding that the final fashion week calendar being presented Wednesday is "full of diversity."

"In the calendar that we are presenting today, you will see all that we are doing for people of color who are working in Italy," Capasa told the AP. A news conference was scheduled for later Wednesday.

Jean sent a letter to Capasa informing him of her hunger strike, which she said would be revoked only with his written assurance that no professional harm would come to the WAMI designers and supports "as a result of our history of misunderstanding."

"This admittedly extreme measure of mine stems from having heard several voices from the collective worried about 'soft' or 'hard' repercussions, including difficulty in securing funding and services from sponsors and partners, given the power wielded by you as president of the chamber in the industry," she wrote in a letter obtained by the AP.

Capasa said he hadn't yet read the letter and was unaware of the hunger strike and WAMI's withdrawal. Both Stella Jean and WAMI appeared on a draft of the Milan Fashion Week calendar of mostly womenswear

previews for next winter released last month.

WAMI was launched on the heels of the Black Lives Matters movement in 2020 by Jean, African-American designer Edward Buchanan and the head of Afro Fashion Week Milano, Michelle Ngonmo, to draw attention to the lack of minority representation in the Italian fashion world. It followed some racial gaffes by major fashion houses that made global headlines.

Ngonmo told the AP that financial support for the project from the chamber had dwindled over the three years it has run so far, and that Afro Fashion Week Milano wasn't able to come up with the 20,000 euros (\$21,000) it would have cost to support the five young designers in making solid looks to present, plus a video.

The Italian fashion chamber fully supported the collections for the two WAMI classes, each with five designers, but that the third generation hasn't received any funding from the chamber, Ngonmo and Jean said. The September show featuring Jean, Buchanan and WAMI was financed through other allies and their own contributions.

"Maybe the message is the whole industry needs to open their eyes and say what can we do to make that happen?" Ngonmo told the AP.

A WAMI designer, Joy Meribe, opened Milan Fashion Week previews for spring-summer 2022, in a major milestone for the movement.

But Jean said that such moves had turned out to be "performative."

"They used WAMI as a free pass of safe conduct for diversity," Jean told the AP. She said she was withdrawing out of fatigue with the "continual fight" for recognition for designers of color in Italy.

"I am a fighter by nature, but I cannot be this way all the time," she said.

Israel steps up Jerusalem home demolitions as violence rises

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Ratib Matar's family was growing. They needed more space.

Before his granddaughters, now 4 and 5, were born, he built three apartments on an eastern slope overlooking Jerusalem's ancient landscape. The 50-year-old construction contractor moved in with his brother, son, divorced daughter and their young kids — 11 people in all, plus a few geese.

But Matar was never at ease. At any moment, the Israeli code-enforcement officers could knock on his door and take everything away.

That moment came on Jan. 29, days after a Palestinian gunman killed seven people in east Jerusalem, the deadliest attack in the contested capital since 2008. Israel's new far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called not only for the sealing of the assailant's family home, but also the immediate demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes built without permits in east Jerusalem, among other punitive steps.

Mere hours after Ben-Gvir's comments, the first bulldozers rumbled into Matar's neighborhood of Jabal Mukaber.

For many Palestinians, the gathering pace of home demolitions is part of the new ultranationalist government's broader battle for control of east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war and claimed by the Palestinians as the capital of a future independent state.

The battle is waged with building permits and demolition orders — and it is one the Palestinians feel they cannot win. Israel says it is simply enforcing building regulations.

"Our construction is under siege from Israel," Matar said. His brothers and sons lingered beside the ruins of their home, drinking bitter coffee and receiving visitors as though in mourning. "We try really hard to build, but in vain," he said.

Last month, Israel demolished 39 Palestinian homes, structures and businesses in east Jerusalem, displacing over 50 people, according to the United Nations. That was more than a quarter of the total number of demolitions in 2022. Ben-Gvir posted a photo on Twitter of the bulldozers clawing at Matar's home.

"We will fight terrorism with all the means at our disposal," he wrote, though Matar's home had nothing

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to do with the Palestinian shooting attacks.

Most Palestinian apartments in east Jerusalem were built without hard-to-get permits. A 2017 study by the U.N. described it as "virtually impossible" to secure them.

The Israeli municipality allocates scant land for Palestinian development, the report said, while facilitating the expansion of Israeli settlements. Little Palestinian property was registered before Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967, a move not internationally recognized.

Matar said the city rejected his building permit application twice because his area is not zoned for residential development. He's now trying a third time.

The penalty for unauthorized building is often demolition. If families don't tear their houses down themselves, the government charges them for the job. Matar is dreading his bill — he knows neighbors who paid over \$20,000 to have their houses razed.

Now homeless, Matar and his family are staying with relatives. He vows to build again on land he inherited from his grandparents, though he has no faith in the Israeli legal system.

"They don't want a single Palestinian in all of Jerusalem," Matar said. Uphill, in the heart of his neighborhood, Israeli flags fluttered from dozens of apartments recently built for religious Jews.

Since 1967, the government has built 58,000 homes for Israelis in the eastern part of the city, and fewer than 600 for Palestinians, said Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer specializing in the geopolitics of Jerusalem, citing the government's statistics bureau and his own analysis. In that time, the city's Palestinian population has soared by 400%.

"The planning regime is dictated by the calculus of national struggle," Seidemann said.

Israel's city plans show state parks encircling the Old City, with some 60% of Jabal Mukaber zoned as green space, off-limits to Palestinian development. At least 20,000 Palestinian homes in east Jerusalem are now slated for demolition, watchdogs say.

Matar and his neighbors face an agonizing choice: Build illegally and live under constant threat of demolition, or leave their birthplace for the occupied West Bank, sacrificing Jerusalem residency rights that allow them to work and travel relatively freely throughout Israel.

While there are no reliable figures for permit approvals, the Israeli municipality set aside just over 7% of its 21,000 housing plans for Palestinian homes in 2019, reported Ir Amim, an anti-settlement advocacy group. Palestinians are nearly 40% of the city's roughly 1 million people.

"This is the purpose of this policy," said Aviv Tatarsky, a researcher at Ir Amim. "Palestinians are forced to leave Jerusalem."

Arieh King, a Jerusalem deputy mayor and settler leader, acknowledged that demolitions help Israel entrench control over east Jerusalem, home to the city's most important religious sites.

"It's part of enforcing sovereignty," King said. "I'm happy that at last we have a minister that understands," he added, referring to Ben-Gvir.

Ben-Gvir is now pushing for the destruction of an apartment tower housing 100 people. Trying to lower tensions, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delayed the eviction that was planned for Tuesday, Israeli media reported.

King contended it was possible for Palestinians to secure permits and accused them of building without authorization to avoid an expensive bureaucracy.

When the al-Abasi family in east Jerusalem found a demolition order plastered on their new breeze-block home last month, they contemplated their options. The government had knocked down their last apartment, built on the same lot, eight years ago. This time, Jaafar al-Abasi decided, he would tear it down himself.

Al-Abasi hired a tractor and invited his relatives and neighbors to join. The destruction took three days, with breaks for hummus and soda. His three sons borrowed pickaxes and jackhammers, angrily hacking away at the walls they had decorated with colored plates just last month.

"This place is like a ticking time bomb," said his brother in law, 48-year-old Mustafa Samhour, who helped them out.

Protests over the demolitions have roiled east Jerusalem in recent days. Two weekends ago, Samhour said, the family's 13-year-old cousin opened fire at Jewish settlers in the neighborhood of Silwan just across

the valley, wounding two people before being shot and arrested.

"The pressure just grows more and more," Samhuri said. "And at last, boom."

LeBron James makes NBA history on a star-filled night in LA

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bronny James stepped over to his dad's locker and played the phone video he had taken of Tuesday night's biggest moment. The NBA's new scoring king tipped his head back in a rich, full-throated laugh when the audio revealed Bronny had anticipated that the historic basket would come on a fadeaway jumper.

"That's tough, that's tough," LeBron James said. "That's funny."

For James, the greatest cost of nearly two decades in the NBA is the family time he misses. When he reached arguably the greatest individual basketball milestone of all by passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's career scoring record, James' mother, wife and three children all witnessed the coronation.

They were right at courtside in a building packed with stars and roaring fans who rose in waves of anticipation every time he touched the ball.

James has been thriving under formidable pressure his entire adult life, and this was nothing the King couldn't handle — although the man who says he almost never cries had tears in his eyes after he made history with that nimble step-back shot in the third quarter.

"I had a moment when it happened, and I embraced that moment," James said afterward. "Seeing my family and friends, the people that's been around me since I started this journey to the NBA, definitely very emotional right there. Just a kid from a small town in Ohio. I had a moment there, but I don't think it's really hit me, what just transpired."

When James surpassed Abdul-Jabbar's record 38,387 points, a crowd that had roared for his every basket went the craziest of all.

"A lot of people wanted me to go to the skyhook to break the record, or one of the signature dunks," James said with a grin. "But the fadeaway is a signature play as well."

The Los Angeles crowd screamed and stomped with every point while James steadily surged toward the mark held since April 1984 by Abdul-Jabbar, who watched the game from a baseline seat near the Los Angeles bench.

With four championship rings and nearly every other honor available to a basketball player, the 38-year-old James closed in on this next moment in history with the confidence of a player who has been even better than anyone could have expected two decades ago when the kid from Akron, Ohio, reached the NBA.

"The expectations were all the way out to Pluto, and he went ahead and created his own galaxy," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said before his team's 133-130 loss to the Oklahoma City Thunder.

The crowd was in its seats far earlier than normal in Los Angeles, and James got numerous ovations before the Lakers and Thunder got rolling. Lakers fans turned out in droves for the chance to see a once-in-a-generation achievement, with tickets going for thousands on the secondary market.

The moment was irresistible to fans like Aaron Sanchez, one of the hundreds of jersey-clad Lakers faithful patiently taking turns posing in front of the statue of Abdul-Jabbar that stands on the plaza in front of the Lakers' downtown arena.

Sanchez shares a set of two season tickets with a few friends and family, and he already had the seats for Tuesday's game months before anyone could predict the magic day. He turned down a friend's offer of \$200 to swap the Thunder seats, but he knew he would be out of luck if James waited until Thursday to break the record, since those tickets belong to a different friend.

"It's basketball history, and that's what the Lakers are all about," Sanchez said. "LeBron is already one of the greatest Lakers ever, and getting this record in a Lakers uniform just makes it more certain. He was our leader after Kobe (Bryant) died, and he's our leader now."

Indeed, James has already earned a special place in Lakers fans' hearts over his five seasons in purple and gold. Several months before he won the franchise's 17th championship in the Florida pandemic bubble,

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he became a part of Lakers lore with his inspirational words and steady leadership in the wake of Bryant's death in a helicopter crash.

Inside the building, dozens of celebrities gathered to witness history: Denzel Washington, Jay-Z, Bad Bunny, LL Cool J, Usher, Andy Garcia and countless others. Dozens of basketball greats also turned out, including Lakers heroes James Worthy and Bob McAdoo along with Dwyane Wade.

The biggest star in the crowd was Abdul-Jabbar, who has verbally sparred with James in public over issues not directly related to basketball. The Lakers legend known to all as Cap wasn't about to miss history, and he shared a warm hug with James before ceremonially exchanging a basketball in a simple, touching gesture.

Although the final score chafed him, James said he'll never forget this stop on his two-decade journey. "This ride has been fantastic," James said.

Biden in State of Union exhorts Congress: 'Finish the job'

By ZEKE MILLER, SEUNG MIN KIM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden exhorted Congress Tuesday night to work with him to "finish the job" of rebuilding the economy and uniting the nation as he delivered a State of the Union address aimed at reassuring a country beset by pessimism and fraught political divisions.

In his 73-minute speech, Biden sought to portray a nation dramatically improved from the one he took charge of two years ago: from a reeling economy to one prosperous with new jobs; from a crippled, pandemic-weary nation to one that has now reopened, and a democracy that has survived its biggest test since the Civil War.

"Folks, the story of America is a story of progress and resilience. Of always moving forward. Of never, ever, giving up," Biden said. "It's a story unique among all nations. We're the only country that has emerged from every crisis we've ever entered stronger than when we got into it."

"We're not finished yet by any stretch of the imagination," he declared.

The backdrop for the annual address was markedly different from the previous two years, with a Republican speaker now sitting expressionless behind Biden and newly empowered GOP lawmakers in the chamber sometimes shouting criticism of him and his administration.

As Biden, 80, prepares for a likely reelection bid, he sought to prove to a skeptical nation that his stewardship has delivered results both at home and abroad. He highlighted record job creation during his tenure as the country has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, and pointed to areas of bipartisan progress in his first two years in office, including on states' vital infrastructure projects and high-tech manufacturing. And he said, "There is no reason we can't work together and find consensus on important thing in this Congress as well."

"The people sent us a clear message. Fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict, gets us nowhere," Biden said. "That's always been my vision for the country: to restore the soul of the nation, to rebuild the backbone of America — the middle class — and unite the country."

"We've been sent here to finish the job!"

But the challenges for Biden are many: economic uncertainty, a wearying war in Ukraine, growing tensions with China and more. Signs of past trauma at the Capitol, most notably the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, were unavoidable: A large fence encircled the complex, and lawmakers and those in attendance faced tighter-than-usual security.

From the start, the heightened partisan divisions were clear. Democrats — including Vice President Kamala Harris — jumped to applause as Biden began his speech. New Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, though he had greeted the president warmly when he entered the chamber, stayed in his seat.

The speech came as Biden has shifted his sights after spending his first two years pushing through major bills such as the bipartisan infrastructure package, legislation to promote high-tech manufacturing and climate measures. With Republicans now in control of the House, and even meeting the government's

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fiscal obligations far from certain, Biden is turning his focus to implementing those massive laws and making sure voters credit him for the improvements.

Instead of flashy proposals, the president offered an encouraging assessment of the nation's condition, declaring that two years after the Capitol attack, America's democracy was "unbowed and unbroken."

The president took to the House rostrum at a time when just a quarter of U.S. adults say things 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. And a majority of Democrats don't want Biden to seek another term.

He sought to confront those sentiments head-on.

"You wonder whether the path even exists anymore for your children to get ahead without having to move away," Biden said. "I get that. That's why we're building an economy where no one is left behind. Jobs are coming back, pride is coming back because of the choices we made in the last several years."

Biden on Wednesday was to travel to Wisconsin, as he and members of his Cabinet embark on a two-day, 20-state blitz to highlight economic progress in his first two years in office.

Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who gained a national profile as former President Donald Trump's press secretary, delivered the Republican response to Biden's speech.

She focused much of her remarks on social issues, including race in business and education and alleged big-tech censorship of conservatives.

"While you reap the consequences of their failures, the Biden administration seems more interested in woke fantasies than the hard reality Americans face every day," she said. "Most Americans simply want to live their lives in freedom and peace, but we are under attack in a left-wing culture war we didn't start and never wanted to fight."

"The choice is between normal and crazy," she added.

With COVID-19 restrictions now lifted, the White House and legislators from both parties invited guests designed to drive home political messages with their presence in the House chamber. The mother and stepfather of Tyre Nichols, who was severely beaten by police officers in Memphis and later died, were among those seated with first lady Jill Biden. Other Biden guests included the rock star/humanitarian Bono and 26-year-old Brandon Tsay, who disarmed a gunman in last month's Monterey Park, California, shooting.

"There's no words to describe the heartache and grief of losing a child," Biden said after introducing RowVaughn and Rodney Wells to a standing ovation. He called on Congress to "rise to this moment" to make meaningful change in policing.

Biden drew bipartisan applause when he praised most law enforcement officers as "good, decent, honorable people" but added that "when police officers or police departments violate the public's trust, they must be held accountable."

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus invited family members of those involved in police incidents, as they sought to press for action on police reform in the wake of Nichols' death.

Biden, not known for his lofty oratory, appeared relaxed and confident as he delivered his address. He casually adlibbed jokes and rejoinders, seeming to feed off the responses from Democratic lawmakers who frequently stood with thunderous ovations and playfully engaging with Republican critics.

Addressing Republicans who voted against the big bipartisan infrastructure law, Biden said he'd still ensure their pet projects received federal support. "I promised to be the president for all Americans," he said. "We'll fund these projects. And I'll see you at the ground-breaking."

Occasional Republican heckling — some drawing hushes from McCarthy — reflected the newly empowered GOP that is itching to undo many of Biden's achievements and vowing to pursue a multitude of investigations — including looking into the recent discoveries of classified documents from his time as vice president at his home and former office.

Though he pledged bipartisanship where possible, Biden also underscored the sharp tensions that exist: He discussed GOP efforts to repeal the Democrats' 2022 climate change and healthcare law and their reluctance to increase the federal debt limit, the nation's legal borrowing authority that must be raised

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later this year or risk default.

"Instead of making the wealthy pay their fair share, some Republicans — some Republicans want Medicare and Social Security to sunset. I am not saying it's a majority," Biden said. As GOP lawmakers in the audience pushed back, Biden responded: "We're not going to be moved into being threatened to default on the debt if we don't respond."

Still, some Republicans refused to back down, with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., and others jumping to their feet, some yelling "Liar!"

The president answered back, "Stand up and show them: We will not cut Social Security! We will not cut Medicare!"

As Republicans continued to protest his accusations, he said, "We've got unanimity."

While hopes for large-scale bipartisanship are slim, Biden reissued his 2022 appeal for Congress to get behind his "unity agenda" of actions to address the opioid epidemic, mental health, veterans' health and cancer.

In fiery refrains, Biden said the phrase "finish the job" 13 times, challenging lawmakers to complete the work of his administration on capping insulin costs for all Americans, confronting climate change, raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations and banning assault-style weapons. But on all of those fronts, the divided government is even less likely to yield than the Congress under sole Democratic control.

The speech came days after Biden ordered the military to shoot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon that flew brazenly across the country, captivating the nation and serving as a reminder of tense relations between the two global powers.

"Make no mistake: As we made clear last week, if China's threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country," Biden said. "And we did."

Last year's address occurred just days after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine and as many in the West doubted Kyiv's ability to withstand the onslaught. Over the past year, the U.S. and other allies have sent tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to bolster Ukraine's defenses. Now, Biden must make the case — both at home and abroad — for sustaining that coalition as the war drags on.

"Together, we did what America always does at our best," Biden said. "We led. We united NATO. We built a global coalition. We stood against Putin's aggression. We stood with the Ukrainian people."

North Korean leader Kim brings daughter to visit troops

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un brought his daughter to visit troops to mark the 75th founding anniversary of the country's army as he lauded the "irresistible might" of his nuclear-armed military, state media said Wednesday.

The visit came amid indications North Korea is preparing to stage a massive military parade in the capital, Pyongyang, where it could showcase the latest hardware of a growing nuclear weapons program that stokes the concern of its neighbors and the United States.

In her fourth known public appearance, Kim's daughter Kim Ju Ae, believed to be 9 or 10 years old, stood closely with her father as he shook the hands of senior officials and sat next to him at a table. Analysts say Kim's decision to bring his daughter to public events tied to his military is to remind the world he has no intentions to voluntarily surrender his nuclear weapons, which he apparently sees as the strongest guarantee of his survival and the extension of his family's dynastic rule.

State media's lofty description of Kim Ju Ae, who has been called "respected" and "beloved," has also inspired debate on whether she's being primed as her father's successor. She attended a flight test of an intercontinental ballistic missile in November and has accompanied her father to a meeting with military scientists and an inspection of ballistic missiles.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Wednesday that Kim visited the lodging quarters of the Korean People's Army's general officers with his daughter. He later gave an encouraging speech to troops at a banquet, praising them for maintaining the "strongest army in the world" despite external

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difficulties.

The visit came a day after Kim presided over a meeting with his top military brass and called for an expansion of combat exercises aimed at sharpening war readiness, as he looks to escalate an already provocative run in weapons demonstrations in the face of deepening tensions with his neighbors and Washington.

State media photos showed military officials applauding at the banquet, which appeared to be held at Pyongyang's Yanggakdo Hotel. Kim and his daughter dressed alike in black suits and white dress shirts and held hands as they walked down a red carpet alongside Kim's wife, Ri Sol Ju.

Kim during his speech said it was his "greatest honor" and delight to be the supreme commander of an army that is "fulfilling (the) call of the times and history as the strongest army in the world."

State media reports on Kim's visit to troops didn't mention any comments made toward Washington or Seoul. But Pyongyang's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in an editorial Wednesday that the North's military is prepared to unleash a "super strong strike of unimaginable might to wipe out the origins of provocations without a trace" when facing enemy threats.

The newspaper said North Korea's ramped up weapons tests and combat exercises last year were successful demonstrations of "overwhelming military might" that supports the government's escalatory nuclear doctrine and its principle of "power-to-power, all-out confrontation" against enemies.

North Korea hasn't confirmed plans for a military parade, which could possibly take place later Wednesday. Residents in Pyongyang marked the anniversary by visiting the city's Mansu Hill to lay flowers and pay respect to the statues of their late leaders, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, respectively the grandfather and father of their ruler, as soldiers lined up to salute.

Commercial satellite images have shown weeks of apparent preparations involving huge numbers of troops and civilians for an event typically intended to glorify Kim Jong Un's rule and his relentless push to cement the North's status as a nuclear power.

North Korea is also facing deepening economic isolation and food shortages, showing the costs of Kim's nuclear ambitions are piling up.

North Korea is coming off a record-breaking year in weapons testing, and the dozens of missiles it fired in 2022 included potentially nuclear-capable systems designed to strike targets in South Korea and the U.S. mainland.

The intensified testing activity was punctuated by fiery statements threatening preemptive nuclear attacks against its neighbors and the United States in a broad range of scenarios where it may perceive its leadership as under threat.

Animosity could rise in coming months with Kim doubling down on his nuclear push entering 2023.

During a major political conference in December, Kim called for an "exponential increase" of the country's nuclear warheads, mass production of battlefield tactical nukes targeting "enemy" South Korea and the development of more powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the continental United States.

Aside of developmental tests, North Korea could also dial up its military demonstrations in response the United States' expanding combined military exercises with South Korea, which the allies say are aimed at countering the North's evolving threat.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry last week warned that the country is prepared to counter U.S. military moves with the "most overwhelming nuclear force" as it condemned U.S. plans to expand its joint exercise with South Korea and deploy more advanced military assets like bombers and aircraft carriers to the region.

'Invasion' language continues after El Paso Walmart shooting

By MORGAN LEE and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — From inside a Texas Walmart in 2019 during one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history, Adria Gonzalez heard the gunman shout epithets against Mexicans as she helped panicked shoppers toward the store exits.

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She won't be there Wednesday when Patrick Crusius is expected to plead guilty in an El Paso courtroom to federal hate crime and firearms charges for the killing of 23 people. But she is angry federal prosecutors won't seek the death penalty over a racist attack that, according to investigators, was preceded by the shooter posting an online screed that warned of a "Hispanic invasion" of Texas.

"It's a slap in the face for us Latinos," Gonzalez said.

The expected guilty plea would amount to the first conviction in a case that has dragged on more than three years, and Crusius could still face the death penalty over separate state charges. But for Democrats and immigrant rights groups, there is a separate disappointment: How the description of an "invasion" on the U.S.-Mexico border has continued in American politics even after the El Paso shooting.

From campaign stumps to hearings in Congress, Republicans have increasingly described high numbers of migrant crossings into the U.S. as an invasion threatening public safety and overwhelming border communities. Critics have condemned the characterization as anti-immigrant and dangerous in the aftermath of El Paso and other racially motivated attacks.

The issue flared again Tuesday during a hearing on border security in the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, where Democrats accused the other side of fanning rhetoric against migrants. Republicans pushed back.

"For my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who want to state that we're using this hearing for white nationalism, I'm not doing that," said Republican Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida, who is Black.

The Aug. 3, 2019, shooting happened on a busy weekend at a Walmart that is typically popular with shoppers from Mexico and the U.S. In addition to those killed, more than two dozen were injured and hundreds more were scarred by being present or having a loved-one hurt.

Many of the dead and wounded were citizens of Mexico.

Crusius, 24, surrendered to police after the massacre, saying, "I'm the shooter," and that he was targeting Mexicans, according to court records. Prosecutors have said he drove more than 10 hours from his hometown near Dallas to the largely-Latino border city and published a document online shortly before the shooting that said it was "in response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas."

Shortly after the shooting, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott came under criticism over a fundraising mailer dated the day before the attack that called on his supporters to "defend Texas" from immigrants entering the country illegally. He responded at the time by saying "mistakes were made" over the mailer, though did not elaborate or assign fault.

But Abbott has more recently embraced using the word "invasion" while authorizing a series of hard-line immigration measures, including a letter to state police and the Texas National Guard in November with the subject line "Defend Texas Against Invasion."

Abbott has defended his statements by saying he is invoking language included in the U.S. Constitution. Some legal scholars have called it a misreading of the clause.

"If this is not an invasion, what is it?" Abbott told CNN's Jake Tapper during an interview last month. "Think about the volume of people coming across the border."

Abbott's office did not return a request seeking comment Tuesday.

Texas state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, a Democrat whose district includes South Texas, said the language needs to stop. "We are not at war here," he said.

America's Voice, an immigration reform group, said it tracked more than 80 Republican candidates during last year's midterm elections who amplified what they called "invasion" and "replacement" conspiracies.

"I think it's been creeping over the years," said Zachary Mueller, political director of America's Voice. "What I would say is that in 2021, there was a marked shift where it went from the fringes of the Republican Party into the mainstream of the Republican Party."

A database of mass killings in the U.S. since 2006 compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University shows that the number of deadly mass shootings linked to hate crimes has increased in recent years. Among 13 prominent instances, the 2019 Walmart shooting was the deadliest. The database tracks every mass killing — defined as four dead, not including the offender — in the U.S.

since 2006.

It remains unclear when Crusius might still face trial on separate state charges in Texas. Gonzalez, who has been credited with saving lives in the Walmart, believes the death penalty would send a message.

Tending to her 3-month-old infant at home in El Paso, Gonzalez says she lives in fear of further attacks and now carries a small handgun with her for protection after completing firearms training.

"This stays with us, the ones that were inside that Walmart shooting that August morning," she said. "We're the ones that saw everything, and we're still hurting inside."

Scoring King: James passes Abdul-Jabbar for NBA points mark

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LeBron James got the first official statistic of his NBA career on a rebound. His next entry on the stat sheet was an assist.

Even then, points weren't the priority. They never were.

Somehow, he became the most prolific scorer in NBA history anyway. It finally happened Tuesday night, the kid from Akron, Ohio, connecting on a stepback jumper to push his career total to 38,388 points and break the record that Kareem Abdul-Jabbar held for nearly 39 years.

James outstretched his arms after his 36th point of the night for the Los Angeles Lakers, threw both hands in the air, then smiled. Abdul-Jabbar rose from his seat and clapped. The game was stopped as members of James' family, including his mother, his wife and their three children, took the floor for a ceremony recognizing the moment.

"It's never gotten my juices flowing," James told The Associated Press, when asked what the scoring record means to him. "I'm there now because I never, ever thought about it. The only thing I ever thought about was winning championships, maybe a couple MVPs, maybe defensive player of the year. But scoring championships and records, I'm telling you, that was never on my mind."

Abdul-Jabbar — a longtime Laker and one of many celebrities and sports stars who made sure they were there to see history — became the league's all-time leading scorer on April 5, 1984 and wound up retiring in 1989 with 38,387 points. It was a record that some thought would last forever, with very few even coming close. Karl Malone retired 1,459 points behind Abdul-Jabbar, Kobe Bryant was 4,744 points shy, and Michael Jordan was 6,095 points away.

James passed them all, then caught Abdul-Jabbar, too. The 38-year-old — who finished with 38 points in the Lakers' 133-130 loss — did it in his 20th season. Abdul-Jabbar also played 20 NBA seasons.

"You've got to give him credit for just the way that he planned to last and to dominate," Abdul-Jabbar told TNT.

And now, King James — a moniker he's had since high school, when he was just a kid from Akron — is the NBA's scoring king, with 38,390 points and counting.

"A record that has stood for nearly 40 years, which many people thought would never be broken," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said.

Abdul-Jabbar held the ball aloft, then handed it to James, the ceremonial passing of the torch. They posed for photos with Silver, then with one another. James wiped away tears from his eyes, then addressed the crowd.

"I just want to say, thank you to the Laker faithful. You guys are one of a kind," James said. "To be able to be in the presence of such a legend as great as Kareem, it's very humbling. Please give a standing ovation to the Captain, please."

James then thanked his family and those who have supported him, including Silver and the late NBA Commissioner David Stern.

"I thank you guys so much for allowing me to be a part of something I've always dreamed about," James said.

At least 16 different players have, technically, been the all-time leading scorer in league history — most of those coming in the opening month of the league's existence in 1946, when everybody was starting

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from zero and nine different players were atop the scoring list in the first 16 days.

But only six have ended a season officially as the all-time leader: Joe Fulks, George Mikan, Dolph Schayes, Bob Pettit, Wilt Chamberlain and Abdul-Jabbar.

James will be the seventh name on that list, and he's likely to stay there for a long time. No active player is within 10,000 points of James, who is under contract for two more years and is on pace to become the league's first 40,000-point scorer sometime next season.

"Nobody will ever, ever touch it," said Cleveland forward Kevin Love, a teammate of James on the 2016 title team. "The scoring record now will never be eclipsed. I don't care. It will never, ever be touched. It will never happen again."

James could have had the scoring record long ago, if so inclined. But he always preferred passing. James is behind only John Stockton, Jason Kidd and Chris Paul on the all-time assists list. None of them were, or are, close to the scorer that James is. Of that group, Paul comes closest, ranking 38th in NBA history.

And Paul is 17,000 points behind the new scoring king.

"I hadn't thought of it that way, but that is very true," Silver told AP in advance of the record-setting night. "I think it even adds — right? — to this this accomplishment for a guy who became a scorer because he determined that's what was necessary to win. And you're right, he probably doesn't get enough credit for his selfless play, because there's so much focus and attention on him. ... I think it makes it that much more special, that he'd rather be known for his assists than his baskets."

James is the only member of the NBA's triple-quintuple club: at least 10,000 points, 10,000 rebounds and 10,000 assists. There are 44 players to reach five digits in two of those categories.

He'll almost certainly be the NBA's all-time leader in earnings whenever he retires; when adding in the \$97 million he'll make over the next two seasons, he'll be past \$500 million in on-court salary alone. He's a 19-time All-Star selection, tying an Abdul-Jabbar record. If he plays in the game on Feb. 19 in Salt Lake City, he'll set a record for appearances.

Others, maybe, have been this good. That's always a debate. But no one has ever been this good, for this long. James — a two-time champion in Miami, a champion in Cleveland in 2016 and a champion with the Lakers in 2020 — is averaging 30 points per game in his 20th season; only three other players have averaged more than 10 points per game this deep into their careers, none of those averaging more than Bryant's 17.6 in his 20th and final season.

"I never did the, 'OK, if I play this amount of time and I average this' thing," James said. "I've never done that with anything in my career. I always said, 'If it happens, it happens.'"

It happened.

Memphis officer took, shared photos of bloodied Tyre Nichols

By ADRIAN SAINZ, TRAVIS LOLLER and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Documents released Tuesday provided a scathing account of what authorities called the "blatantly unprofessional" conduct of five officers involved in the fatal police beating of Tyre Nichols during a traffic stop last month — including new revelations about how one officer took and shared pictures of the bloodied victim.

The officer, Demetrius Haley, stood over Nichols as he lay propped against a police car and took photographs, which Haley sent to other officers and a female acquaintance, according to documents released by the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission.

"Your on-duty conduct was unjustly, blatantly unprofessional and unbecoming for a sworn public servant," the Memphis Police Department wrote in requesting that Haley and the other officers be decertified.

Haley's lawyer declined to comment, and lawyers for the other four officers either declined to comment or did not respond to requests from The Associated Press.

The five officers — Haley, Desmond Mills Jr., Tadarrius Bean, Justin Smith and Emmitt Martin III — have all been fired and charged with second-degree murder. The new documents offer the most detailed account to date of each officer's actions.

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Another officer has also been fired and a seventh has been relieved of duty in connection with the latest police killing to prompt angry nationwide protests and an intense public conversation about how police officers treat Black residents.

As many as 13 Memphis officers could end up being disciplined, officials said Tuesday.

The newly released documents are part of a request by the Memphis Police Department that the five officers who have been charged with murder be decertified and prohibited from working in law enforcement again. Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis signed each of the five requests to decertify the officers.

Haley, who was driving an unmarked car and wore a black sweatshirt hoodie over his head, forced Nichols from his car using loud profanity, then sprayed him directly in the eyes with a chemical irritant spray, according to the statement.

"You never told the driver the purpose of the vehicle stop or that he was under arrest," it states.

Haley did not have his body camera on when he stopped Nichols but was on a phone call with someone who overheard the encounter.

Nichols ran from the officers but was apprehended again a few blocks away. At that point, Haley kicked him in the torso as three other officers were handcuffing him. Other officers kicked Nichols in the face, punched him or struck him with a baton. According to footage captured on a utility pole camera, one of the officers appears to quickly take a photo of Nichols on his phone as flashlights are shined on him.

"You and other officers were captured on body worn camera making multiple unprofessional comments, laughing, bragging about your involvement," the decertification charges against Mills said.

They added, "You admitted you did not provide immediate medical aid and walked away and decontaminated yourself from chemical irritant spray," and further accused Mills of later failing to give Nichols' mother an accurate account of what happened.

Martin claimed Nichols tried to snatch the officer's gun from his holster after another officer forced him out of the vehicle, with Martin helping by grabbing Nichols' wrist. However, video evidence doesn't corroborate the gun-grab claim, the documents said.

Audio from a body camera did not capture Nichols using profanity or making violent threats — instead, he appeared calm and polite in his comments to the officers. Martin, meanwhile, cussed at Nichols and threatened to knock him out as he commanded Nichols to put his arm behind his back.

Martin also failed to disclose in a required form that he punched Nichols in the face and kicked him multiple times, and instead added in his later statement to investigators that he gave "body blows," the documents said. Video showed Martin kicking Nichols repeatedly and punching him in the face five times while two officers held Nichols' arms.

Police deemed Martin's oral and written statements deceitful, the charges said.

A hearing officer wrote of Justin Smith: "You admitted you struck an unarmed and non-violent subject with a closed fist two to three times in the face because you and your partner were unable to handcuff him. ... You sprayed the subject with your chemical irritant spray and also held the individual's arm while other officers kicked, punched and pepper sprayed him several times."

In a letter from Smith included in his file, he defends his conduct, stating that Nichols was "violent and would not comply."

Bean was accused of holding Nichols by one arm while another officer pepper sprayed and beat him with a baton. It also notes that his indifference to Nichols' distress in the aftermath was reported by a civilian who took video of the incident.

Nichols died three days after the beating. His family attended the State of the Union address Tuesday as guests of first lady Jill Biden.

Fears grow for untold numbers buried by Turkey earthquake

By MEHMET GUZEL, GHAITH ALSAYED and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

NURDAGI, Turkey (AP) — Rescuers raced against time early Wednesday to pull survivors from the rubble before they succumbed to cold weather two days after an earthquake tore through southern Turkey and

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war-ravaged northern Syria. The death toll climbed above 7,700 and was expected to rise further.

The last two days have brought dramatic rescues, including small children emerging from mounds of debris more than 30 hours after Monday's pre-dawn quake. But there was also widespread despair and growing anger at the slow pace of rescue efforts in some areas.

"It's like we woke up to hell," said Osman Can Taninmis, whose family members were still beneath the rubble in Hatay, Turkey's hardest-hit province. "Help isn't coming, can't come. We can't reach anyone at all. Everywhere is destroyed."

In Syria, residents found a crying newborn still connected by the umbilical cord to her mother, who was dead. The baby was the only member of her family to survive a building collapse in the small town of Jinderis, relatives told The Associated Press.

Search teams from nearly 30 countries and aid pledges poured in. But with the damage spread across several cities and towns — some isolated by Syria's ongoing conflict — voices crying for help from within mounds of rubble fell silent.

Monday's magnitude 7.8 quake and powerful aftershocks cut a swath of destruction that stretched hundreds of kilometers (miles) across southeastern Turkey and neighboring Syria. The shaking toppled thousands of buildings and heaped more misery on a region wracked by Syria's 12-year civil war and refugee crisis.

Turkey is home to millions of refugees from the war. The affected area in Syria is divided between government-controlled territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, where millions rely on humanitarian aid to survive.

Unstable piles of metal and concrete made the search efforts perilous, while freezing temperatures made them ever more urgent, as worries grew about how long trapped survivors could last in the cold. Snow swirled around rescuers in parts of Turkey.

The scale of the suffering — and the accompanying rescue effort — were staggering.

Many survivors in Turkey have had to sleep in cars, outside or in government shelters.

"We don't have a tent, we don't have a heating stove, we don't have anything. Our children are in bad shape. We are all getting wet under the rain and our kids are out in the cold," Aysan Kurt, 27, told the AP. "We did not die from hunger or the earthquake, but we will die freezing from the cold."

Adelheid Marschang, a senior emergencies officer with the World Health Organization, said up to 23 million people could be affected in the entire quake-hit area, calling it a "crisis on top of multiple crises."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said 13 million of the country's 85 million people were affected, and he declared a state of emergency in 10 provinces. More than 8,000 people have been pulled from the debris in Turkey, and some 380,000 have taken refuge in government shelters or hotels, authorities said.

But authorities faced criticism from residents of hard-hit Hatay, sandwiched between Syria and the Mediterranean Sea, who say rescue efforts have lagged. Erdogan's handling of the crisis could weigh heavily on elections planned for May, and his office has already dismissed the criticism as disinformation.

Nurgul Atay told The Associated Press she could hear her mother's voice beneath the rubble of a collapsed building in the Turkish city of Antakya, the capital of Hatay province. But rescuers did not have the heavy equipment needed to rescue her.

"If only we could lift the concrete slab, we'd be able to reach her," she said. "My mother is 70 years old, she won't be able to withstand this for long."

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said 1,647 people were killed in Hatay alone, the highest toll of any Turkish province. At least 1,846 people had been rescued there as of Tuesday evening, he said. Hatay's airport was closed after the quake destroyed the runway, complicating rescue efforts.

In Syria, meanwhile, aid efforts have been hampered by the ongoing war and the isolation of the rebel-held region along the border, which is surrounded by Russia-backed government forces. Syria itself is an international pariah under Western sanctions linked to the war.

Volunteer first responders known as the White Helmets have years of experience rescuing people from buildings destroyed by Syrian and Russian airstrikes in the rebel-held enclave, but they say the earthquake

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has overwhelmed their capabilities.

Mounir al-Mostafa, the deputy head of the White Helmets, said they were able to respond efficiently to up to 30 locations at a time but now face calls for help from more than 700.

"Teams are present in those locations, but the available machinery and equipment are not enough," he said, adding that the first 72 hours were crucial for any rescue effort.

The United Nations said it was "exploring all avenues" to get supplies to the rebel-held northwest.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the road leading to the Bab al-Hawa border crossing — the only terminal through which U.N. aid is allowed to enter the rebel-held area — was damaged by the quake, disrupting deliveries.

Dujarric said the U.N. was preparing a convoy to cross the conflict lines within Syria.

The U.N. already delivers aid across conflict lines to the rebel-held enclave. But it can't move the quantities needed because of difficulties in arranging convoys with opposing parties, making aid deliveries from Turkey critical.

Syrian President Bashar Assad's government has pressed for years for all humanitarian aid to be sent from within Syria, including to the opposition-held enclave. The U.N. has increased cross-conflict line deliveries but not enough for the millions in need.

Turkey has large numbers of troops in the border region and has tasked the military with aiding its rescue efforts, including setting up tents for survivors and a field hospital in Hatay province.

A navy ship docked Tuesday at the province's port of Iskenderun, where a hospital collapsed, to transport people in need of medical care to a nearby city.

A large fire at the port, caused by containers that toppled over during the earthquake, sent thick plumes of black smoke into the sky. The Defense Ministry said the blaze was extinguished with the help of military aircraft, but live footage broadcast by CNN Turk showed it was still burning.

Vice President Fuat Oktay said at least 5,894 people have died from the earthquake in Turkey, with another 34,810 injured.

The death toll in government-held areas of Syria has climbed to 812, with some 1,400 injured, according to the Health Ministry. At least 1,020 people have died in the rebel-held northwest, according to the White Helmets, with more than 2,300 injured.

The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999.

Lucky player in Seattle suburb wins \$754.6M Powerball prize

AUBURN, Wash. (AP) — A single winning ticket for a \$754.6 million Powerball jackpot was sold at a department store in a Seattle suburb, Washington state lottery officials said Tuesday.

The winning numbers drawn Monday night were 5, 11, 22, 23, 69 and the Powerball 7.

The winning ticket was bought Sunday at a Fred Meyer store in Auburn, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Seattle, lottery officials said. The store will receive a \$50,000 bonus.

The winner has not yet come forward.

It's the second time a Powerball jackpot ticket was sold in Washington state, and both tickets were purchased in Auburn. The first was a \$90 million jackpot in 2014.

Lottery officials said another \$1 million prize from a ticket bought in Airway Heights, near Spokane, in November remains unclaimed. Lottery winners have 180 days to claim their prizes.

Powerball officials said in a statement early Tuesday that a single ticket matched all six numbers and that ticket sales pushed the jackpot higher than an earlier \$747 million estimate.

The full jackpot is for a winner opting for an annuity distributed in one immediate but partial payout followed by additional payments over 29 years that increase by 5% annually. The winner also can opt for a one-time cash payment of \$407.2 million.

Both prizes available are the amounts before taxes, Powerball said.

The estimated jackpot for the next drawing scheduled for Wednesday is \$20 million, according to the

lottery's website.

Monday night's win was the first Powerball jackpot win since Nov. 19. That winless streak allowed the prize to grow larger and larger until it became the ninth-largest in U.S. history.

Higher interest rates have allowed annuity payments to increase compared with earlier jackpots, when rates were lower. Most winners prefer the immediate cash prize.

The game's abysmal odds of 1 in 292.2 million are designed to build big prizes that draw more players. That strategy certainly has worked recently: Someone in Maine won a \$1.35 billion Mega Millions prize in January and a California player hit a record \$2.04 billion Powerball jackpot last November. No one has claimed either of those prizes.

Powerball is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Microsoft bakes ChatGPT-like tech into search engine Bing

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

REDMOND, Wash. (AP) — Microsoft is fusing ChatGPT-like technology into its search engine Bing, transforming an internet service that now trails far behind Google into a new way of communicating with artificial intelligence.

The revamping of Microsoft's second-place search engine could give the software giant a head start against other tech companies in capitalizing on the worldwide excitement surrounding ChatGPT, a tool that's awakened millions of people to the possibilities of the latest AI technology.

Along with adding it to Bing, Microsoft is also integrating the chatbot technology into its Edge browser. Microsoft announced the new technology at an event Tuesday at its headquarters in Redmond, Washington.

"Think of it as faster, more accurate, more powerful" than ChatGPT, built with technology from ChatGPT-maker OpenAI but tuned for search queries, said Yusuf Mehdi, a Microsoft executive who leads its consumer division, in an interview.

A public preview of the new Bing launched Tuesday for desktop users who sign up for it, but Mehdi said the technology will scale to millions of users in coming weeks and will eventually come to the smartphone apps for Bing and Edge. For now, everyone can try a limited number of queries, he said.

The strengthening partnership with OpenAI has been years in the making, starting with a \$1 billion investment from Microsoft in 2019 that led to the development of a powerful supercomputer specifically built to train the San Francisco startup's AI models.

While it's not always factual or logical, ChatGPT's mastery of language and grammar comes from having ingested a huge trove of digitized books, Wikipedia entries, instruction manuals, newspapers and other online writings.

Microsoft Corp. CEO Satya Nadella said Tuesday that new AI advances are "going to reshape every software category we know," including search, much like earlier innovations in personal computers and cloud computing. He said it is important to develop AI "with human preferences and societal norms and you're not going to do that in a lab. You have to do that out in the world."

The shift to making search engines more conversational — able to confidently answer questions rather than offering links to other websites — could change the advertising-fueled search business, but also poses risks if the AI systems don't get their facts right. Their opaqueness also makes it hard to source back to the original human-made images and texts they've effectively memorized, though the new Bing includes annotations that reference the source data.

"Bing is powered by AI, so surprises and mistakes are possible," is a message that appears at the bottom of the preview version of Bing's new homepage. "Make sure to check the facts."

As an example of how it works, Mehdi asked the new Bing to compare the most influential Mexican painters and it provided typical search results, but also, on the right side of the page, compiled a fact box summarizing details about Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and Jose Clemente Orozco. In another example, he quizzed it on 1990s-era rap, showing its ability to distinguish between the song "Jump" by Kris Kross and "Jump Around" by House of Pain. And he used it to show how it could plan a vacation or help with shopping.

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Gartner analyst Jason Wong said new technological advancements will mitigate what led to Microsoft's disastrous 2016 launch of the experimental chatbot Tay, which users trained to spout racist and sexist remarks. But Wong said "reputational risks will still be at the forefront" for Microsoft if Bing produces answers with low accuracy or so-called AI "hallucinations" that mix and conflate data.

Google has been cautious about such moves. But in response to pressure over ChatGPT's popularity, Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Monday announced a new conversational service named Bard that will be available exclusively to a group of "trusted testers" before being widely released later this year.

Wong said Google was caught off-guard with the success of ChatGPT but still has the advantage over Microsoft in consumer-facing technology, while Microsoft has the edge in selling its products to businesses.

Chinese tech giant Baidu also this week announced a similar search chatbot coming later this year, according to Chinese media. Other tech rivals such as Facebook parent Meta and Amazon have been researching similar technology, but Microsoft's latest moves aim to position it at the center of the ChatGPT zeitgeist.

Microsoft disclosed in January that it was pouring billions more dollars into OpenAI as it looks to fuse the technology behind ChatGPT, the image-generator DALL-E and other OpenAI innovations into an array of Microsoft products tied to its cloud computing platform and its Office suite of workplace products like email and spreadsheets.

The most surprising might be the integration with Bing, which is the second-place search engine in many markets but has never come close to challenging Google's dominant position.

Bing launched in 2009 as a rebranding of Microsoft's earlier search engines and was run for a time by Nadella, years before he took over as CEO. Its significance was boosted when Yahoo and Microsoft signed a deal for Bing to power Yahoo's search engine, giving Microsoft access to Yahoo's greater search share. Similar deals infused Bing into the search features for devices made by other companies, though users wouldn't necessarily know that Microsoft was powering their searches.

By making it a destination for ChatGPT-like conversations, Microsoft could invite more users to give Bing a try, though the new version so far is limited to desktops and doesn't yet have an interface for smartphones — where most people now access the internet.

On the surface, at least, a Bing integration seems far different from what OpenAI has in mind for its technology. Appearing at Microsoft's event, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said the "the new Bing experience looks fantastic" and is based in part on learnings from its GPT line of large language models. He said a key reason for his startup's Microsoft partnership is to help get OpenAI technology "into the hands of millions of people."

OpenAI has long voiced an ambitious vision for safely guiding what's known as AGI, or artificial general intelligence, a not-yet-realized concept that harkens back to ideas from science fiction about human-like machines. OpenAI's website describes AGI as "highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work."

OpenAI started out as a nonprofit research laboratory when it launched in December 2015 with backing from Tesla CEO Elon Musk and others. Its stated aims were to "advance digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole, unconstrained by a need to generate financial return."

That changed in 2018 when it incorporated a for-profit business Open AI LP, and shifted nearly all its staff into the business, not long after releasing its first generation of the GPT model for generating human-like paragraphs of readable text.

OpenAI's other products include the image-generator DALL-E, first released in 2021, the computer programming assistant Codex and the speech recognition tool Whisper.

Fed's Powell: Strong hiring could force further rate hikes

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Tuesday that if the U.S. job market further strengthens in the coming months or inflation readings accelerate, the Fed might have to raise its benchmark interest rate higher than it now projects.

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Powell's remarks followed the government's blockbuster report last week that employers added 517,000 jobs in January, nearly double December's gain. The unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in 53 years, 3.4%.

"The reality is if we continue to get strong labor market reports or higher inflation reports, it might be the case that we have to raise rates more" than is now expected, Powell said in remarks to the Economic Club of Washington.

Though price pressures are easing and Powell said he envisions a "significant" decline in inflation this year, he cautioned that so far the central bank is seeing only "the very early stages of disinflation. It has a long way to go."

Even as the Fed has raised rates dramatically — by 4.5 percentage points, to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%, the fastest increase in four decades — the job market has remained surprisingly resilient. In addition, inflation, though still high, slowed to a year-over-year rate of 6.5% in December from 9.1% in June.

The slowdown in inflation, even while the economy has stayed healthy, has raised hopes in financial markets that the Fed might be able to achieve its goal without having to raise borrowing rates so high as to cause a steep recession.

But Powell brushed aside that notion Tuesday.

"There's been an expectation that it'll go away quickly and painlessly," Powell said. "I don't think that's at all guaranteed."

Instead, he warned that in his estimation, "it will take some time, and we'll have to do more rate increases and then we'll have to look around and see if we've done enough."

Inflation has slowed at the same time that the unemployment rate has declined — a trend that defies most economic models. Powell said that phenomenon reflects the unique nature of the post-pandemic U.S. economy.

"It's just confounded all sorts of attempts to predict what it will do," he said.

Powell's remarks Tuesday followed the moderately optimistic note he struck at a news conference last week. Speaking to reporters then, Powell noted that high inflation had begun to ease and said he believed the Fed could tame spiking prices without causing a deep recession involving waves of layoffs.

But the Fed chair also warned then that the job market was still out of balance, with robust demand for labor and too-few workers in many industries leading employers to sharply raise wages, a trend that could help keep inflation high.

Some Fed officials have already said the stronger-than-expected jobs report made it more likely that the central bank will have to keep raising its benchmark rate, which affects the rates on many consumer and business loans.

Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said Tuesday morning in an interview on CNBC that January's outsize hiring gain showed that the Fed's higher rates have so far had only a limited effect in slowing the economy.

"We need to raise rates aggressively," Kashkari said, "to put a ceiling on inflation, then let monetary policy work its way through the economy."

On Friday, the government issued a jobs report that suggested that the economy and hiring were even healthier than Fed officials had thought. Employers added 517,000 jobs in January, the report said, nearly double December's gain, and the unemployment rate reached 3.4%, the lowest level in 53 years.

Navy divers begin pulling up Chinese spy balloon debris

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Navy divers began pulling pieces of the downed Chinese spy balloon from the depths of the ocean floor on Tuesday, using sophisticated reconnaissance drones dubbed the Kingfish and the Swordfish to locate the debris.

After collecting all of the balloon's white fabric and shell structure found floating on the surface, the Navy has now shifted to an all-underwater search for the remnants of the massive balloon that a U.S. fighter jet shot down off the coast of South Carolina on Saturday, officials said.

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Navy and Coast Guard personnel were using underwater drones to locate and map the debris field, and divers were in the water gathering up what they could, officials said.

The debris already collected was being hauled by small boats to a few area locations, including a Coast Guard station south of Myrtle Beach, and, depending on the size, will eventually go either to the FBI lab at Quantico, Virginia, or other sites where experts can analyze it, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details of an ongoing military operation.

The head of U.S. Northern Command, Gen. Glen VanHerck, who is in charge of the recovery effort, and several Biden administration officials will brief members of Congress on the balloon on Wednesday and Thursday.

Lawmakers have raised a number of questions about whether the balloon was able to collect intelligence and transmit it back to China during the time it traveled eastward across the United States, after crossing the border from Canada into Idaho.

White House and Pentagon officials have largely avoided providing any details on the balloon's capabilities.

Officials said Tuesday the U.S. was very aware of the sites the balloon crossed over — including nuclear missile silos and other military installations — and knows how to protect them from any intelligence collection. Even if the balloon was able to transmit, they said, it wasn't getting any new or important information to send.

The officials were unwilling to provide any insight into what the U.S. has been able to glean about the balloon's collection and transmission abilities.

The balloon, an estimated 200 feet (60 meters) tall, was carrying a long sensor package underneath, which VanHerck estimated was the size of a small regional jet.

U.S. counterintelligence teams hope to learn far more about the sensors and other equipment on the balloon as they retrieve it and study it.

The balloon debris is scattered in waters that are about 50 feet (15 meters) deep, but stretch across an area 15 football fields long and 15 football fields across, VanHerck said.

In new images released Tuesday morning, sailors from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 2 can be seen leaning over a rigid hull inflatable boat and pulling in broad swaths of the balloon's white outer fabric and shell structure.

VanHerck has also said the recovery teams were taking precautions to safeguard against the chance any part of the balloon was rigged with explosives or was dangerous in any way.

A Navy warship, the USS Carter Hall, is heading the recovery effort, aided by three Coast Guard cutters — the Venturous, the Richard Snyder and the Nathan Bruckenthal — as well as the USNS Pathfinder, an oceanographic survey ship. A salvage ship is expected to arrive on Wednesday.

The Pentagon said Tuesday that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin requested a secure call with his Chinese counterpart, Minister of National Defense Wei Fenghe, on Saturday after the balloon was shot down. China declined the request, said Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary.

"Lines between our militaries are particularly important in moments like this. ... Our commitment to open lines of communication will continue," Ryder said.

Super Bowl gambling surging as states legalize it? You bet

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — As legal sports gambling proliferates, the number of Americans betting on the Super Bowl and the total amount they're wagering is surging — although most of the action is still off the books.

An estimated 1 in 5 American adults will make some sort of bet, laying out a whopping \$16 billion, or twice as much as last year, according to an industry trade group.

Even as legal gambling has spread to two-thirds of U.S. states, independent analysts say only about \$1 billion of the total being wagered on Sunday's game will happen through casinos, racetracks or companies such as FanDuel and DraftKings, whose ads have become ubiquitous during sporting events.

The vast majority of people, in other words, are still betting with friends and family, participating in of-

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fice pools or taking their chances with a bookie.

More than 50 million American adults are expected to bet on the national championship game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs, according to the American Gaming Association, whose estimates are based on a nationwide online survey of 2,199 adults. That's an increase of 61% from last year.

Experts in addiction say aggressive advertising is contributing to a rise in problem gambling.

"As sports betting expands, the risk of gambling problems expands," said Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

Thirty-three states, plus Washington, D.C., now offer legal sports betting, and more than half of all American adults live in one of those markets.

"Every year, the Super Bowl serves to highlight the benefits of legal sports betting," said Bill Miller, the gambling association's president and CEO. "Bettors are transitioning to the protections of the regulated market ... and legal operators are driving needed tax revenue to states across the country."

But legal sports betting still represents just a small piece of the pie.

Eilers & Krejcik Gaming Research, an independent analytics firm in California, estimates that just over \$1 billion of this year's Super Bowl bets will be made legally. The leading states are: Nevada (\$155 million); New York (\$111 million); Pennsylvania (\$91 million); Ohio (\$85 million) and New Jersey (\$84 million.)

The research firm estimates 10% to 15% of that total would be wagered live after the game begins. Another 15% to 20% would come in the form of same-game parlays, or a combination of bets involving the same game, such as betting on the winner, the total points scored and how many passing yards Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts will accumulate.

As legal sports betting grows, so too has concern about its effect on people with gambling problems.

The National Council on Problem Gambling has conducted nationwide surveys since 2018, when New Jersey won a U.S. Supreme Court case clearing the way for all 50 states to offer legal sports betting. They ask questions like, "Do you ever borrow money to gamble?"

Between 2018 and 2021, the number of people whose answers indicated they were at risk of a gambling problem increased by 30%, said Whyte, the council's executive director.

He added that the Super Bowl presents an opportunity to see how well responsible gambling messaging and campaigns by sports books and professional sports leagues are working.

On Tuesday, New Jersey gambling regulators unveiled new requirements for sports books to analyze the data they collect about their customers to look for evidence of problem gambling, and to take various steps to intervene with these customers when warranted.

"It is no coincidence that our announcement comes just a week ahead of one of the biggest days in sports wagering, serving as a reminder of how devastating a gambling addiction can be," New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin said.

As of Tuesday, the Eagles were 1.5-point favorites over the Chiefs on FanDuel, the official odds provider to The Associated Press. Bettors are evenly split on who will win the game, according to the gaming industry association.

Amid soaring crime, Memphis cops lowered the bar for hiring

By BERNARD CONDON, JIM MUSTIAN and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Beyond the beating, kicking, cursing and pepper spraying, the video of Tyre Nichols' deadly arrest at the hands of young Memphis police officers is just as notable for what's missing — any experienced supervisors showing up to stop them.

That points to a dangerous confluence of trends that Memphis' police chief acknowledged have dogged the department as the city became one of the nation's murder hotspots: a chronic shortage of officers, especially supervisors, increasing numbers of police quitting and a struggle to bring in qualified recruits.

Former Memphis police recruiters told The Associated Press of a growing desperation to fill hundreds of slots in recent years that drove the department to increase incentives and lower its standards.

"They would allow just pretty much anybody to be a police officer because they just want these numbers,"

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said Alvin Davis, a former lieutenant in charge of recruiting before he retired last year out of frustration. "They're not ready for it."

The department offered new recruits \$15,000 signing bonuses and \$10,000 relocation allowances while phasing out requirements to have either college credits, military service or previous police work. All that's now required is two years' work experience — any work experience. The department also sought state waivers to hire applicants with criminal records. And the police academy even dropped timing requirements on physical fitness drills and removed running entirely because too many people were failing.

"I asked them what made you want to be the police and they'll be honest — they'll tell you it's strictly about the money," Davis said, adding that many recruits would ask the minimum time they would actually have to serve to keep the bonus money. "It's not a career for them like it was to us. It's just a job."

Another former patrol officer-turned-recruiter who recently left the department told the AP that in addition to drawing from other law enforcement agencies and college campuses, recruits were increasingly coming from jobs at the McDonald's and Dunkin' drive-thrus.

In one case, a stripper with an arrest record submitted an application. And even though she didn't get hired, it reinforced the message that "anyone can get this job. You could have any type of experience and be the police."

"There were red flags," said the former recruiter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel and hiring. "But we're so far down the pyramid nobody really hears the little person."

Many young officers, before ever walking a beat with more experienced colleagues, found themselves thrust into specialized units like the now-disbanded SCORPION high-crime strike force involved in Nichols' arrest. Their lack of experience was shocking to veterans, who said some young officers who transfer back to patrol don't even know how to write a traffic ticket or respond to a domestic call.

"They don't know a felony from a misdemeanor," Davis said. "They don't even know right from wrong yet."

Memphis police did not respond to requests for comment about their hiring standards. But police Director Cerelyn Davis, who took over in June 2021, has said supervision of less experienced officers is an urgent need, noting her department is investigating why a supervisor failed to respond to Nichols' arrest despite a policy that requires a ranking officer to go to the scene when pepper spray or a stun gun is used.

"If that had happened, somebody could have been there to intercept what happened," Davis told the AP in an interview last month.

"Culture eats policy for lunch in police departments," she added. "If you don't have the checks and balances you will have problems."

Davis told city council members Tuesday that she intends to bring in an outside vendor to help fill 125 new supervisor slots, which would improve the ratio of supervisors to officers from the current 1-to-10 to about 1-to-8, closer to what is considered the ideal ratio of at least 1-to-7.

"While those 125 don't satisfy the ratio, this is a start," Davis said. "It's not just the officer that has to be held accountable. It's everybody in the chain up to the chief of police."

Of the five SCORPION team officers now charged with second-degree murder in Nichols' Jan. 7 beating, two had only a couple of years on the force and none had more than six years' experience.

One of the officers, Emmitt Martin III, 30, a former tight end on the Bethel University football team, appeared to have had at least one arrest, according to files from the Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission, a state oversight agency. But the date and details of the case were blacked out.

The section for arrests in the agency's file for another officer, Demetrius Haley, 30, who worked at a Shelby County Corrections facility before joining the force, was also redacted from the state records. Haley was sued for allegedly beating an inmate there, which he denied, and the case was dismissed because papers had not been properly served.

"If you lower standards, you can predict that you're going to have problems because we're recruiting from the human race," said Ronal Serpas, the former head of the police in Nashville and New Orleans and the Washington State Patrol. "There's such a small number of people who want to do this and an infinitesimally smaller number of people we actually want doing this."

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Memphis, in many ways, stands as a microcosm of the myriad crises facing American policing. Departments from Seattle to New Orleans are struggling to fill their ranks with qualified officers amid a national movement of mounting scrutiny and calls for reform in the wake of the 2020 killing of George Floyd.

Davis' aim after taking office was to increase staff from 2,100 to 2,500, close to the size of the force a decade ago. Instead, the police ranks have dropped to 1,939 officers — like the city, majority Black — even as the population has increased and the number of homicides topped 300 in each of the past two years.

A big part of the reason for the dwindling ranks is that more than 1,350 officers either resigned or retired over the past decade — more than 300 in the last two years alone.

Michael Williams, former head of the Memphis Police Association, the officers' union, said strict supervision is essential, especially for the specialized teams like SCORPION.

"Why would you have an elite task force that you know is designed for aggressive policing and you don't cover your bases? They may have to shoot someone. They may have to kick someone's door down. They may have to physically restrain someone," Williams said. "You should have experienced people around to restrain them and keep them from going down a dark path."

Longtime observers of the Memphis police say this is not the first moment of reckoning for a department with a history of civil rights abuses.

After the 2015 death of Darrius Stewart, a 19-year-old Black man fatally shot by a white police officer, activists and U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, a Tennessee Democrat, called on the U.S. Justice Department to conduct a "pattern or practice" investigation of civil rights violations in the department. Such inquiries often result in sweeping reforms, including staffing and training overhauls.

Carlos Moore, an attorney for Stewart's family, warned the Justice Department at the time of a deadly trend that preceded Stewart's death. "There have been over 24 suspicious killings of civilians by officers of the Memphis Police Department since 2009," he wrote in a 2015 letter obtained by AP, "and not one officer has been indicted for killing unarmed, largely Black young men."

The Justice Department decided not to open such an inquiry for reasons it didn't explain at the time, and it declined to comment this week.

"The Department of Justice missed a golden opportunity to properly investigate the Memphis Police Department," Moore said in an interview. "It was just as corrupt then as it is now."

Thaddeus Johnson, a former Memphis police officer who is now a criminal justice professor at Georgia State University, said the missed chance for federal intervention allowed the problems of the department — soaring crime, community distrust and chronic understaffing — to fester until they exploded.

"A deadly brew came together," he said. "But that same mixture is in many other places, too, where the bubble just hasn't burst yet."

Will Ferrell, Alicia Silverstone star in Super Bowl ads

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Super Bowl is advertising's biggest, glitziest stage.

Big name advertisers from Netflix to Google are paying as much as \$7 million for a 30-second spot during the big game on Sunday, in order to capture the attention of the roughly 100 million viewers who tune in each year.

In order to get as much as a return on investment for those millions, most advertisers release their ads in the days ahead of the big game to get the most publicity for their spots. In the ads released so far, actor Miles Teller dances to customer-service hold music for Bud Light, Will Ferrell crashes popular Netflix shows like "Bridgerton" in a joint ad for GM and Netflix; and Alicia Silverstone reprises her "Clueless" character for online shopping site Rakuten.

BOOKING.COM

Actress Melissa McCarthy stars in a musical number for the travel site about her desire to go on a trip "somewhere, anywhere."

BUD LIGHT

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Actor Miles Teller ("Top Gun: Maverick") and his wife Keleigh Sperry Teller dance to customer service hold music while drinking a Bud Light.

BUDWEISER

In a regional ad, a diverse group of people share a six-pack of Budweiser — a voiceover by Kevin Bacon showcases the "six degrees of Bud." Although he's not shown, the ad is a nod to the "Six degrees of Kevin Bacon" meme — the idea that anyone in the entertainment business can be linked to Kevin Bacon in six connections.

BUSCH LIGHT

A mountain man talk talks about surviving the outdoors in an ad that stars singer Sarah McLachlan spoofing her well-known and oft mocked animal-advocacy ad that uses her song "Angel."

DEXCOM

Singer Nick Jonas returns for the second year in an ad that highlight's Dexcom's glucose monitoring system.

DOWNY UNSTOPABLES

Super Bowl regular Procter & Gamble promotes its Downy Unstopables brand in an ad showing actor Danny McBride — who wants to go by "Downy McBride."

DRAFTKINGS

The online betting site shows stars including skateboard mogul Tony Hawk and singer Ludacris discussing DraftKings free bet offer at a party at actor Kevin Hart's house.

GENERAL MOTORS AND NETFLIX

Actor and comedian Will Ferrell drives different GM electric vehicles through different Netflix shows, including "Bridgerton" and "Stranger Things," to announce that Netflix will feature electric vehicles in its original shows.

HELLMANN'S

The mayo brand shows actors Jon Hamm and Brie Larson in a fridge with a jar of Hellmann's mayo — to drive home the point that Hellmann's would go well with a "ham and brie" sandwich.

MICHELOB ULTRA

Michelob Ultra's two ads are set at Bushwood Country Club, the fictional country club in "Caddyshack," and star a bevy of stars and athletes: tennis great Serena Williams, actor Brian Cox, Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo, soccer player Alex Morgan and boxer Canelo Alvarez.

POPCORNERS

The Frito-Lay brand recreates "Breaking Bad" with Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul — but this time the duo are cooking up the PopCorners snack in their RV instead of anything illicit.

PRINGLES

Anyone can get their hand stuck in a Pringles can, according to Pringles' latest Super Bowl ad effort, including singer Meghan Trainor.

RAKUTEN

The online shopping site tapped "Clueless" stars Alicia Silverstone and Elisa Donovan to recreate a scene from the 1995 hit and convey that Rakuten gives shoppers cash back on purchases. Designer Christian Siriano also appears as a student.

UBER ONE

Uber's ad for its membership program Uber One shows hip hop mogul P. Diddy working to create a hit song for Uber One. The ad features singers of famous hits, including Montell Jordan ("This is How We Do It"), Kelis ("Milkshake"), Donna Lewis ("I Love You Always Forever"), Haddaway ("What is Love") and Ylvis ("What Does the Fox Say").

WORKDAY

In the first Super Bowl ad from the enterprise software company, actual rock stars Ozzy Osbourne, Billy Idol, Joan Jett and others complain that office workers shouldn't call each other "rock stars."

Disney faces losing control of its kingdom with Florida bill

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Disney's government in Florida has been the envy of any private business, with its unprecedented powers in deciding what to build and how to build it at the Walt Disney World Resort, issuing bonds and holding the ability to build its own nuclear plant if it wanted.

Those days are numbered as a new bill released this week puts the entertainment giant's district firmly in the control of Florida's governor and legislative leaders in what some see as punishment for Disney's opposition to the so-called "Don't Say Gay" law championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Republican-controlled Legislature.

"Disney won't like it because they're not in control," said Richard Foglesong, professor emeritus at Rollins College, who wrote a definitive account of Disney's Reedy Creek Improvement District in his book, "Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando."

With that loss of control comes an uncertainty about how Disney's revamped government and Walt Disney World, which it governs, will work together — whether the left hand always will be in sync with the right hand as it has been with the company overseeing both entities.

The uniqueness of Disney's government, where building inspectors examine black box structures holding thrill rides instead of office buildings, also complicates matters. The district essentially runs a midsize city. On any given day, as many as 350,000 people are on Disney World's 27,000 acres (11,000 hectares) as theme park visitors, overnight hotel guests or employees. The 55-year-old district has to manage the traffic, dispose of the waste and control the plentiful mosquitoes.

"What kind of control is preferable? Control by a private business or corporation, or control by appointed officials, appointed by governor of the state?" Foglesong said. "Will they have the expertise to be able to make the new district work as efficiently as the old district works?"

The bill prohibits anybody who has worked or had a contract with a theme park or entertainment complex in the past three years, or their relatives, from serving on the revamped district's board of supervisors, a prohibition that some experts say eliminates people with expertise in the field.

The bill's sponsor, Florida Rep. Fred Hawkins, a Republican from St. Cloud, defended the exclusion Tuesday. "This was a provision I requested," Hawkins said. "We want to try to avoid any conflicts of interest of the new board members."

Under the bill's proposals, Florida's governor appoints the five-member board of supervisors to the re-named Central Florida Tourism Oversight District instead of Disney. Limits would be placed on the district's autonomy by making it subject to oversight and regulation by state agencies, and it would be unable to adopt any codes that conflict with state regulations. The district also would no longer have the ability, if it wanted, to own and operate an airport, stadium, convention center or nuclear power plant.

DeSantis started gunning for Disney's private government last year when the entertainment giant publicly opposed what critics call the "Don't Say Gay" law, which bars instruction on sexual orientation, gender identity and other lessons deemed not age-appropriate in kindergarten through third grade. Republican critics of the Disney district also argued it has given the company an unfair advantage over rivals in issuing bonds and financing expansion.

The Legislature passed a bill last year to dissolve the Disney government by June 2023.

Lawmakers are meeting this week for a special session to complete the state takeover of the district and approve other key conservative priorities of the governor on immigration and voter fraud. A Senate committee approved separate bills Tuesday to expand the governor's migrant relocation program and allow the statewide prosecutor to bring election crime charges.

Florida Rep. Anna Eskamani, a Democrat from Orlando, called the Disney bill on Monday a "power grab" by DeSantis, a potential 2024 presidential candidate who has emerged as a fierce opponent of what he describes as "woke" policies on race, gender and public health. Such positions endear him to the GOP's conservative base but threaten to alienate independents and moderate voters in both parties who are influential in presidential politics.

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The changes proposed in the legislation were welcomed by at least one group of Reedy Creek employees — firefighters who have clashed in the past with district leaders. Tim Stromsnes, a spokesperson for Reedy Creek Professional Firefighters Local 2117, said all the current board cares about is “bonds and low-interest loans for building Disney infrastructure, and zero about treating its employees fairly.”

“We think they are going to be more receptive to first responders,” Stromsnes said Tuesday of the proposed new board. “They’re calling the governor a fascist for doing this ... but he is actually fixing a fascist, Disney-owned government.”

To the relief of taxpayers in neighboring Orange and Osceola counties, the district won’t be dissolved, a prospect that had raised fears that the counties would have to absorb the district’s responsibilities and raise property taxes significantly. The Reedy Creek Improvement District has more than \$1 billion in bond debt.

In a statement, Orange County said officials were monitoring the bill.

The new bill appears to address some key questions raised by last year’s legislation, primarily preserving the district’s ability to raise revenue and service outstanding debt, said Michael Rinaldi, head of local government ratings for Fitch Ratings.

Foglesong expects a legal challenge should the bill pass. Disney didn’t respond to an inquiry asking about any potential lawsuits.

“Disney works under a number of different models and jurisdictions around the world, and regardless of the outcome, we remain committed to providing the highest quality experience for the millions of guests who visit each year,” Jeff Vahle, president of Walt Disney World Resort, said in a statement.

Disney could make an argument that their rights as a private business are being undermined, Foglesong said.

“It will have political appeal, the arguments they make, in a Republican state for a potential presidential candidate,” Foglesong said. “It will be like, legally, ‘How can you do this to us?’ and politically, ‘How can you do this to a corporation that has done so much for the state of Florida?’”

Germany, Denmark, Netherlands pledge Ukraine Leopard 1 tanks

By FRANK JORDANS and SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands announced Tuesday that they plan to provide Ukraine with at least 100 refurbished Leopard 1 battle tanks in the coming months, a pledge that comes as Kyiv anticipates a new Russian offensive around the anniversary of its invasion.

The announcement followed Germany agreeing last month to allow deliveries of the more modern German-made Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.

In a joint statement, the defense ministers of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands said the shipment of the older Leopard 1 tanks was part of an effort “to support Ukraine in their endeavor to withstand Russian aggression.”

“(It) will significantly enhance Ukraine’s military potential for the restoration of their violated territorial integrity,” they said, adding that the delivery would occur “within the coming months” and include logistical support and training.

Ukrainian officials say they expect Russian forces to make a new drive in eastern and southern Ukraine, as the Kremlin strives to secure territory it illegally annexed in late September and where it claims its rule is welcomed.

The anticipated Russian push may seek to recapture territory Moscow lost in a late summer counteroffensive. Battlefield setbacks in Ukraine have embarrassed the Kremlin, and Russian President Vladimir Putin is keen to cement public support for the war.

Some Western military analysts were skeptical, however, of Russia’s ability to mount a large new offensive in coming weeks, particularly in time for the Feb. 24 anniversary, that might alter the course of the war. Ukraine and Russia are both still training their new troops and amassing weapons.

News agency dpa quoted Germany’s defense minister, Boris Pistorius, as saying during a visit to Kyiv on Tuesday that the first 20-25 Leopard 1 tanks would reach Ukraine this summer.

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Pistorius' office said German authorities have authorized the export of up to 178 Leopard 1 A5 tanks to Ukraine, but noted that the actual number sent would depend on the refurbishments required.

The three countries that made the pledge said Belgium has also shown interest in participating in the initiative.

The Leopard 1, manufactured between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, was the first battle tank built for West Germany's Bundeswehr. The German military hasn't had any of the tanks since 2003.

Germany last month agreed to send 14 newer Leopard 2 A6 tanks from its military's current stocks. The country's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that the first Leopard 2s could arrive in Ukraine by the end of March. The first Ukrainian soldiers to be trained on the tanks departed for Germany this week.

Several other European countries have equipped their armies with Leopard 2s, and Germany's move following weeks of mounting pressure meant that those nations could also give some of their stocks to Ukraine.

In some of the latest fighting in Ukraine, local authorities reported Tuesday that Russian shelling damaged a hospital and apartment buildings.

The shelling in the northeastern town of Vovchansk caused multiple fires late Monday, including at the two-story municipal hospital, the regional State Emergency Service said in an online statement.

Emergency crews evacuated eight civilians from the site before putting out the blaze, which caused no casualties, authorities said.

Vovchansk is in the Kharkiv region, which was occupied by Russia after its full-scale invasion began on Feb. 24 and subsequently retaken by Ukraine in the course of its counteroffensive.

Russian forces are "regrouping" as they attempt to break Ukrainian lines in five areas in the country's east and northeast, the Ukrainian military reported Tuesday.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Moscow was focusing its efforts near the towns of Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Novopavlivka in the eastern Donetsk province, as well as Kupiansk in Kharkiv province.

In the Donetsk region, Russian forces also kept up their shelling of Vuhledar, a mining town that has become one of Moscow's key targets, the Ukrainian presidential office said. Five apartment buildings were destroyed in the town, the office said, which had a prewar population of 14,000.

Donetsk province has seen a marked influx of Russian troops in the past few days, according to Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko.

"The transfer of Russian army units goes on day and night. (Russian) shelling intensifies, pressure from the Russians intensifies each day," Kyrylenko said on Ukrainian television.

Russia is also preparing for a major offensive in Luhansk province, which is directly north of Donetsk, Gov. Serhii Haidai said in televised remarks.

The number of Russian attacks in the province increased "dramatically" on Monday and overnight, he said.

"The occupiers are looking for weak points and have brought a lot of equipment and thousands of troops to the front line," Haidai said.

About 60,000 households in Marhanets were left without water after Russian shelling near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant cut the power supply to a local pumping station, authorities reported.

Mykola Lukashuk, who heads the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council, accused Russian forces of firing on towns and villages neighboring the plant, Europe's largest nuclear facility, with heavy artillery and multiple rocket-launchers overnight.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense said in an assessment Tuesday that Russia is "requiring undermanned, inexperienced units to achieve unrealistic objectives due to political and professional pressure."

"Russian leaders will likely continue to demand sweeping advances," it added. "It remains unlikely that Russia can build up the forces needed to substantially affect the outcome of the war within the coming weeks."

Michael Kofman, an American military analyst and director of Russia Studies at the CAN research organization in Arlington, Virginia, tweeted on Monday it was unclear how big an offensive Russia is able to mount.

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He added, "but I suspect it may prove underwhelming, focused largely on the Donbas."

Michael Clarke, visiting professor of war studies at King's College London, said he would be "amazed, I mean, truly amazed, if (the Russians) are in any shape to launch a strategic offensive on the 24th."

He acknowledged Moscow has been scaling up its troop deployment in Ukraine and said Russia could also launch local offensives or major air attacks. But he recalled that Russian commanders are still smarting from their failed attempt early in the war to take Kyiv and topple the Ukrainian government.

He said that "military planners in Russia will be aware that when they start this new offensive, they've got to get it right.

"After the fiasco of the first (offensive), it would be better to leave it and go late than go early and make a mess of it again," Clarke told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian parliament on Tuesday appointed national police chief Ihor Klymenko as the country's new interior minister. Klymenko had served as acting interior minister since the Jan. 18 death of his predecessor, Denys Monastyrskyi, in a helicopter crash on the outskirts of Kyiv.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs controls the police and border forces, National Guard, and emergency response service.

Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, also appointed Vasyl Malyuk to lead Ukraine's main security agency.

At last: Streisand memoir 'My Name is Barbra' coming Nov. 7

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Barbra Streisand's very long and very long-awaited memoir, a project she has talked about for years, is coming out this fall. Viking, a Penguin Random House imprint, will release "My Name is Barbra" on Nov. 7.

Her memoir, fitting for a superstar of the grandest ambitions, is listed at 1,040 pages.

"The book is, like Barbra herself, frank, funny, opinionated, and charming," according to the publisher. "She recounts her early struggles to become an actress, eventually turning to singing to earn a living; the recording of some of her acclaimed albums; the years of effort involved in making 'Yentl'; her direction of 'The Prince of Tides'; her friendships with figures ranging from Marlon Brando to Madeleine Albright; her political advocacy; and the fulfillment she's found in her marriage to James Brolin."

"My Name Is Barbra" also is the title of a 1965 Streisand album and television special.

Publishers have sought a Streisand memoir for decades, with the singer telling Jimmy Fallon in 2021 that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis asked her to write one in the early 1980s, when the former first lady was an editor at Doubleday. During an Associated Press interview in 2009, Streisand mentioned that she had been writing chapters about her life, in longhand.

"I go back and forth," Streisand said at the time. "Do I really want to write about my life? Do I really want to relive my life? I'm not sure."

The memoir was first announced in 2015, and scheduled for two years later, although it didn't have a title at the time. A reference to it on her web site, posted in 2015, was later pulled.

Financial terms for the memoir were not disclosed. Streisand was represented by Robert Barnett, the Washington attorney whose other clients have ranged from Barack Obama to Elton John.

Streisand, 80 has long been wary of discussing her private life, including her relationships with actor Elliott Gould and producer Jon Peters. She has been married to Brolin since 1998.

Study: 15 million people live under threat of glacial floods

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

As glaciers melt and pour massive amounts of water into nearby lakes, 15 million people across the globe live under the threat of a sudden and deadly outburst flood, a new study finds.

More than half of those living in the shadow of the disaster called glacial lake outburst floods are in just four countries: India, Pakistan, Peru and China, according to a study in Tuesday's Nature Communications.

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A second study, awaiting publication in a peer-reviewed journal, catalogs more than 150 glacial flood outbursts in history and recent times.

It's a threat Americans and Europeans rarely think about, but 1 million people live within just 6 miles (10 kilometers) of potentially unstable glacial-fed lakes, the study calculated.

One of the more devastating floods was in Peru in 1941 and it killed between 1,800 and 6,000 people. A 2020 glacial lake outburst flood in British Columbia, Canada, caused a tsunami of water about 330 feet (100 meters) high, but no one was hurt. A 2017 glacial outburst flood in Nepal, triggered by a landslide, was captured on video by German climbers. Alaska's Mendenhall glacier has had annual small glacial outburst floods in what the National Weather Service calls "suicide basin," since 2011, according to study lead author Caroline Taylor, a researcher at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom.

Heavy rains and a glacial lake outburst flood combined in 2013 in India to kill thousands of people. A 2021 deadly flood in India that was initially attributed to a glacial lake outburst wasn't caused by one, studies later found.

Scientists say so far it doesn't seem like climate change has made those floods more frequent, but as glaciers shrink with warming, the amount of water in the lakes grows, making them more dangerous in those rare situations when dams burst.

"We had glacier lake outburst floods in the past that have killed many many thousands of people in a single catastrophic flooding event," said study co-author Tom Robinson, a disaster risk scientist at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. "And with climate change glaciers are melting so these lakes are getting bigger, potentially getting more unstable."

Dan Shugar, a geoscientist at the University of Calgary who wasn't part of the two studies, said much of the threat depends simply on how many people live in a glacial flood zone.

"In a warming world we certainly expect more and larger glacial lakes," Shugar said in an email. "But the threat that these lakes might pose critically depends on where people are living and what their vulnerabilities might be."

Robinson said what's different about his study is that it's the first to look at the climate, geography, population, vulnerability and all these factors to get "a good overview of where in the world is the most dangerous places" for all 1,089 glacial basins.

At the top of the list is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa basin in Pakistan, north of Islamabad.

"That's particularly bad," Robinson said. "Lots of people and they're very, very vulnerable" because they live in a valley below the lake.

The trouble is that scientists are focusing too much attention on the Pakistan, India, China and the Himalayas, often called High Mountain Asia, and somewhat ignoring the Andes, Robinson said. The second and third highest risk basins are in Peru's Santa basin, and Bolivia's Beni basin, the paper said.

After the deadly Andes flood in the 1940s that region "was sort of a leader" in working on glacial flood outburst threats, but in the last decade or so, High Mountain Asia has taken over because of the high population, said University of Dayton geology professor Umesh Haritashya, who wasn't part of the studies.

India ranks high in the threat list not so much because of the physical setup but because of "a huge number of people downstream."

Three lake basins in the United States and Canada rank high for threats, from the Pacific Northwest to Alaska, but aren't nearly as high as areas in Asia and the Andes with few people in the danger zone. They are in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula — distinct from the Mendenhall glacier near Juneau — northeast Washington and west central British Columbia.

"This ranking is a good checklist for further research," said Oliver Korup of the University of Potsdam in Germany, who co-authored the list of glacial lake outburst floods.

NFL, DAZN sign agreement for Game Pass International package

NEW YORK (AP) — The NFL has signed a 10-year agreement with DAZN Group to deliver the Game Pass International service to fans outside the United States beginning with the 2023 season, it was announced

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Tuesday.

Game Pass International will be offered in more than 200 countries and regions, including Canada and Mexico. It will not be available in China.

The service will allow fans outside the U.S. to watch every regular-season and playoff NFL game, including the Super Bowl.

"Growing the NFL globally is a key strategic priority for the League and our 32 Clubs. We are excited to partner with DAZN to help us accelerate this effort," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. "Our goal has always been to make our games available to as many fans as possible, and we are confident that DAZN's innovative viewing experience technology will best serve millions of viewers around the world while also engaging a new generation of international NFL fans."

DAZN has distributed NFL Game Pass in Canada since 2017 and has been the league's broadcast partner in Germany and Japan since 2016 as well as Italy since 2018.

Game Pass International also will deliver NFL Network and NFL RedZone programming as well as access to a library of NFL Films and NFL Media programming. Everything will be available on-demand.

DAZN is available on most connected devices, including smart TVs, smartphones, tablets and game consoles. Game Pass International will be available through the DAZN app either as a standalone subscription or an add-on to an existing package.

The NFL reached an agreement with Google's YouTube TV to distribute Sunday Ticket package of out-of-market, regular-season games in the U.S. beginning in 2023.

The Grammys ended in controversy, again. Here's what to know

By NARDOS HAILE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A night in music brimming with shocking upsets, historic wins, tributes for artists like the late rapper Takeoff and hip-hop's 50th anniversary, the 65th Grammys were back in full swing Sunday. Once again, Beyoncé was in the running for the top honor.

Once again, the show ended with someone else winning album of the year.

This year was widely seen as a chance for the Grammys to honor the superstar with a marquee award, especially on a night where she could have (and did) become its most decorated artist.

Instead, Harry Styles won, and a line from his acceptance speech stung those who thought Beyoncé should have won.

Here's what happened, how it's been perceived and who picks the Grammys' top honors.

WHAT'S CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT STYLES' WIN?

Styles won for his third album, "Harry's House," and even he seemed surprised when his name was called.

The British pop star was competing against other giants in the industry: acts like ABBA, Adele, Bad Bunny, Brandi Carlile, Coldplay, Lizzo, Kendrick Lamar, and Beyoncé.

While accepting the award, he said, "This is really, really kind. I'm so, so grateful... I'm just so — This doesn't happen to people like me very often. And this is so, so nice. Thank you very, very much."

The line, "this doesn't happen to people like me very often," drew criticism in the hours after his win.

Styles was born and raised in Northern England and rose to fame in 2010 when he auditioned for the Simon Cowell-led talent competition show "The X Factor." He placed third with the boyband One Direction. His solo career has earned him several Grammys and Billboard-charting albums and singles.

Styles hasn't said what he meant by his words. Some have interpreted it as him trying to express how far he'd come from his youth. Others, however, see the remark as an example of white privilege.

WHY ARE PEOPLE MAD AT STYLES' WORDS?

Many of Beyoncé's fans are fiercely protective of the singer. They're called the Beyhive, after all.

Despite Beyoncé's 32 Grammy wins — the most of any artist in history — many are troubled by the fact she has yet to win album of year and that she's lost to white musicians every time she has been nominated.

Washington Post pop music critic Chris Richards, in a story headlined "Beyoncé just made Grammy history. Why does it feel like she still lost?" wrote that her historic achievement feels hollow.

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"Why does that feel like not enough," Richards asked. "Because for the past 20 years and counting, the Recording Academy has routinely failed to recognize Black artists at their creative peaks — and to her credit, Beyoncé keeps updating that peak with each new album."

Similar criticism was raised in other stories and by online commenters, some of whom noted a Black woman hadn't won album of the year since Lauryn Hill in the late '90s.

Ashley Smalls, a Black feminism and pop culture doctoral student at Penn State University criticized Styles' speech in a tweet: "'this doesn't happen to people like me very often' when a Black woman hasn't won that award since 1999 is crazy lol."

WHAT IS BEYONCÉ'S GRAMMYS HISTORY?

The artist is tied with her husband, Jay-Z, for most nominations all-time with 88 but she has only won 32 times. Most significantly, Beyoncé has lost album of the year four times to Taylor Swift, Beck, Adele and now Styles.

Beyoncé has been nominated in each of the most prestigious categories across her decadeslong career but she has won in these categories just once for "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)."

A Black woman has not won album of the year since Lauryn Hill received the accolade for her breakout album, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in 1999. The last Black person to win the award was Jon Batiste, last year for his album "We Are."

WHO DECIDES ALBUM OF THE YEAR?

According to Billboard, the Recording Academy boasts more than 12,000 voting members. The entire membership is allowed to vote in the big four categories — best new artist, record, song and album of the year. Members are also responsible for nominating in their area of expertise, as well as voting on the winners this categories.

Numerous artists have criticized how the Grammys nominate artists. The Recording Academy is undergoing a campaign to diversify its membership and has a goal of having 2,500 female members by 2025.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BEYONCÉ AND STYLES?

Both are hitting the road for international tours.

Styles' next show is in Thailand next week and he'll play shows in Asia and Europe into the summer.

Beyoncé will be starting her "Renaissance" tour in May in Sweden and will play dates in Europe and the United States.

Gallup: Just 2 in 10 U.S. employees have work 'best friend'

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Crystal Powers began a new job remotely in February 2022 as a medical records supervisor. She has yet to meet two of the five people who report to her in person and has found it challenging to bond with her fellow managers online.

"I was used to that face-to-face of going into people's cubicles and talking with them one-on-one. It just doesn't translate as well to a remote environment," said the 42-year-old Powers, who lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Just 2 in 10 adult U.S. employees say they definitely have a "best friend" at work, according to a quarterly Gallup survey done in June 2022. The percentage under age 35 dropped by 3 points when compared to pre-pandemic 2019, to 21% from 24%, said Gallup workplace and well-being researcher Jim Harter. There was no such change for workers 35 and up, he said.

Having a best friend at work has become even more important since the dramatic rise in remote and hybrid employment, Harter said.

"We're seeing in the data that younger people in general are feeling more disconnected from their workplaces," he said. "You can attribute some of that potentially to remote work. If they're less connected to their workplace, they have fewer opportunities to connect with other colleagues and to develop those kinds of friendships that they might have had in the past."

For many employees during the pandemic, particularly parents, educators and frontline workers, such

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friendships offered social and emotional support at a critical time, Gallup said.

They also benefited employers. Gallup found a strong link between workers with best friends on the job and profitability, safety, inventory control and retention.

Employees who have a bestie at work are significantly more likely to engage customers and internal partners, get more done in less time, support a safe workplace with fewer accidents, and innovate and share ideas, according to the research.

Karen Piatt started a new job with a medical relief nonprofit just a few weeks into the pandemic lockdowns of 2020. She did all of her interviewing for the post online and works remotely full time.

"It's the first time in my 25-year career that I was hired for a job without meeting the hiring manager in person," said the 52-year-old Piatt, who lives just outside Seattle. "It was nearly two years until I met my colleagues face-to-face."

When she finally did, at a retreat last year, "it was really special," she said. "We hugged and talked as if we had known each other for years. In fact, we had."

Best friends on the job are just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to workers' well-being and added value to employers, Harter said. Without strong positive feelings for an employer, "You can have friendships at work that are likely to be dysfunctional and probably turn into gripe sessions."

Powers said her team is mostly nearing retirement age. One is younger than she is. She is the only manager hired since the pandemic who is handling a full-time remote staff. Team building has been challenging.

"They're not super-interested in doing icebreaker-type stuff or things like trivia get-togethers," she said.

Most of her staff live about 45 minutes away from the office and were commuting in before the pandemic. Powers knows her team has casual, digital get-togethers without her. She does biweekly check-ins with each.

"It's been more challenging than it has been in past positions to get buy-ins on things and earn the trust in me as a supervisor, because they still don't really know me," she said.

Yet Powers likes working remotely.

"I'm hopeful that over time we'll come up with strategies to better engage both with our colleagues and with our subordinates to make it successful," she said.

Henry Crabtree, 26, in London, said that when you have work friends, "You're not only working with each other but for each other."

He was hired in December 2021 onto a small marketing team for a software company that has workers around the globe.

"Seeing each other outside work, especially when colleagues are over from other countries, really helps forge these friendships," he said.

Harter draws a distinction between levels of trust among work besties and more casual work friends.

"It's a lot more difficult to establish close kinds of relationships when you're more distant," he said.

Johnny C. Taylor Jr., president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, cites many benefits to work friends from all standpoints. Worker retention is on the top of his list.

"Secondly, what we found is it fosters workplace harmony. I'm not talking about sexual relationships. When you're at work, we have an interest in ensuring that 'family' life is calm, peaceful and doesn't have drama. So from an employee relations standpoint, when I get heated and upset about something, that person sitting next to me who's my bestie can say, 'Johnny, chill out.'"

He, too, draws a distinction between close friendships and more distant ones at work.

"If there's a disagreement between besties, time will usually heal," Taylor said. "That's not always true for other friendships."

Gallup found that workers sometimes "need the OK" from leaders to develop close friendships on the job. Taylor agrees.

More companies, he said, are actively encouraging friendships. His organization, with nearly 500 employees around the world, is one of a growing number of employers that buy lunches for people who invite somebody they're not close with to a meal as a way to foster new ties.

"From a diversity, equity and inclusion standpoint, we're trying to get people together who have different sets of experiences, lived experiences, backgrounds, etc.," Taylor said. "The idea is, you go to lunch

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with a stranger and make them a friend.”

Today in History: FEB 8, Mary, Queen of Scots beheaded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2023. There are 332 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 8, 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

On this date:

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1924, the first execution by gas in the United States took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Gee Jon, a Chinese immigrant convicted of murder, was put to death.

In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.

In 1965, Eastern Air Lines Flight 663, a DC-7, crashed shortly after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport; all 84 people on board were killed. The Supremes' record "Stop! In the Name of Love!" was released by Motown.

In 1968, three Black students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley.

In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.

In 1973, Senate leaders named seven members of a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal, including its chairman, Democrat Sam J. Ervin of North Carolina.

In 2007, model, actor and tabloid sensation Anna Nicole Smith died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 39 of an accidental drug overdose.

In 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen who'd been diagnosed with the coronavirus had died on Feb. 5 in Wuhan; it was apparently the first American fatality from the virus.

Ten years ago: A massive storm packing hurricane-force winds and blizzard conditions began sweeping through the Northeast, dumping nearly 2 feet of snow on New England and knocking out power to more than a half a million customers.

Five years ago: The federal government stumbled into a shutdown that would end by morning, its second in less than a month, as rogue Senate Republicans blocked a speedy vote on a massive, bipartisan, budget-busting spending deal. For the second time in a week, the Dow Jones industrials plunged by more than 1,000 points as a sell-off in the stock market deepened. Hundreds of thousands lined the streets of Philadelphia as the Eagles celebrated their Super Bowl victory with a parade.

One year ago: Retired Pope Benedict XVI asked forgiveness for any "grievous faults" in his handling of clergy sex abuse cases, but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing after an independent report criticized his actions in four cases while he was archbishop of Munich, Germany. "The Power of the Dog" topped the 2022 Oscar nominations with 10. (It would go on to win just one, best director for Jane Campion.)

Today's birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 91. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 83. Actor Nick Nolte is 82. Comedian Robert Klein is 81. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 80. Singer Ron Tyson is 75. Actor Brooke Adams is 74. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 70. Author John Grisham is 68. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 67. Actor Henry Czerny is 64. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 62. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is

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61. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 60. Actor Missy Yager is 55. Actor Mary McCormack is 54. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 53. Actor Susan Misner is 52. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 49. Actor Seth Green is 49. Actor Joshua Morrow is 49. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 46. Actor William Jackson Harper is 43. Actor Jim Parrack is 42. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 41. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 39. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 38. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 37. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 35. NBA star Klay Thompson is 33. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 33. Actor Karle Warren is 31.