

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar Saturday, Feb. 11

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Basketball Double Header at Mobridge: (Boys JV in MS Gym, 1 p.m.; Girls JV in HS Gym, 1 p.m.; Varsity Girls to follow in HS Gym and then Varsity Boys).

Northeast Conference Wrestling at Webster, 11 a.m.

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

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



Middle School State wrestling at Pierre, 9 a.m.
Junior High Boys Basketball at Mobridge, 11 a.m. in the MS Gym - 2 games)

Sunday, Feb. 12

Kids wrestling Tournament in Groton, 10:30 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

Youth Wrestling Tournament at the Groton Area Arena, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

United Methodist Church: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: worship/milestones, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Worship at Bethesda, 2 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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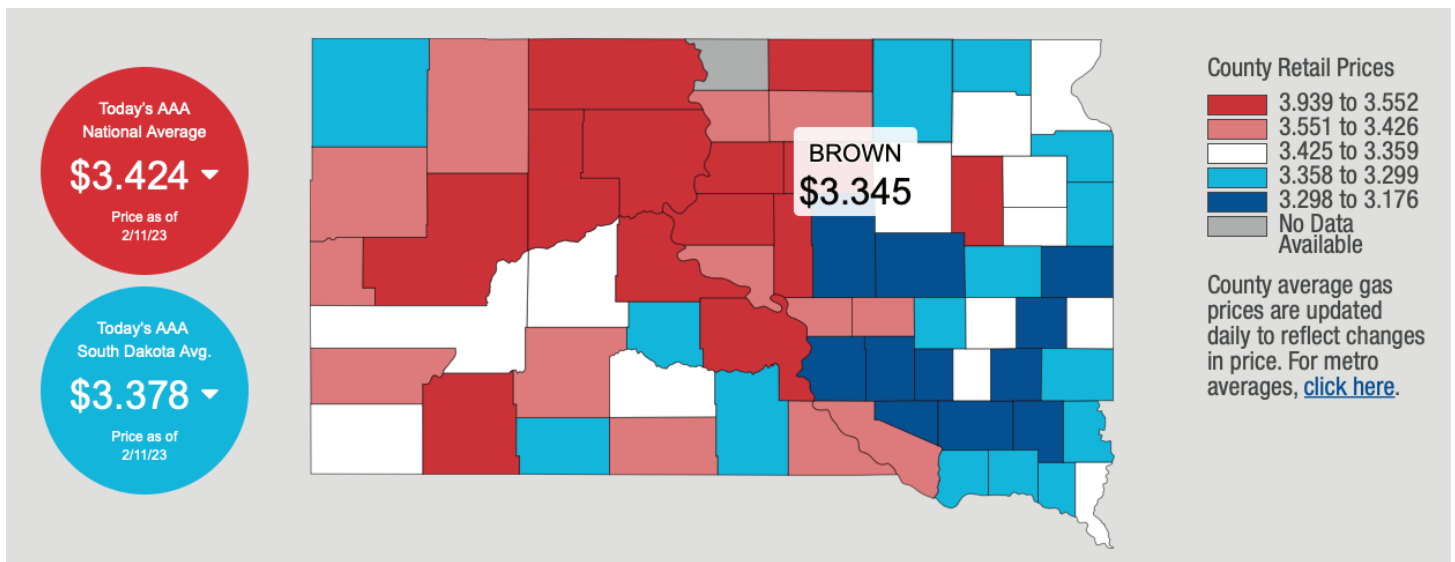
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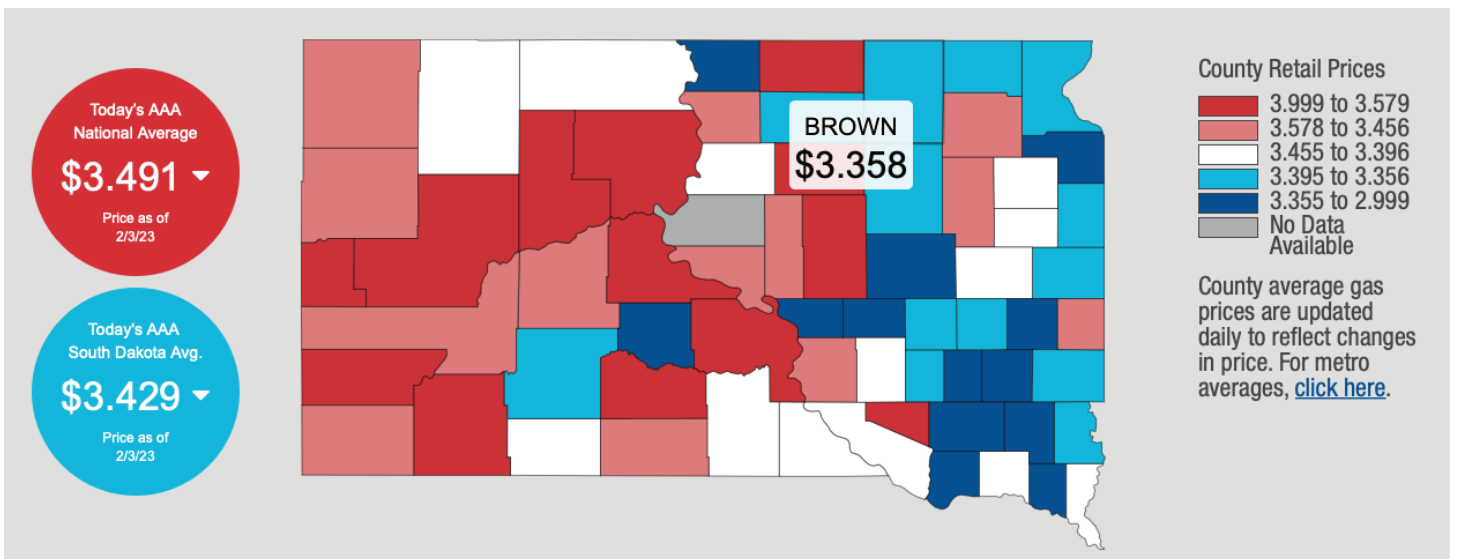
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.378	\$3.531	\$3.986	\$4.307
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.391	\$3.544	\$3.994	\$4.322
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.417	\$3.550	\$4.015	\$4.441
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.216	\$3.384	\$3.820	\$4.295
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.356	\$3.444	\$3.787	\$3.720

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



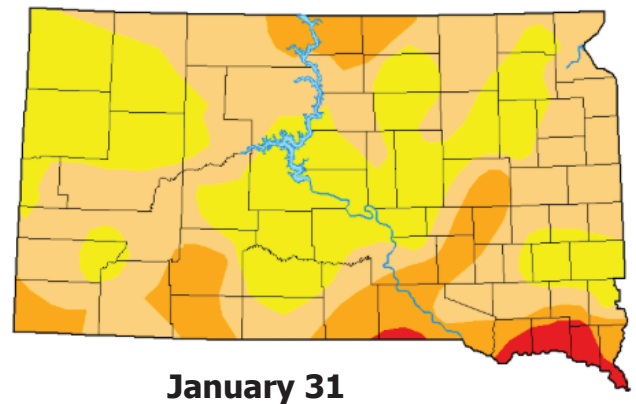
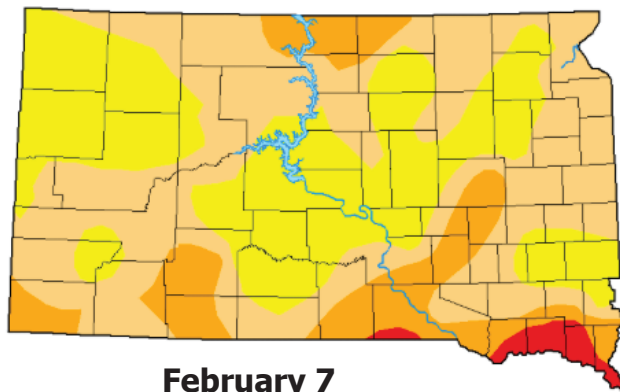
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor











Most of the region was dry for the week with just some light precipitation over eastern Wyoming and surrounding areas. Temperatures were cooler than normal from eastern Colorado through western Kansas and into Nebraska as well as the eastern areas of the Dakotas where temperatures were up to 5 degrees below normal. Temperatures were near normal to slightly above normal through the central to western Dakotas, eastern Wyoming and eastern Kansas. Minimal changes were made this week as only areas of southeast Wyoming improved with a reduction of severe and exceptional drought. Some improvements to severe drought were brought into western North Dakota based on reassessing the data going back a couple of years.

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
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Region 1A Standings

Girls Basketball

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	<u>PTS</u>
1	 Sisseton	15	2	.882	43.941
2	 Milbank	11	6	.647	41.706
3	 Groton Area	11	7	.611	41.056
4	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	8	.529	40.941
5	 Redfield	8	10	.444	39.222
6	 Waubay/Summit	9	9	.500	38.667
7	 Webster Area	6	11	.353	37.941
8	 Tiospa Zina	5	12	.294	37.824

Boys Basketball

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	<u>PTS</u>
1	 Waubay/Summit	14	2	.875	43.938
2	 Groton Area	10	4	.714	42.571
3	 Tiospa Zina	9	7	.562	41.438
4	 Milbank	8	6	.571	41.429
5	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	9	.500	40.333
6	 Redfield	8	10	.444	39.722
7	 Webster Area	4	12	.250	37.812
8	 Sisseton	1	17	.056	36.611

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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NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Complete Season Sweep of Beavers in 62-54 Road Win

Bemidji, MN – Three scored in double figures tonight as the Northern State women's basketball team picked up a critical road victory over Bemidji State, 62-54. With the win the Wolves move into a 3-way tie for fourth place in the north division with only three games remaining in the regular season.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 62, BSU 54

Records: NSU 14-11 (9-10 NSIC), BSU 7-16 (4-15 NSIC)

Attendance: 276

HOW IT HAPPENED

Laurie Rogers knocked down the first two baskets of the game to give Northern State an early 4-0 lead, and the defense held Bemidji State scoreless for nearly the first four minutes of game time; the Wolves scored the final six points of the first period to take a 16-8 lead into second quarter

While Northern went cold shooting from the field in the second quarter, shooting 4-16 (25.0%), NSU remained within striking distance trailing only 26-24 at the halftime break

Bemidji State momentarily held leads of five points in the opening minutes of the third quarter however Northern State used a 6-0 scoring run led by Kailee Oliverson and Rianna Fillipi to grab a 3-point lead (38-35) with 4:14 remaining in the period

Midway through the fourth quarter the Wolves struck a 9-0 scoring run to take the lead for good, shooting 8-12 (66.7%) from the field in the quarter to secure the win

Northern shot 23-55 (41.8%) from the field in the game, and shot 40 percent or better from the field in three of the four quarters

The Wolves won the turnover battle forcing 13 Beaver turnovers while committing only eight in the win; tonight marked the tenth game this season committing ten or fewer turnovers, improving to 7-3 in those contests

Oliverson notched her fifth double-double of the season with 21 points and a career-high 16 rebounds in the win, she also recorded her eighth game of 20 or more points this season (fifth in last six games)

Rogers recorded her 16th game this season in double figures and tenth game with three or more blocks; Fillipi reached double figures for the fifth straight game and 14th this season, while notching three or more steals for the seventh time this season

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Kailee Oliverson: 21 points, 16 rebounds, 2 blocks

Laurie Rogers: 16 points, 6 rebounds, 3 blocks, 2 steals

Rianna Fillipi: 14 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 steals

UP NEXT

Northern State will conclude their weekend in Minnesota this afternoon with a match-up against Minnesota Crookston. The Wolves and Golden Eagles are scheduled for a 5:30 p.m. tip-off from Lysaker Gymnasium.

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NSU Men's Basketball

A Win in Bemidji Leads to 20 in the Season and 300 in Phillips Career

Bemidji, Minn. – The No. 22 Northern State University men's basketball team cruised past Bemidji State on Friday evening on the road. The Wolves shot 53.2% from the floor and 42.4% from the 3-point line, hitting 14 made buckets from beyond the arc.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 85, BSU 63

Records: NSU 20-5 (16-3 NSIC), BSU 16-9 (11-8 NSIC)

Attendance: 478

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern led 38-35 at the half and ran away with the game in the second, out-scoring the Beavers 47-28
- The Wolves out-rebounded the Beavers 35-33 in the win, notching four points off of four offensive boards
- NSU tallied 32 points in the paint, 16 points off turnovers, 17 assists, four blocks and one steal
- They gave up just six turnovers in the contest and forced nine
- In addition, the Beavers tallied just seven made 3-point buckets and the Northern State defense held Bemidji State to 41.9% from the floor and 33.3% from the 3-point line
- Sam Masten led four starters in double figures, notching his third double-double of the season with 21 points and 11 rebounds
- Masten, Jacksen Moni, and Josh Dilling, who all scored double digits, hit three long range buckets in the win
- Dilling was second on the team with eight rebounds and dished out a team high five assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Sam Masten: 21 points, 60.0 field goal%, 11 rebounds, 4 assists, 1 block
- Jacksen Moni: 19 points, 66.7 field goal%, 7 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 block
- Jordan Belka: 18 points, 50.0 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 blocks
- Josh Dilling: 16 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists

BEYOND THE BOX SCORE

- The Wolves 20th win of the season was also the 300th career victory for head coach Saul Phillips
- The Northern State leader holds a career record of 300-186 and NSU record of 85-24

UP NEXT

Northern State remains on the road today at Minnesota Crookston. Tip-off time is set for 3:30 p.m. versus the Golden Eagles.

GHS Girls Basketball

Subvarsity teams beat Redfield, Pheasants fly away from Tigers in varsity game

Groton Area's girls basketball teams won the C and junior varsity games, but lost the varsity one to Redfield Friday night in Groton.

The Tigers won the C game, 47-9. Kella Tracy led the Tigers with 14 points followed by McKenna Tietz and Talli Wright with 11 each, Taryn Traphagen had four, Mia Crank three and Emily Clark and Ashlyn Warrington each had two points.

Charli Jungwirth led Redfield with three points.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 41-15. Kennedy Hansen had 14 points, Brooklyn Hansen had nine points, McKenna Tietz had six points, Faith Traphagen had four, Taryn Traphagen and Mia Crank each had three points and Talli Wright and Kella Tracy each added two points.

It was close at the early part of the varsity game before Redfield scored 10 straight points to take a 15-9 first quarter lead, then led, 24-18 at half time and 34-23 after three quarters. The Tigers did close to within three points, 37-34, late in the game but the Pheasants would pull away at the end.

Brooke Gengerke had six points and three rebounds. Jerica Locke had six points, three rebounds and three assists. Sydney Leicht had five points, one rebound and one steal. Jaedyn Penning had five points and six rebounds. Faith Traphagen had five points and one rebound. Rylee Dunker had two points and one rebound. Aspen Johnson had three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Kennedy Hansen had two rebounds and one steal.

Groton Area made 10 of 27 two-pointers for 37 percent, three of 17 three-pointers for 18 percent, five of eight free throws for 63 percent, had 21 rebound, 13 turnovers, six assists, four steals and 16 team fouls.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Mr Anonymous sponsoring the junior varsity and C games while 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. Shane Clark called the varsity game.



February GHS Students of the Month

From left back: Carly Guthmiller (11th), Chesney Weber (7th), Carly Gilbert (9th), Kennedy Hansen (10th)

From left front: Ashtyn Bahr (12th), Gavin Kroll (8th), Abby Fjeldheim (6th) (Courtesy Photo)

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.

GDILIVE.COM

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

Junior High Boys games, 11 a.m., at the MS Gym sponsored by
Akaska Tavern & Bait Shop

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 Wheeting



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.

GDI Subscribers can watch for free

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Free popcorn nets \$507 to the concession stand

Representatives from Dacotah Bank, Groton, presented a check for \$507 to the Groton Area PAC for popcorn that was given away at the Northwestern double header. The PAC runs the concessions stand the Dacotah Bank gave away 507 bags of popcorn. Pictured left to right are Heidi Locke, Jonna Waage, Kiertsten Sombke (MS/HS principal), Joni Groeblichhoff (Groton PAC), BJ Wiest and Katelyn Nehlich. (Courtesy Photo)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Opponents urge board to 'go back to the drawing board' for social studies standards

The public had a third opportunity to speak to the South Dakota Board of Education about proposed changes to the state's social studies standards on Friday at The Rushmore Hotel in Rapid City, and many used the opportunity to criticize the current draft.

Wade Pogany, executive director of the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, said the board needs to "go back to the drawing board."

"Passing these social studies standards as they are would be a disaster," Pogany said.

Hundreds of parents, educators and community members have voiced opposition or support for the proposed social studies standards in the past months. Educators lined the sidewalks outside the hotel on Friday morning in protest of the current draft of the standards.

The standards originally drew criticism in 2021 after the state removed more than a dozen references to the Oceti Sakowin (the collective term for Lakota, Dakota and Nakota speaking Native Americans) in the first draft. Gov. Kristi Noem ordered the standards revision process to restart in 2022.

The Department of Education released its revised standards in August, but quickly drew criticism again after the South Dakota Education Association said the standards discourage inquiry-based learning and emphasize rote memorization, adding that Native American history and South Dakota history are "afterthoughts or lumped in with other standards."

More revisions have been made since the November state Board of Education meeting in Sioux Falls, including the addition of world geography standards in high school, several grammatical and formatting changes, and the translation of names of Indigenous historical figures to their Lakota translations or to translations in their Native languages, according to a summary of the revisions.

But those changes aren't enough for some.

Many who testified Friday said the recent revisions fail to fix several problems, especially with age appropriate learning, memorization, and accurate Native American history. One educator opposed to the standards compared one of them — first-graders memorizing the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution — to adults "memorizing the Preamble in Mandarin with your eyes closed" because of the mental capacity and understanding of children at that age.

Shaun Nielsen, a social studies educator and a teacher who served on the original social studies standards workgroup and the revision work group in 2022, testified against the "unrealistic" standards, saying students would not get in-depth learning opportunities and would only "skim the surface."

"The exhaustive list of topics paired with the amount of school days will turn my scuba diving class into a water skiing class," Nielsen said.

Just over 50 people testified in-person or virtually at the Friday meeting, showing their support or opposition for the revised standards.

Most proponents said the new standards are an improvement from current standards, and that memorization and factual knowledge are important foundations for critical thinking and learning later on in students' educations.

"The first step in creating critical thinkers is giving them something to think about," said Tim Weisz, president of the Aberdeen Catholic School System.

A handful of proponents admitted that the standards were not perfect, but encouraged their adoption anyway.

"They set the bar high, which is, in my opinion, where it needs to be," Weisz said.

Proponents included government officials, legislators, parents and educators, including those in South Dakota and representatives from organizations across the country, such as the National Association of Scholars and Johns Hopkins University.

As of Tuesday, nearly 1,100 people had submitted written testimony — about 117 proponents, 940 opponents and 37 neutral comments, according to the state Department of Education.

Originally, the social studies standards were crafted by a more than 40-person work group. After the process was restarted, a second, 15-person work group, which included a retired educator from Hillsdale College in Michigan, began work on the standards up for debate now.

The next South Dakota Board of Education meeting will be April 17 in Pierre.

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.

Legislative roundup: Pipelines and punishment

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 1:52 PM

Aside from transgender health care, the big themes on the Searchlight radar this week were carbon pipelines and criminal justice.

At least one media outlet used the term "Pipeline Monday" to describe the first day of the week that marked the halfway point of the main run of the 2023 legislative session. Half a dozen bills tied to proposed carbon pipelines appeared in committee that morning.

The pipelines in question aim to capture carbon dioxide from Midwestern ethanol plants and pump it underground. They'd earn \$85 per ton of sequestered carbon through federal tax credits – not chump change, considering the projects could capture about 15 million tons every year.

Josh Haiar listened Monday as lawmakers debated whether to adjust South Dakota law to scuttle the projects. Two of six proposals on offer that morning survived committee.

Landowners and stakeholders impacted by the two carbon capture pipeline projects planned for South Dakota listen as the House State Affairs Committee decides on six bills impacting the projects on Feb. 6, 2023, at the Capitol in Pierre. (Courtesy of Jason Harward/Forum News Service)

House Bill 1133 would disallow the use of eminent domain – when a company can force you to sell or allow access to your property for public interest endeavors – for carbon capture projects. HB 1230 would force companies to give their final and best offer to landowners early on in the process.

Both bills passed the House floor and move to a Senate committee.

On the criminal justice side, four bills to tighten penalties for the repeat offenders bedeviling public safety in South Dakota's urban centers advanced.

Senate Bill 146 would abolish parole for 13 violent crimes and require defendants to serve 85% of their sentences for 10 others. It cleared the full Senate Wednesday.

Two others made it out of House committees and await House floor debate. HB 1170 would establish mandatory minimums for repeat DUI offenses. HB 1160 would restrict parole eligibility for those with four or more felonies, irrespective of the underlying crimes' violent nature.

HB 1171 would require parole hearings for people with four or more felony convictions (currently inmates can earn early release without a hearing through good behavior and rehabilitation program completion). That one was tabled in committee on Wednesday.

Gov. Kristi Noem signed several bills into law this week, too. [Here's a list.](#)

Here's where we're at with some of the other bills we've been following.

Free state IDs: The original bill that would have let low-income South Dakotans get free state identification cards, HB 1103, was killed in the House Transportation Committee last week. But the committee revived the idea this week, sponsoring it in the form of HB 1241. Next up: Joint Committee on Appropriations.

Opioid harm reduction: The bipartisan HB 1041 would legalize fentanyl test strips, which can detect the presence of the sometimes-deadly synthetic opioid in other drugs. The bill sailed through Senate Judiciary

on a unanimous vote, and now heads to the Senate floor.

Relocating county seats: SB 56 would raise the number of registered voters in a county required to sign a petition to move a county seat to a different city. A new amendment would allow one year rather than 30 days for county offices to move. That passed the House Local Government and heads to the House floor.

Tax cuts: A bill that would lower the state food sales tax from 4.5 % to 3.5% (HB 1096) was tabled in committee. Another that would cut the state food sales tax to 2.5% (HB 1095), as well as a bill that would exempt feminine hygiene products from the state sales tax (HB 1159), will head to House Appropriations.

Pharmacy costs: A bill that would lower costs for pharmacies by providing more transparency in prescription drug pricing by pharmaceutical companies passed the House Commerce and Energy Committee. Next up for HB 1135: The House floor.

Marijuana: The House passed HB 1172, which would require people seeking a medical marijuana card to undergo a medical assessment in typical places where licensed health care providers operate, such as chiropractic offices, clinics, hospitals or other facilities. That'll flip to the Senate now.

Abortion: At the request of the sponsor, the House Health and Human Services Committee tabled a bill that would have further defined when doctors can intervene in a pregnancy to save the life of a pregnant female. Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls, pledged to continue educating legislators and the general public, and she plans to bring the issue back to the House next year.

Public defense: A bill to create a committee that will study the delivery of and payment for those who can't afford their own legal defense passed the full House. HB 1064 is headed to Gov. Noem.

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.

Lawmakers advance bill to block carbon pipelines as regulators continue permitting process

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 9:28 AM

The end of the week brought a flurry of activity related to proposed carbon pipelines as lawmakers advanced a bill to block the projects, and regulators waded through requests affecting the speed of the permitting process.

Navigator Heartland's missed deadlines

State utility regulators voted 2-1 on Thursday to deny an effort by some landowners to send a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline project back to the start of the application process.

Navigator CO2's Heartland Greenway project faced the potential setback for missing a deadline to provide notice of the project to 204 impacted landowners.

The project would capture carbon dioxide emitted from ethanol plants in the Midwest and transport it in liquified form through a multi-state pipeline to be sequestered underground in Illinois. Another pipeline proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions would sequester carbon underground in North Dakota.

Pipeline projects go through a monthslong application process with a state regulatory body, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission. The PUC is made up of three publicly elected commissioners – Kristie Fiegen, Gary Hanson and Chris Nelson – and a small staff of analysts and lawyers.

Landowners said Navigator failed to "notify, in writing, the owner of record of any land that is located within one-half mile of the proposed site where the facility is to be constructed" within 30 days following the filing of the application. They argued "the only appropriate course is for the Commission to return the application."

Navigator argued its application was "not deficient in form and content" and said the commission lacks statutory authority to return an application for late notice. The company said state law only allows an application to be returned for failure to file it "generally in the form and content required."

Commissioners Nelson and Fiegen voted against the landowners, saying Navigator had met all necessary requirements in the application process, and that giving notice to landowners was a separate process.

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"If they were one, then there would be this remedy," Nelson said. "But they're not, they're two separate functions, clearly separate in the statute."

While voting against sending the project back to the starting line, Fiegen acknowledged Navigator missed the notice deadline. But she said it's up to the company to figure out how to address the shortcoming.

"Navigator has made a mistake, and so they have to choose how they're going to deal with the mistake," Fiegen said.

Hanson was the lone vote to send the process back to the start of the application phase. He was not convinced the notice process was entirely separate from the application process.

"Two hundred is a lot of folks to not receive an application that is supposed to be sent out," Hanson said. Public hearings on Heartland Greenway's permit application are scheduled for June.

Summit pipeline schedule

Also Thursday, in actions that sparked less debate, the regulators dealt with two requests from Summit Carbon Solutions related to its proposed pipeline project.

The commission unanimously denied an effort by the company to adjust the PUC's current procedural schedule, which would have resulted in a final permitting decision by June.

However, regulators approved an effort by Summit Carbon Solutions to set a final permitting decision no later than Nov. 15. Hanson was once again also the lone no vote.

Landowners opposed to the actions said Summit failed to notify 156 impacted landowners by a required deadline.

Public hearings on Summit's permit application are scheduled for September.

House says no eminent domain for CO2

In another pipeline-related development Thursday, legislators in the South Dakota House of Representatives voted 40-28 to pass a bill intended to prevent carbon pipeline projects from using eminent domain.

The bill now heads to the Senate.

Current state law says "all pipelines holding themselves out to the general public as engaged in the business of transporting commodities for hire by pipeline" are common carriers. The law also says common carriers may exercise eminent domain, which is a legal process to obtain access rights from landowners who are unwilling to grant them.

The bill excludes carbon pipelines from the definition of a "common carrier." That means a carbon pipeline would not be allowed to use eminent domain, which could have the effect of killing the projects.

An opponent of the bill, Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, said the CO2 traveling through the pipelines will be sequestered underground, but a future company could one day use it.

"We have so much production of CO2 running through all 14 ethanol plants, that it's more than we could ever utilize through consumption," Chase said. "Some day I could envision, along this pipeline, if it gets built, an industry that finds a use for CO2."

That argument didn't convince the majority.

"At this time, this product is going straight into the ground," said Rep. Oren Lesmeister, D-Parade. "Unless somebody can tell me they're going to extract it back out and use it for a soft drink or something else that it could be used for, then I consider it not a commodity. It's a byproduct."

However, it wasn't a party-line vote. While Lesmeister voted in favor of the bill, Linda Duba, Erin Healy, Kameron Nelson, and Kady Wittman – all Democrats representing Sioux Falls – voted no.

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.

Suspect science and claims at center of abortion-pill lawsuit

BY: SOFIA RESNICK - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 4:13 PM

Emergency rooms across America are teeming with women and girls bleeding from abortion drugs in such copious amounts that it's exacerbating the national blood shortage.

Or, at least, that's the grim – but false – narrative a group of small conservative Christian medical associations have painted for a federal judge in Texas. Their mountain of evidence, they say, shows abortion via a specific drug regimen is incredibly dangerous and should never have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration more than 20 years ago.

The openly anti-abortion federal judge presiding over *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA* could, at least temporarily, ban abortion drugs any day now. But if he does, reproductive-health care experts say it will be based on deeply flawed evidence that largely rests on cherry-picked studies and a handful of anecdotes from a handful of anti-abortion doctors. And it will have immediate consequences for pregnant people in America, many of whom have begun to rely on this method to terminate pregnancies early and safely, especially in states that banned abortion after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year.

"The attempt to reverse the FDA's approval of mifepristone has absolutely nothing to do with the safety of this drug," Dr. Kristyn Brandi, a family-planning subspecialist and fellow with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said in an email. "This is a highly safe and effective medication that should be available to patients. The use of mifepristone for medication abortion improves patient outcomes. We know this based on evidence from numerous medical studies and data from millions of uses in the twenty-three years since the FDA first approved the use of mifepristone for medication abortion."

Many of the doctors who brought this case are with the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which represents about 7,000 members compared to ACOG's 60,000 members. Despite its small stature, AAPLOG wields an enormous amount of power when it comes to reproductive-health policy. The group has spent decades in the courts and legislatures selling a narrative unsupported by the predominating medical consensus: Abortion is not only immoral, but should be banned because it's dangerous.

That strategy helped codify hundreds of state anti-abortion laws and paved the legal pathway for the reversal of federal abortion rights. Now, AAPLOG is back in court as part of the *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine*, a consortium of medical associations that practice Christian-right beliefs when it comes to reproductive-health care, health care for trans people, and end-of-life care. They are represented by the nonprofit Christian-right legal shop *Alliance Defending Freedom*, which also represented plaintiffs in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. ADF has previously leaned on shaky science in the courts to defend anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ policy, including the widely discredited practice of conversion therapy to change people's sexual orientation and gender identity.

One of conversion therapy's biggest advocates, Dr. Quentin Van Meter, also testifies in this lawsuit: arguing that long-term effects of mifepristone on minors have not been adequately studied (HHS disagrees).

And the evidence in this case couldn't be shakier. The data footnoted in the 113-page complaint don't actually support plaintiffs' horrifying scenario. At most, plaintiffs show there are sometimes complications associated with medication abortion, which sometimes require medical attention – but they don't present convincing data to show high rates of life-threatening incidences.

Instead, plaintiffs cast doubt on the safety data collected and monitored by the FDA since it approved mifepristone under the brand-name *Mifeprex* in 2000, and then approved an abortion-drug regimen of mifepristone and an ulcer medicine called *misoprostol*. In more than two decades, there have been 28 reported deaths associated with mifepristone and a generally low rate of adverse events, according to the FDA.

Plaintiffs conjecture about high levels of under-reporting of adverse events. And they speculate that with increased availability of abortion drugs – especially as more people have begun self-managing their abortions – health issues will skyrocket.

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"We represent OBs, emergency-room doctors, medical associations, the doctors who every day care for women and see the harms of these dangerous chemical abortion drugs in their practice," ADF senior counsel Julie Blake said last month on Washington Watch with Tony Perkins, produced by the conservative Christian Family Research Council. "And we are confident that once we get our claims in front of a judge, that he'll say, 'Hey you didn't follow the law, you didn't follow the science. And it's time to withdraw these drugs from the marketplace.'"

In addition to relying on flawed research manufactured by the anti-abortion movement, the plaintiffs mix religion with their science.

For example, California family doctor George Delgado, who practices medicine based on "teachings of the Catholic Church," invented a controversial protocol to "reverse" an abortion, which has raised safety flags. Another plaintiff is Republican Indiana Sen. Tyler Johnson, an emergency room doctor, who last year campaigned as "a pro-life physician, not a politician." He's spoken out against the COVID-19 vaccine and against exceptions to Indiana's legally challenged abortion ban.

This is the second time group-plaintiff Christian Medical & Dental Associations tapped the Detroit-based Dr. Regina Frost-Clark to be a party in an abortion-related lawsuit. She considers God to be the ultimate authority in her medical practice and works for a Catholic hospital system whose guidelines deny access to miscarriage management in the absence of life-threatening infection.

Like CMDA, AAPLOG is always scouting for new expert witnesses to lend credibility to their lawsuits and has been regularly hosting expert-witness trainings around the country, including this Sunday in Tucson, Arizona. Upcoming trainings are scheduled in Georgia, Kentucky, Florida, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, and North Carolina.

"The voices of medical professionals carry great weight in the public square," reads a recent AAPLOG member email advertising this training program. "We want to provide you with the training and confidence you need to give the evidence-based rationale for pro-life medical practice to the media, to your state legislators, and in court."

So, what are some of the most serious medical claims plaintiffs are making, and will their medical degrees be able to sell them in the absence of robust evidence?

CLAIM: Abortion drugs are dangerous.

The FDA-approved medication abortion regimen involves taking mifepristone, which blocks the hormone progesterone, needed for the pregnancy to grow and develop normally. That's followed a day or two later by misoprostol, which stimulates the uterus to empty the pregnancy, essentially inducing a miscarriage. The FDA approves this regimen for early abortion and miscarriage management through 10 weeks of pregnancy, while the World Health Organization says the drug regimen can be safely taken through 12 weeks.

Cramping and bleeding are expected symptoms after taking medication abortion. Just as with menstruation and pregnancy and childbirth, women report various experiences after taking medication abortion. Some report horrifying pain, while others compare the experience to a heavy period. Other potential side effects, which the FDA says are reportedly rare, are incomplete abortion (which then requires surgical intervention) and life-threatening bleeding and infection. The drug's warning label instructs patients to seek medical attention if their blood soaks two thick full-size sanitary pads per hour for two consecutive hours, or if they experience fever, vomiting, or diarrhea in the days after taking the medicine.

In their opposing brief, general counsel for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services cites the FDA's 2016 scientific review of mifepristone, which was based on a dozen studies and on data from more than 30,000 patients, and found low rates of "serious adverse events": 0-0.1 percent for needed blood transfusions; less than 0.01 percent for sepsis; 0-0.7 percent for hospitalization; 0.1 percent for hemorrhage.

But according to AAPLOG CEO-Elect Dr. Christina Francis in a recent Newsmax interview, "These drugs are extremely dangerous."

To bolster this assertion, the main statistic plaintiffs cite in their complaint is that 1 in 5 women "will have an adverse event after taking chemical abortion drugs. ... This includes over fifteen percent (15%) of females experiencing hemorrhaging and two percent (2%) having an infection during or after taking chemical abortion drugs."

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It comes from a 2009 Finnish study comparing adverse events associated with medication abortion compared with surgical abortion. As if they haven't spent decades trying to ban surgical abortion on the premise that it's also dangerous to women, plaintiffs have also glommed onto another statistic from the Finnish study: that the complication rate for medication abortions is four times higher than surgical abortions.

The HHS attorneys claim the plaintiffs have misconstrued the Finnish study's findings, noting that that percentage encapsulates instances of expected and necessary bleeding. The Finnish researchers ultimately conclude that "both methods of abortion are generally safe," but that counseling should address all the risks.

"Plaintiffs do not even attempt to allege facts supporting the chain of causation," the government's legal team argues. "They do not corroborate any of the pecuniary harms that they purport to fear, nor any of the intangible concerns that they raise. That omission is particularly telling given the more than two decades that mifepristone has been in use. If Plaintiffs' injuries had an evidentiary basis, then Plaintiffs would be able to marshal allegations grounded in fact rather than conjecture."

CLAIM: Medication abortion is riskier than full-term pregnancy and childbirth

Plaintiffs in their complaint boldly claim, "Pregnancy rarely leads to complications that threaten the life of the mother or the child."

Their source that medication abortion is deadlier than pregnancy and childbirth is a 2013 research paper published in a journal produced by one of the plaintiff groups, the Catholic Medical Association.

The paper's author, Dr. Byron Calhoun, is a longtime anti-abortion activist and a high-risk OB-GYN in West Virginia who says abortion is never necessary to save a life. He's also made false claims to the West Virginia attorney general about high rates of abortion complications in his state for which he never produced evidence. Calhoun tries to take down the often-cited statistic that the risk of death associated with childbirth is approximately 14 times higher than with abortion. But his evidence boils down to assumptions that abortion-related deaths are vastly under-reported. The bulk of his argument relies on discredited studies showing links between abortion and suicide and cancer.

The footnote that abortion is deadlier than pregnancy also links to a National Review Online article by James Studnicki and Tessa Longbons, who work for the anti-abortion research group the Charlotte Lozier Institute. They also assume vast under-reporting of abortion-related complications. But their main evidence is a red herring.

"Depending on the assumptions in estimating and accounting for miscarriages and the simple recognition that abortion is a death, abortion could be as much as 4,500 times more likely to result in a human death than giving birth," Studnicki and Longbons write.

Arguing that abortion is more dangerous than giving birth because it ends a pregnancy omits the well-documented evidence that maternal mortality in the U.S. is the highest among developed countries and is three times higher for non-Hispanic Black women (about 55 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020) compared with non-Hispanic White women. There were 861 total reported maternal deaths in 2020, but the rate was three times higher for non-Hispanic Black women (about 55 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020) compared with non-Hispanic White women.

CLAIM: ERs are flooded with medication abortion cases that are overwhelming the blood supply.

To argue that they have legal standing in this case and are directly impacted by its outcome, plaintiffs speculate that the FDA's most recent rule changes – allowing for patients to obtain medication abortion via telemedicine and allowing retail pharmacies to dispense the drugs directly to patients – will lead to a burdensome increase in workload in emergency rooms.

"The increased occurrence of complications related to chemical abortions also multiplies the workload of healthcare providers, including AHM and AAPLOG members, in some cases by astronomical amounts," writes outgoing CEO Dr. Donna Harrison in a legal declaration. "This is especially true in maternity care 'deserts.'"

She argues that some of the FDA's previously relaxed regulations resulted in "the explosion of Mifeprex complications including hemorrhage, adding to the current shortage of blood and blood products across the United States."

These claims are baseless, says Dr. Nikki Zite, a board-certified OB-GYN and complex-family-planning

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specialist at the University of Tennessee Graduate School in Knoxville, who submitted a legal declaration on behalf of the federal government.

"Given the demonstrably low rate of complications from the Mifepristone/Misoprostol regimen, it is inconceivable to me that medication abortion could have a measurable impact on the blood supply in any location," Zite writes, noting that ACOG has been monitoring a nationwide problem of hemorrhage following childbirth. "If hemorrhage or transfusions from medication abortion was a significant issue, ACOG would be addressing it as well."

The plaintiffs also offer anecdotes.

Dr. George Delgado, who spearheaded a network of anti-abortion doctors willing to perform his experimental abortion-pill reversal protocol, claims he has "treated women suffering complications from chemical abortion and seeking to reverse the effects of chemical abortion," but he gives no details.

The one attempt at a controlled study of Delgado's protocol – which amounts to instructing women who have taken mifepristone to throw away their misoprostol and receive progesterone injections – stopped prematurely because the OB-GYN and mifepristone expert leading the study determined it was unsafe after three patients hemorrhaged. Neither in his declaration, nor in response to a media inquiry does Delgado explain if these complications were from the FDA's approved regimen, or from women only taking the mifepristone.

Dr. Regina Frost-Clark of Michigan said she has "treated several women who have suffered complications from chemical abortions," which she clarifies amounts to about dozen women who were suffering "significant bleeding," which is inherent in a medication abortion.

Dr. Shaun Jester, an OB-GYN from Dumas, Texas, recounts one example to back up his claim that unsupervised medication abortion is dangerous and "potentially life-threatening." He says he treated a Texas woman, where abortion is currently banned, who obtained the medication abortion regimen in New Mexico but was still heavily bleeding two weeks later and had developed an infection. "IF she had waited a few more days before receiving care, she could have been septic and died," Jester writes, noting that he reported the adverse event to the FDA.

Similarly, Indiana state Sen. Tyler Johnson gives a concerning example: an Indiana woman who obtained abortion drugs in Chicago and bled heavily on the drive home, needed a blood transfusion. "I have seen multiple cases similar to this one," he writes.

But their testimony does not contradict the medication abortion's reported safety record, which does account for some incidences of serious adverse events. Neither of the doctor-plaintiffs or their attorneys responded to requests for comment.

Outside of the lawsuit, plaintiffs have simultaneously claimed abortion bans haven't and won't lead to denial of emergency medical care in the case of pregnancies that need to be terminated for health reasons – despite ample evidence to the contrary.

What's next

Family physician Dr. Linda Prine, who co-founded the Miscarriage and Abortion Hotline to help pregnant people navigate self-managing medication abortions post-Roe, said it's the anti-abortion movement putting women in riskier, more traumatizing abortion situations. She said her hotline has been hearing more from people taking abortions drugs later than 12 weeks – because it's the earliest they could get them.

"What leads to using abortion drugs past the first trimester are the abortion bans and the difficulties in getting the medications," Prine said in an email. "It is medically less risky to use the medications earlier, and it is medically less risky to have an abortion rather than an ongoing pregnancy. The bottom line is that people should be able to get the medical care they need, whenever it is that they determine that they need it."

There are other ongoing legal cases aimed at preserving access to abortion drugs, even in states that have passed abortion bans. But as early as this month, U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk could rule that the FDA must ban the drugs, or resume its old protocols. From there the case would go to the conservative Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. And if it goes to the U.S. Supreme Court, the scale is tipped by anti-abortion hard-liners.

As the decision date for Alliance v. FDA has gotten closer, more providers have begun discussing how to help pregnant people terminate pregnancies using only misoprostol, which is used in other countries, but not as effective and more risky than the current regimen. Abortion-rights advocates and health professionals are scared for patients and frustrated.

"The scenario of people being scared and traumatized by a later abortion could be prevented by giving people access to the pills early and legally, not by forcing them to continue an unwanted pregnancy," Prine said.

Sofia Resnick is a national reproductive rights reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. She has reported on reproductive-health politics and justice issues for more than a decade.

Attorneys general from 23 GOP-led states back suit seeking to block abortion pill

South Dakota included in effort

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 4:00 PM

WASHINGTON — Attorneys general representing nearly two dozen Republican states are backing a lawsuit that would remove the abortion pill from throughout the United States after more than two decades, eliminating the option even in states where abortion access remains legal.

The state of Missouri filed its own brief in the case Friday while Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch filed a brief on behalf of her state as well as Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

"The serious nature of the FDA's unlawful actions, and the agency's decision to invite lawbreaking by private parties and government actors across the country, favors broad relief," the 22 Republican attorneys general wrote in the multi-state brief.

"The FDA and the Administration as a whole have no intention to respect the Constitution, the Supreme Court, or the democratic process when it comes to abortion. This Court's decisive action is warranted," they added.

The case, Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration, was originally filed in the U.S. District Court for the North District of Texas in mid-November by Alliance Defending Freedom, an anti-abortion legal organization.

The lawsuit argues, on behalf of four anti-abortion medical organizations and four anti-abortion physicians, that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration exceeded its authority when it approved mifepristone to end pregnancies in 2000.

The prescription medication was originally approved for up to seven weeks into a pregnancy but is now approved for up to 10. It is used as part of a two-drug regimen that includes misoprostol as the second pharmaceutical.

The abortion pill, mifepristone, is legal at the federal level, though several GOP states have laws in place that restrict abortion to less than 10 weeks, setting up a dispute between state law and the federal government's jurisdiction to approve pharmaceuticals.

If the judge doesn't pull the abortion pill entirely, the anti-abortion organizations' lawsuit argues to move the dosage and prescribing process back to how it worked before 2016, when the FDA made changes to its approval.

DOJ says suit 'unprecedented'

The U.S. Justice Department argued in its court filing the anti-abortion groups' lawsuit "is extraordinary and unprecedented."

"Plaintiffs have pointed to no case, and the government has been unable to locate any example, where a court has second-guessed FDA's safety and efficacy determination and ordered a widely available FDA-approved drug to be removed from the market — much less an example that includes a two-decade delay,"

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wrote attorneys for the U.S. Justice Department.

The Republican attorneys general said in their Friday briefs that “while the FDA is authorized to evaluate new drugs for safety and effectiveness, States are primarily responsible for protecting the health and welfare of their citizens.”

“Many States, including several amici here, have thus enacted laws to regulate abortion-inducing drugs and account for their dangers,” they wrote.

“Such laws can include in-person examination and dispensing requirements, qualification requirements for prescribers, mandates for informed consent, bans on distribution by mailing, or some combination of these and other safety limitations.”

The 22 attorneys general argued in their brief that the FDA’s approval of the abortion bill has two legal flaws.

The first is that it “defies the agency’s own regulations” since the section the FDA first approved the drug under, Subpart H, “does not permit the agency to greenlight elective abortions on a wide scale.”

The second, they wrote, is that allowing abortion medication to be sent via the mail is in direct contrast to a federal law that prohibits “using the mail to send or receive abortion-inducing drugs such as mifepristone.”

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, in a separate brief, wrote that he agreed with the arguments made in the original lawsuit and by his fellow Republican attorneys general, but that he wanted to highlight facts “recently uncovered in litigation.”

Missouri’s brief alleges that medication abortions, which have been used for more than two decades, “are much riskier than surgical abortions” and that “there is a lack of substantial information that the drugs will have the effect they purport.”

Accessing abortions

Dr. Jamila Perritt, president & CEO for Physicians for Reproductive Health, said during a press briefing this week on the court case that abortion medication is safe and effective, and that “when abortion is more difficult to access, we know that this means abortion gets pushed later and later into pregnancy as folks try to navigate these barriers.”

If the judge in the case were to pull mifepristone, Perritt said, people in states where abortion is still legal would be able to access abortion using misoprostol alone since “there are approved regimens of managing medication abortion using only misoprostol.”

Perritt added that “while it is equally safe ... dosage and timing to completion of the abortion varies if mifepristone is not added to the equation.”

Patients in legal states would also still have access to procedural abortion, Perritt noted.

Reproductive health experts have said the suit is based on flawed evidence, selected studies and anecdotes.

Dr. Iffath Abbasi Hoskins, president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said in a written statement in January that “restricting access to mifepristone interferes with the ability of obstetrician–gynecologists and other clinicians to deliver the highest-quality evidence-based care for their patients.”

“Since 2020, continued usage of mifepristone for abortion care without the in-person dispensing requirement has been shown to be safe and effective,” she wrote when the FDA announced it would allow commercial pharmacies to fill prescriptions for mifepristone.

The judge in the lawsuit, Trump appointee Matthew Joseph Kacsmaryk, could rule on whether to pull mifepristone from the market as soon as this month.

Any ruling is likely to be appealed to the conservative-leaning 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and could eventually find itself in the U.S. Supreme Court.

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

After China balloon scare, Air Force shoots down object flying above Alaska's North Slope

BY: JAMES BROOKS - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 3:26 PM

An F-22 fighter jet from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson shot down an unidentified object flying above Alaska's North Slope on Friday, officials at the White House said.

The shootdown, at 9:45 a.m. Alaska time, took place less than a week after an Air Force fighter jet shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon off the coast of South Carolina.

Federal officials repeatedly declined to say whether the object was a balloon.

John Kirby, the National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the White House, said in a news conference that the object on Friday was "much, much smaller" than the Chinese surveillance balloon and was "about the size of a small car."

Kirby said it wasn't immediately clear whether the object was from China.

President Joe Biden ordered the object be shot down, Kirby said. It was traveling at an elevation of about 40,000 feet and could have posed a threat to commercial aviation, he said.

NORAD, in charge of air defense over North America, detected the object with ground-based radar on Thursday, according to the Defense Department.

A fighter jet inspected it visually, Kirby said. The president gave his order Friday morning after consulting military officials, and a jet conducted a second visual inspection before the balloon was shot down with an air-to-air missile.

Kirby said the flybys didn't reveal much.

"They did the best they could, but again the speed and the conditions up there as well as the size of the object made it a little bit more difficult," he said.

Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, a Defense Department spokesperson, said the object's origin isn't yet known. He declined to say how quickly the object was traveling.

"We will know more once we're able to potentially recover some of those materials. But the primary concern again was the potential hazard to civilian flight," he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued a temporary flight restriction over Prudhoe Bay, portions of the North Slope and the Arctic Ocean on Friday morning. At least one flight carrying oilfield workers was delayed, according to a scheduling announcement given to the Alaska Beacon by a worker.

State Rep. Josiah Patkotak, I-Utqiagvik, represents the North Slope and said there is limited air traffic in the area — a regular flight between Utqiagvik and Kaktovik, plus commercial flights carrying cargo and passengers into Prudhoe Bay.

After the shootdown, the object fell onto sea ice offshore.

Online flight tracking services showed a C-130 from Elmendorf Air Force Base circling south of Prudhoe Bay for much of the morning before flying offshore and circling above a spot northeast of Prudhoe Bay.

Ryder said helicopters were also involved in the effort.

In a congressional hearing this week, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said she was angered that the earlier Chinese balloon was allowed to travel across Alaska and much of the United States before being shot down.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, mentioned the balloon during his annual address to state legislators this week and said after the first shootdown that the incident "cannot become a precedent for further Chinese Communist Party aggression."

Patkotak said Friday's incident indicates a need for military infrastructure development on the North Slope in order to respond to similar incidents. Any such development should be done only after consulting local communities, he said.

Reporter Ashley Murray contributed to this report from Washington, D.C.

James Brooks, of the Alaska Beacon, is a longtime Alaska reporter, having previously worked at the Anchorage Daily News, Juneau Empire, Kodiak Mirror and Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. A graduate of Virginia Tech, he is married to Caitlyn Ellis, owns a house in Juneau and has a small sled dog named Barley. He can be contacted at jbrooks@alaskabeacon.com.

Biden meets with governors, urges them to implement laws allocating billions to states

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 3:20 PM

WASHINGTON — Governors from throughout the country met with President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday to hash out the best way to implement the billions of federal dollars flowing to their states from both bipartisan and Democratic legislation.

Biden, who typically meets with the governors when they're in Washington, D.C., for their annual winter meeting, urged the governors to work with his administration to implement several bills enacted during the last Congress and to dispel the narrative that the two political parties never work together.

"I think the success for all of us — Democrats and Republicans — is in part going to be measured not by what else we get done or passed, but whether we're able to implement what we've already done," Biden said.

"I know it's a problem having to deal with all the money we're sending you. I understand that," Biden said, seemingly half joking.

New Jersey Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy, chair of the National Governors Association, said the laws represented "game changing investments in our country" that the governors were in the midst of implementing.

The bipartisan infrastructure law, the semiconductor manufacturing and science bill, and Democrats' signature health care and climate change legislation, Murphy said, were all helping to boost jobs and address issues states had been facing.

Increases in funding for mental health care and maternal health care were also welcomed by the governors, Murphy said, noting that much of what the NGA works on is bipartisan.

"I think there's a certain pride that we have in the National Governors Association that notwithstanding our political parties or differences, we can consistently come together and disprove the narrative that politics has gotten completely divisive," Murphy said.

Utah Republican Gov. Spencer Cox, vice chair of the NGA, noted that before Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris joined the meeting, the governors had a chance to talk with several Cabinet secretaries about federal programs and issues in their states.

"I will just remind you that you are in a room full of — my wife said I can't use my farm words — so, the get-stuff-done caucus. Governors get stuff done," Cox said. "So we are partners with you in getting that stuff done and we look forward to working closely with you."

Harris spoke directly about the federal government's climate change initiatives during the portion of the meeting that was open to the press, telling the governors that none of the work could get done without their collaboration.

"It will be your leadership that allows us to invest in families, in workers, collaborate with the private sector and do the work that is not only about meeting the direct needs when it comes to the climate crisis and extreme weather conditions; but what we uniquely can do as the United States of America to be a model for the world, around how we invest in our people and invest in our future," Harris said.

She also noted the challenges of climate change and extreme weather are a turning point for the country.

"We do think of this moment as being a moment in the history of our nation, where it is not about incrementalism," Harris said. "It is truly about jumping to a new plateau."

Governors in attendance, according to the White House:

Gov. Lemanu Mauga, American Samoa

Gov. Jared Polis, Colorado

Gov. Ned Lamont, Connecticut

Gov. John Carney, Delaware

Gov. Lou Leon-Guerrero, Guam

Gov. Josh Green, Hawaii

Gov. Brad Little, Idaho

Gov. JB Pritzker, Illinois

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Gov. Eric Holcomb, Indiana
Gov. Laura Kelly, Kansas
Gov. Andy Beshear, Kentucky
Gov. John Bel Edwards, Louisiana
Gov. Janet Mills, Maine
Gov. Maura Healey, Massachusetts
Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan
Gov. Tim Walz, Minnesota
Gov. Greg Gianforte, Montana
Gov. Jim Pillen, Nebraska
Gov. Phil Murphy, New Jersey and NGA Chair
Gov. Chris Sununu, New Hampshire
Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico
Gov. Kathy Hochul, New York
Gov. Roy Cooper, North Carolina
Gov. Doug Burgum, North Dakota
Gov. Arnold Palacios, Northern Mariana Islands
Gov. John Stitt, Oklahoma
Gov. Tina Kotek, Oregon
Gov. Pedro Pierluisi, Puerto Rico
Gov. Daniel McKee, Rhode Island
Gov. Henry McMaster, South Carolina
Gov. Bill Lee, Tennessee
Gov. Albert Bryan, US Virgin Islands
Gov. Spencer Cox, Utah and NGA Vice Chair
Gov. Phil Scott, Vermont
Gov. Jay Inslee, Washington
Gov. Tony Evers, Wisconsin
Gov. Mark Gordon, Wyoming

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Fossil fuel drilling threatens air and wildlife in national parks, advocacy group finds

BY: ADAM GOLDSTEIN - FEBRUARY 10, 2023 2:53 PM

WASHINGTON — A “massive” methane cloud forming over Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico.

Noxious air pollution fouling Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

Herds of mule deer and pronghorn at risk of decimation at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

Environmental problems like these are already resulting from fossil fuel extraction near four federally protected lands — and could become even wider problems if the federal government doesn't bolster protections, the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks said in a recent report.

Oil and gas development near parks could contaminate water and air, destroy habitat, hurt the visitor experience and exacerbate the impacts of climate change, Mike Murray, chairman of the coalition's executive council, said in a Feb. 2 statement.

“The Biden administration and Congress must take action to curb the adverse effects of energy extraction on parks, surrounding landscapes, gateway communities, park visitors, and national park resources,” he said.

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Leasing of public lands to oil and gas developers grew significantly from 2016 through 2020, under the Trump administration, according to the report. During that time, the federal government leased 5.4 million acres to fossil fuel companies, according to a Wilderness Action report.

The coalition said that while oil and gas leasing has slowed under the Biden administration, the U.S. Interior Department is still on track to lease thousands of acres to energy companies in 2023.

"It is imperative that the Biden administration complete much needed reforms to the federal oil and gas program," the authors said.

Unsafe air in New Mexico

The coalition used four Western case studies to highlight the negative impacts of fossil fuel extraction on federally protected lands: Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico, Rocky Mountain National Park and Grand Teton National Park.

The authors said that in the region surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park, the Bureau of Land Management has leased more than 90% of public lands to oil and gas developers.

They added that more than 37,000 oil wells had been dug in the region, and a methane cloud covering more than 1,200 square miles has formed over New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah.

The coalition recommended federal legislation to protect Chaco Canyon, an area that's culturally significant to the area's Native American communities, and noted the Bureau of Land Management was considering withdrawing roughly 10 square miles of public land surrounding the region from mineral leasing.

Finalizing that proposal is "essential," Jerome Lucero, vice-chair of the All-Pueblo Council of Governors, said in the report, as is legislation to permanently protect the area.

Growing oil and gas development in the Permian Basin, near Carlsbad Caverns in southeastern New Mexico, are correlated with a rise in airborne ozone levels that violates National Ambient Air Quality Standards, the authors said.

Ozone concentrations greater than 70 parts per billion can have detrimental effects on human health, including lung scarring and inflammation, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

According to the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board, ozone levels at Carlsbad Caverns first rose to unsafe levels in 2018, when they measured 71 parts per billion. These levels remained elevated into 2020, when they measured 73 parts per billion.

As a large national park, Carlsbad Caverns has special air quality protections under the Clean Air Act. Yet the EPA paused its investigation to officially designate the area as violating those standards earlier this year.

The top New Mexico environment official said this week a federal designation would come eventually, according to public radio news station KUNM.

An EPA spokesperson did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Interior's decision to disallow mineral extraction on forest land surrounding the caverns and recent re-writes of state and federal methane laws are steps in the right direction, the report's authors said.

"However, a thorough assessment of the cumulative risks posed by oil and gas drilling on the wide-reaching cavern system connected to Carlsbad Caverns, and similar protections put in place, is greatly needed to protect these irreplaceable resources," they said.

A rocky future for Colorado, Wyoming wildlife

In Colorado, the authors of the report found oil and gas drilling in Weld County has contributed to Rocky Mountain National Park falling out of compliance with regional haze standards set under the Clean Air Act.

The Bureau of Land Management plans to lease another roughly 60,000 acres of land west of the park for fossil fuel projects, which may interfere with overwintering elk populations, according to the National Parks Conservation Association.

The authors added that other impacts of climate change affecting the park include more aggressive invasive species and more devastating wildfires.

"Without additional planning and regulations to protect and improve air quality and manage the boom of oil and gas development near national parks, our climate and air remain at risk," they said.

In Wyoming, the authors found that impacts of oil and gas extraction were also affecting the survival of local wildlife.

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Oil and gas development in the western half of the state has led to a decline in mule deer habitat that has dropped population numbers 46% below the state baseline for a healthy population, the authors said. A proposed 250,000-acre leasing project could alter migration patterns for the mule deer, further decimating their population, they added.

The authors added that pronghorn herds face similar challenges in Grand Teton National Park, in which a 3,500-well project could "irrevocably alter the Path of the Pronghorn." Hundreds of pronghorn use the route to migrate seasonally.

The authors cited a Center for Biological Diversity legal petition, which asserted that the park's entire population of pronghorn could disappear with any alteration to the route.

"In order to ensure that the mule deer and pronghorn of Grand Teton remain protected, oil and gas development should remain far from national parks and migration paths," the authors said.

Protecting national parks

The coalition proposed several legislative protections for national parks, including protecting animal migration routes from project development, and enhancing community air monitoring.

The group also recommended the federal government create a stronger mandate to force energy companies to pay for environmental clean-up costs prior to drilling.

"Too often, oil and gas companies fail to fully pay for clean-up costs that result from drilling on public lands, which can pollute our air and water while leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab," the authors said.

In a tweet promoting the report, the group urged movement from the federal government.

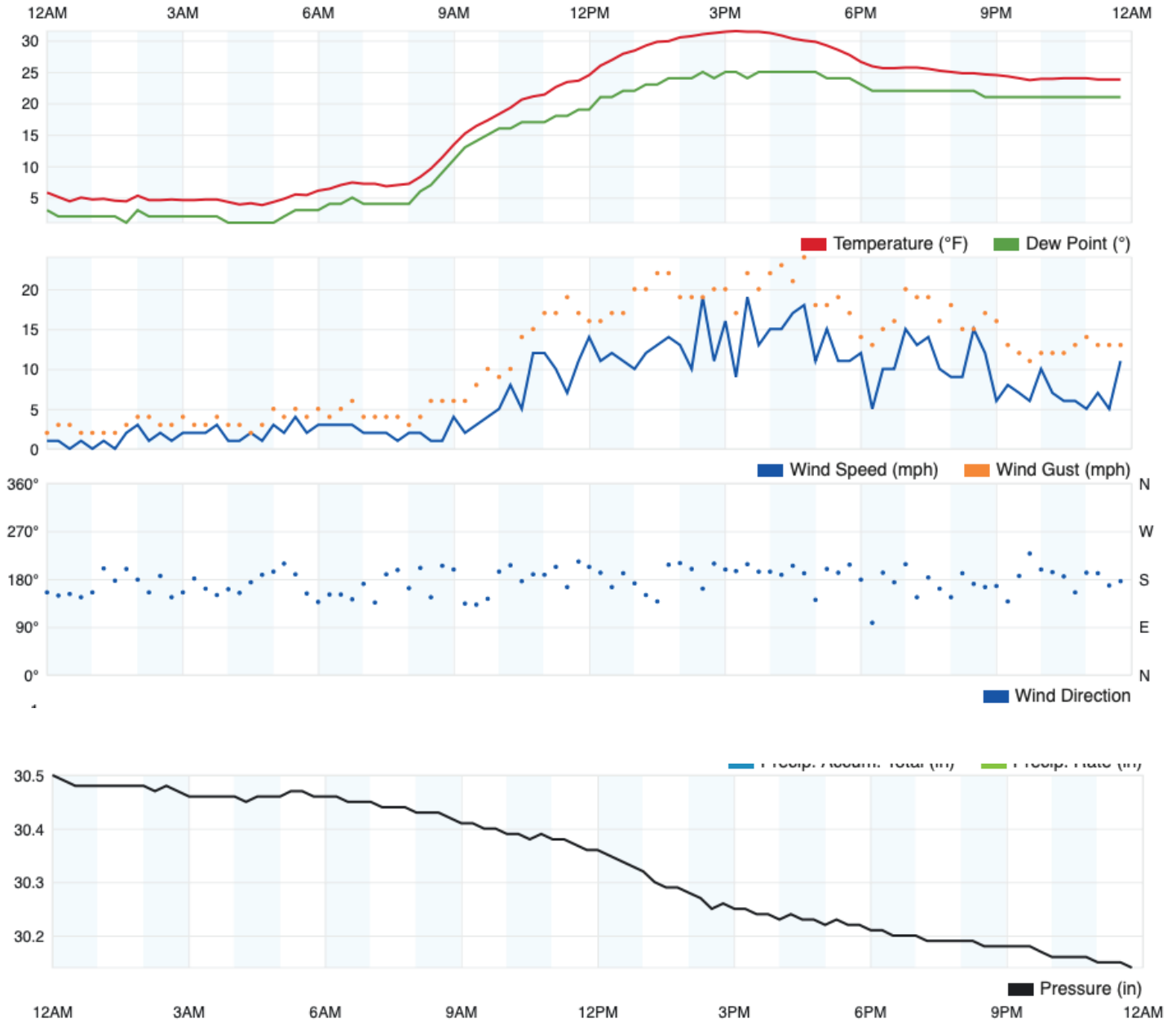
"Much stronger action is needed from the Biden administration and Congress to better protect these extraordinary places from the impacts of oil and gas development," the group said.

Adam Goldstein is the D.C. Bureau intern for States Newsroom. Goldstein is a graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, studying digital reporting. He is originally from San Francisco, and loves swimming, cooking, and the San Francisco 49ers.

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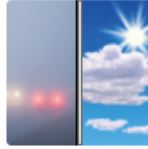




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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Dense Freezing Fog and Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	30% Chance Rain then Chance Rain/Snow 50%
High: 37 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 35 °F



Relatively Mild Weekend on Tap

February 11, 2023
2:44 AM

Today

➤ Mostly Sunny, Mild, Highs 35-52°

Tonight

➤ Partly Cloudy, Areas Fog, Lows 15-25°

Sunday

➤ Partly Sunny, Highs 32-50°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A relatively mild weekend is forecast for the region. #sdwx #mnwx

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 3:18 PM

Low Temp: 4 °F at 4:42 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 3:30 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 16 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 2005

Record Low: -35 in 1988

Average High: 27

Average Low: 5

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.22

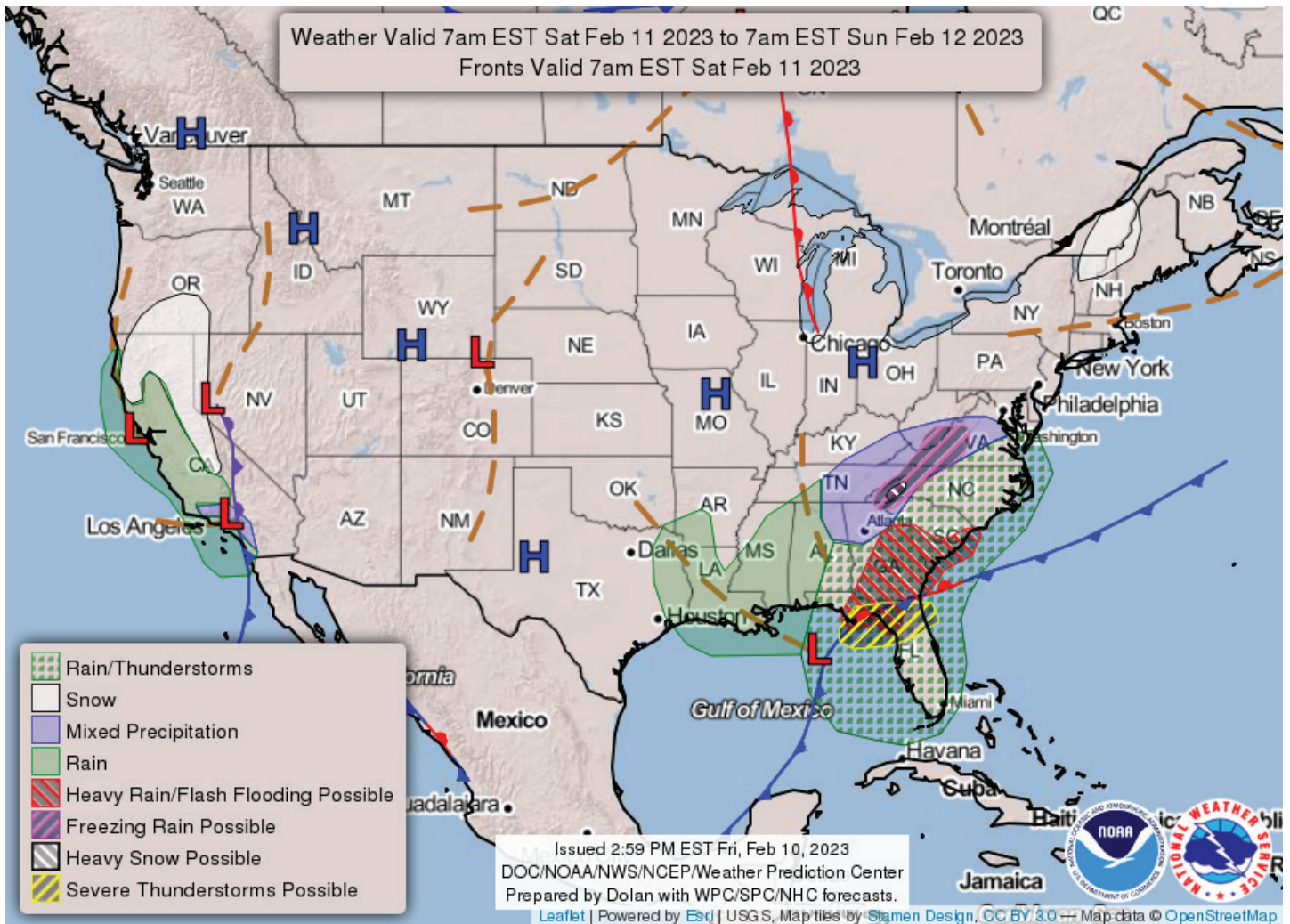
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.77

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 5:54:55 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36:47 AM



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Today in Weather History

February 11, 2002: High winds of 35 to 45 mph gusting to 60 to 65 mph affected central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota through the afternoon and into the evening hours. The high winds caused some spotty tree and roof damage, along with a few power outages. In addition, a few downed power lines in Aberdeen resulted in a short power outage for some people. Some wind gusts included 55 mph at Wheaton, 58 mph at McLaughlin, 59 mph at Pierre, 61 mph at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 62 mph at Mobridge, and 63 mph at Graceville, Minnesota.

1895: The low temperature was 11 degrees below zero at Moline, Illinois, marking the last of 16 consecutive days on which the low temperature was at or below zero. During the first 11 days of February, Moline's highest temperature was only 13 degrees above zero. Their current average high temperature for early February is in the lower 30s.

1899 - Perhaps the greatest of all arctic outbreaks commenced on this date. The temperature plunged to 61 degrees below zero in Montana. At the same time a "Great Eastern Blizzard" left a blanket of snow from Georgia to New Hampshire. The state of Virginia took the brunt of the storm, with snowfall totals averaging 30 to 40 inches. (David Ludlum)

1935: The lowest recorded temperature on the continent of Africa occurred on this date in 1935. A bitterly cold 11 degrees below zero was registered at the Atlas Mountains village of Ifrane, Morocco.

1962: A powerful F3 tornado struck Holstebro in Denmark, causing devastating damage. More than 100 houses were severely damaged or destroyed, making this event the most devastating tornado in Denmark's history. The tornado could have been a low-end F4.

1983: Called the "Megalopolitan blockbuster snowstorm," this major snowstorm impacted the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England. Snowfall up to 25 inches fell at Allentown, Pennsylvania. Snowfall amount of 35 inches occurred in parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia at Glen Cary. Windsor Locks, Connecticut, recorded a record 19 inches in 12 hours. A ship sunk off the Virginia/Maryland coast, killing 33. There were 46 total storm-related fatalities. New 24-hour snowfall records were set in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Hartford, Connecticut. Five inches of snow in one hour was recorded at Allentown and Hartford.

1983 - The Middle Atlantic Coast States and southern New England were in the midst of a major snowstorm. In Pennsylvania, the storm produced 21 inches at Philadelphia, 24 inches at Harrisburg, and 25 inches at Allentown, establishing record 24 hour totals and single storm totals for those locations. New York City received 22 inches of snow, and 35 inches was reported at Glen Gary, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia. Windsor Locks CT received a record 19 inches of snow in 12 hours. The storm resulted in forty-six deaths, thirty-three of which occurred when a freighter capsized and sank off the Maryland/Virginia coast. Heavy snow was reported from northeastern Georgia to eastern Maine. (10th-12th) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Denver, CO, reported only their third occurrence of record of a thunderstorm in February. Ten cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD reported February temperatures averaging 19 degrees above normal. Williston ND reported readings averaging 24 degrees above normal for the month. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Bitter cold air gripped the north central U.S. Morning lows of 35 degrees below zero at Aberdeen SD, Bismarck ND and International Falls MN were records for the date. Bemidji MN was, officially, the cold spot in the nation with a low of 39 degrees below zero, however, a reading of 42 degrees below zero was reported at Gettysburg SD. In the Northern High Plains Region, Baker MT warmed from 27 degrees below zero to 40 above. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - While much of the continental U.S. enjoyed sunshine and seasonable temperatures, a strong weather system over the Hawaiian Islands deluged Honolulu with 2.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A winter storm produced up to ten inches of snow in Vermont, and up to nine inches of snow in Aroostook County of northeastern Maine. A three day snowstorm began to overspread Oregon, and the winter storm produced 29 inches of snow at Bennett Pass. Mild weather continued in the central U.S. La Crosse WI reported a record forty-seven consecutive days with temperatures above normal. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

While growing up, I remember an advertisement that was very popular: "Clothing makes the man." It's a slogan from the past that has been overcome by ads that are much different. Each time I heard it, I would stop, look at what I was wearing, and wonder if it would be a help or a hindrance to what I wanted to accomplish.

Though the slogan is a thing of the past, clothes continue to contribute to the opinions others form about us. And we, also, do the same. More often than not we judge others by their clothing. We often do it without even thinking about what we are doing: stereotyping others.

"She is clothed with strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come," are words that describe the "woman of noble character." How do we identify the garments of "strength and dignity" and is it ever wise to "laugh at the future?"

"Men," God's Word reminds us, "look at what people wear. God looks at the person's heart." Character and values are something that flows from the inside of a person. The essential qualities described here refer to God at work in the lives of those who surrender their lives to Him. Strength comes from His presence within, and dignity is the result of being who He wants us to be so we can walk in a "just pride" because we are His very own children.

When we walk in His strength and not our own and when we realize the benefits of being "His child," there is no reason to "fear the days to come." We are in "good hands" - His hands - and that is what matters most.

Prayer: Often, Father, we fail to recognize all that we can have through You. Open our heart to Your greatness. May we accept Your gifts with gratitude and humility. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: She is clothed with strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come. Proverbs 31:25



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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.10.23

20 29 30 52 58 19

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$67,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

4 5 29 36 37 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,900,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 54 Mins 9
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.10.23

10 11 12 18 27 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 24 Mins 9
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

1 9 16 26 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$47,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 54 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

40 41 57 64 65 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 53 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

52 58 59 64 66 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 53 Mins 8
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Bridgewater-Emery 53, Pine Ridge 35

Canistota 55, Chester 46

Canton 56, Garretson 38

Castlewood 55, Elkton-Lake Benton 40

Dakota Valley 49, Dell Rapids 34

DeSmet 55, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 50

Deubrook 39, Colman-Egan 34

Dupree 60, Stanley County 39

Edgemont 77, Oelrichs 49

Elk Point-Jefferson 45, Beresford 28

Ethan 55, Avon 26

Faulkton 42, Langford 26

Flandreau 58, Belle Fourche 39

Gregory 50, Scotland 38

Hamlin 63, Viborg-Hurley 46

Hanson 57, Kimball/White Lake 27

Harding County 48, New England, N.D. 38

Harrisburg 38, Rapid City Central 26

Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 51, Faith 43

Hot Springs 39, Sturgis Brown 36

Howard 48, Jones County 35

Ipswich 44, Sunshine Bible Academy 32

Lyman 44, McCook Central/Montrose 40

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 53, Corsica/Stickney 36

Northwestern 63, North Central Co-Op 45

Pierre 84, Bismarck, N.D. 76

Platte-Geddes 64, Bon Homme 47

Rapid City Christian 52, Red Cloud 46

Rapid City Stevens 50, Yankton 49

Redfield 43, Groton Area 34

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 49, Highmore-Harrold 35

Sioux Falls Christian 37, St. Thomas More 32

Sioux Falls Jefferson 63, Brookings 36

Sioux Falls Washington 41, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 36

Tea Area 66, Lennox 51

Timber Lake 63, Newell 54

Vermillion 64, Irene-Wakonda 23

Wagner 77, Chamberlain 33

Wall 58, Dell Rapids St. Mary 46

Watertown 67, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 50

Waubay/Summit 67, Waverly-South Shore 27

White River 47, Little Wound 20

Winner 62, McLaughlin 38

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Wolsey-Wessington 71, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 40

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Crazy Horse vs. Alliance, Neb., ccd.

Santee, Neb. vs. Marty Indian, ccd.

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Crow Creek 99, Flandreau Indian 65

Dakota Valley 79, Dell Rapids St. Mary 63

Deubrook 70, Colman-Egan 60

Elk Point-Jefferson 55, Beresford 49

Ethan 77, Avon 36

Faith 84, Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 47

Florence/Henry 47, Warner 41

Gregory 63, Scotland 30

Harrisburg 69, Rapid City Central 37

Herreid/Selby Area 51, Mobridge-Pollock 47

Highmore-Harrold 59, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 54

Huron 60, Aberdeen Central 57

Lennox 63, Tea Area 57

New Underwood 66, Bennett County 22

Northwestern 66, North Central Co-Op 30

Oelrichs 44, Edgemont 39

Pierre 89, Bismarck, N.D. 67

Platte-Geddes 73, Bon Homme 56

Rapid City Stevens 50, Yankton 49

Sioux Falls Jefferson 66, Brookings 43

Sioux Falls Lincoln 61, Brandon Valley 42

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 48, Watertown 35

Sioux Falls Washington 62, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 50

Sturgis Brown 54, Hot Springs 45

Timber Lake 70, Newell 42

Tiospa Zina Tribal 70, Sisseton 28

Vermillion 45, Irene-Wakonda 44

Wagner 54, Chamberlain 40

West Central 47, Madison 44

Wilmot 72, Sioux Falls Lutheran 55

Winner 52, McLaughlin 32

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Crazy Horse vs. Alliance, Neb., ccd.

Santee, Neb. vs. Marty Indian, ccd.

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

Transgender advocates sue South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem

By AMANCAI BIRABEN Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A transgender advocacy group in South Dakota sued Republican Gov. Kristi Noem and the head of the state's Department of Health on Friday over the state's decision to terminate a contract with the group last December.

The Transformation Project filed a lawsuit Friday that alleges that the decision to terminate the contract

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— which resulted in the group losing a nearly \$136,000 grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — was discrimination.

It comes as the transgender community has raised concern over a bill to ban minors' access to gender-affirming health care. That bill has passed both chambers and is expected to be signed by Noem in coming days.

Noem's spokesperson Ian Fury, said last December that the contract had been signed without Noem's knowledge or consent. Noem's office has also said that the organization did not meet all of the terms of its contract, such as providing quarterly reports. The office did not respond to requests for comment on the lawsuit Friday.

Susan Williams, director of the Transformation Project, said in a text message to the Associated Press that the loss of the grant was "uncalled for and was, in fact, discrimination." She added: "We believe that our contract was not broken and that the State's claims against us are unfounded."

Brendan Johnson, an attorney representing The Transformation Project, said the contract's cancellation was unconstitutional and unlawful.

"Even our state government is not above the rule of law, and we stand with the Transformation Project in this important constitutional challenge," Johnson said.

Ceasing the state's transgender health care partnership has only added to critics' concerns that Noem's agenda is to take away the liberties of transgender people. Last year, she signed into law bills that banned transgender girls and college-age women from playing in school sports leagues that match their gender identity.

She's also voiced support for a proposition known as "Help not Harm," that passed through the Senate Thursday and awaits her final approval. When put into law, it would add South Dakota to the list of at least 18 other states pushing legislation to block transgender youth from having access to medical care this year.

Over the past few weeks, viewpoints over the ethical, moral, medical and legal sides of the bill have clashed, despite lawmakers voting in great numbers for its passage.

Samantha Chapman, advocacy manager for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said the pretense that the bill is meant to "help" trans youth "is a flimsy veneer when you consider that Governor Noem is actively cutting off any available help for transgender South Dakotans at every turn."

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health said last year that teens experiencing gender dysphoria can start taking hormones at age 14 and can have certain surgeries at ages 15 or 17. The group acknowledged potential risks but said it was unethical to withhold early treatments, which can improve psychological well-being and reduce suicide risk.

'Everybody's tired': South Dakota tribe sues US over crime

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Holly Wilson had just left to pick up soda for a steak dinner for her nine grandchildren last May, when a barrage of bullets was fired into her home on the largest Native American reservation in South Dakota.

Her 6-year-old grandson, Logan Warrior Goings, jumped from the family's loveseat and raced across the room to his grandfather — and was shot in the head. It took at least 15 minutes for a single tribal law enforcement officer to arrive, but by then, the drive-by shooters were gone, and Logan — a "kind and gentle" boy who loved Xbox and his Siamese cat, Simon — was dead.

"He was the sweetest little boy," said Wilson, 62. "He was so helpful for grandma. He was my best partner."

Months later, a father and son who live near Wilson on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home to the Oglala Sioux Tribe, were shot and killed by an intruder, and their bodies weren't found for six days, she said. Just a few nights ago, Wilson's oldest son was held at gunpoint in his home.

These types of crimes have become increasingly common on the 5,400-square-mile (14,000-square-kilometer) reservation. Only 33 officers and eight criminal investigators are responsible for over 100,000 emergency calls each year across the reservation, which is about the size of the state of Connecticut, tribal officials said. The officers and investigators are all federally funded — and the tribe says it's just not enough.

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The tribe sued the Bureau of Indian Affairs and some high-level officials in July, alleging the U.S. is not complying with its treaty obligations nor its trust responsibility by failing to provide adequate law enforcement to address the “public safety crisis” on the reservation. The federal government countered in court documents that the tribe can’t prove treaties force the U.S. to provide the tribe with its “preferred level of staffing or funding for law enforcement.” After two days of court proceedings this week, a judge said he would take the case under advisement.

“We need change. Everybody’s tired of the same old talk. It’s all talk, talk, talk every year after year, and our people have suffered for decades,” Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out told The Associated Press. “We believe now is the time to take that stand.”

The federal government has a trust duty to Indigenous nations and has made promises to tribes under treaty agreements, which should be read liberally and in favor of Native American tribes, explained Robert Miller, law professor at Arizona State University and an enrolled citizen of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe in Oklahoma.

“If federal law enforcement is woefully weak, which it is on most reservations, it’s not carrying out its duty as the trustee, as the guardian of Indian nations,” he said.

Indigenous nations have increasingly advocated for treaty rights, including hunting, fishing and education, in the courtroom, with some success. In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court made its landmark McGirt decision, ruling that a large portion of eastern Oklahoma, promised in treaties to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, would remain a reservation.

In court documents in this case, the Oglala Sioux Tribe points to treaties such as the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, which states that if someone commits a crime against Native Americans, the U.S. will “proceed at once to cause the offender to be arrested and punished according to the laws of the United States, and also reimburse the injured person for the loss sustained.”

Star Comes Out said he hopes Oglala Sioux’s lawsuit, which was filed just days after the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in Montana filed a similar one, will help to serve as an example for other tribes in the Great Plains and beyond who are facing similar situations.

The South Dakota reservation, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) southeast of Rapid City, is located between the Nebraska border and the Bakken oil fields.

The location has made it convenient for both human and drug trafficking, explained Patricia Marks, an attorney with the tribe, while its lack of police has meant it’s known as a “lawless area.”

“We’ve had a radical increase in guns, gun violence,” she said. “We’ve had a radical increase in hard narcotics. It is heroin. It’s fentanyl. It’s meth. It is things that are life threatening.”

Between January and June 2022, tribal law enforcement received 285 reports of missing persons, 308 gun-related calls and 49 reports of rape, Oglala Sioux officials said. There are typically only five tribal officers on any given shift, and response time for weapon-related calls can be anywhere from 40 minutes to an hour, Marks said.

In 2020, there were 155 more violent crimes reported by the Oglala Sioux tribal law enforcement compared to 2017, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country is complicated and depends on whether the suspect, victim or both are Native American, and where the crime occurs.

The federal government, tribes and counties have tried to bolster public safety on reservations — where, in some locations, Native women are killed at a rate more than 10 times the national average — with approaches that include cross-commissioning agreements, expanding sentencing authority for tribes and programs that allow tribal prosecutors to try cases in federal court.

The landmark Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, for example, expanded sentencing authority of tribal courts under certain conditions.

The Justice Department has also worked to increase funding given to tribes to address crime, including last year when officials announced it would award over \$246 million in grants to Native communities to improve public safety and help crime victims.

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But the tribe says none of this has been enough.

On the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the FBI has jurisdiction over a set of major crimes. But its closest office is in Rapid City, so it can take more than two hours for agents to arrive, explained Marks.

"For all practical purposes, it is the tribal police who are the first responders regardless of the type of crime," she said. "They're the ones that have to get out there and answer the call."

The tribe would need over 140 more police officers on the reservation to fight the rampant crime, according to court documents.

JoAnn Sierra, 79, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said two of her sons and two of her grandsons were killed on or near the reservation. The most recent case involved her grandson, Justin Little Hawk, 40, who in November 2020 was ambushed by a man he did not recognize while driving two of Sierra's teenage grandchildren, she said.

The man got in the backseat of Sierra's car and shot Little Hawk after the other grandchildren ran out. He died shortly before Christmas, and the person responsible was never convicted, Sierra said.

"It just makes me feel like I'm lost ... Why does this have to happen here?" Sierra asked. "Why didn't I move?"

Since the death of Logan, who was given the Lakota name Petá Zi Hoksila, meaning Yellow Fire Boy, Wilson has plastered the reservation with signs that say things like, "Justice for Logan" and "Who killed grandma's baby?" in hopes of bringing attention to his death.

She said after Logan was shot, she waited months to hear from the FBI, and when she tried to talk with tribal law enforcement, they were limited in what they could say due to jurisdictional issues.

Wilson said she believes if there had been more law enforcement responding quickly, her grandson's case could have been solved.

"It's sad that we had to take those measures as a tribe to get the help that should have been there," she said through tears. "It should have been there according to the treaties. And yet we all had to live like this. Lose people; lose loved ones."

5 days in, survivors still found in quake-hit Turkey, Syria

By JUSTIN SPIKE, ABDELRAHMAN SHAHEEN and SUZAN FRAZER Associated Press

ANTAKYA, Turkey (AP) — Rescue teams in Turkey on Saturday pulled to safety a family of five who survived inside their collapsed home for five days following a major earthquake in a sprawling border region of Turkey and Syria. The death toll, however, was approaching 25,000.

They first extricated mother and daughter Havva and Fatmagul Aslan from among a mound of debris in the hard-hit town of Nurdag, in Gaziantep province, HaberTurk reported. The teams later reached the father, Hasan Aslan, but he insisted that his other daughter, Zeynep, and son Saltik Bugra be saved first.

Then, as the father was brought out, rescuers cheered and chanted "God is Great!"

The dramatic rescue after 129 hours brings to nine the number of people rescued Saturday, despite diminishing hopes amid freezing temperatures. They included a disoriented 16-year-old and a 70-year-old woman.

"What day is it?" Kamil Can Agas, the teenager who was pulled out of the rubble in Kahramanmaras, asked his rescuers, according to NTV television.

Members of the mixed Turkish and Kyrgyz search teams embraced each other, as did the teenager's cousins, with one of them calling out: "He is out, brother. He is out. He is here."

The rescues brought shimmers of joy amid overwhelming devastation days after Monday's 7.8-magnitude quake collapsed thousands of buildings, killing more than 24,000 people, injuring another 80,000 and leaving millions homeless. Another quake nearly equal in power and likely triggered by the first caused more destruction hours later.

Rescue workers in the Turkish city of Antakya carried Ergin Guzeloglan, 36, to an ambulance after they pulled him out from a collapsed building on Saturday.

Not everything ended so well, however. Rescuers reached a 13-year-old girl inside the debris of a col-

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lapsed building in Hatay province early on Saturday and intubated her. But she died before the medical teams could amputate a limb and free her from the rubble, Hurriyet newspaper reported.

Even though experts say trapped people can live for a week or more, the odds of finding more survivors were quickly waning. Rescuers were shifting to thermal cameras to help identify life amid the rubble, a sign of the weakness of any remaining survivors.

As aid continued to arrive, a 99-member group from the Indian Army's medical assistance team began treating the injured in a temporary field hospital in the southern city of Iskenderun, where a main hospital was demolished.

One man, Sukru Canbulat, was wheeled into the hospital in a wheelchair, his left leg badly injured with deep bruising, contusions and lacerations.

Wincing in pain, he said he had been rescued from his collapsed apartment building in the nearby city of Antakya within hours of the quake on Monday. But after receiving basic first aid, he was released without getting proper treatment for his injuries.

Hospitals in Antakya, he said, were overburdened, and he had come to the Indian field hospital in Iskenderun to finally address his injuries.

"I buried (everyone that I lost), then I came here," Canbulat said, counting his dead relatives: "My daughter is dead, my sibling died, my aunt and her daughter died, and the wife of her son" who was 8½ months pregnant.

Temperatures remained below freezing across the large region, and many people have no shelter. The Turkish government has distributed millions of hot meals, as well as tents and blankets, but is still struggling to reach many people in need.

The disaster compounded suffering in a region beset by Syria's 12-year civil war, which has displaced millions of people within the country and left them dependent on aid. The fighting sent millions more to seek refuge in Turkey.

The conflict has isolated many areas of Syria and complicated efforts to get aid in. The United Nations said the first earthquake-related aid convoy crossed from Turkey into northwestern Syria on Friday, the day after an aid shipment planned before the disaster arrived.

The U.N. refugee agency estimated that as many as 5.3 million people have been left homeless in Syria. Sivanka Dhanapala, the country representative in Syria for UNHCR, told reporters Friday that the agency is focusing on providing tents, plastic sheeting, thermal blankets, sleeping mats and winter clothing.

President Bashar Assad and his wife have visited injured quake victims in a hospital in the coastal city of Latakia, a base of support for the Syrian leader.

Syrian state TV said Assad and his wife Asma on Saturday morning visited Duha Nurallah, 60, and her son Ibrahim Zakariya, 22, who were pulled out alive the night before from under the rubble of a building in the nearby coastal town of Jableh, five days after the earthquake.

A day earlier, Assad toured the northern city of Aleppo.

Earthquake compounds Turkish leader's woes as election nears

By SUZAN FRASER and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power 20 years ago riding a wave of public outrage toward the previous government's handling of a deadly earthquake.

Now, three months away from an election, Erdogan's political future could hinge on how the public perceives his government's response to a similarly devastating natural disaster.

"It is going to be a big challenge for Erdogan, who has established a brand for himself as an autocratic figure but an efficient one that gets the job done," said Soner Cagaptay, a Turkey expert at the Washington Institute and the author of several books on Erdogan.

The aftermath of a massive earthquake isn't the only parallel to the election of 2002. Back then, Turkey was in the midst of a financial crisis that was punishing its economy.

Today, Turkey's economy is being hammered by skyrocketing inflation, and Erdogan has faced wide-

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spread criticism for his handling of the problem, which has left millions of poor and middle class people struggling to make ends meet.

Erdogan's political rivals have already begun criticizing his government's response to the earthquake, saying that over the course of two decades he failed to prepare the country for the inevitable. Experts point to lax enforcement of building codes as a major reason why this week's quakes were so deadly. But with less than 100 days before the election, Erdogan's rivals have yet to put forth a candidate to run against him.

The memory of how Bulent Ecevit, the late prime minister, was undone by his poor handling of financial and natural disasters two decades ago must be on Erdogan's mind as he tries to contain the twin problems he faces today, analysts say.

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck on Feb. 6 was followed nine hours later by another powerful quake, killing more than 24,000 people in both Turkey and Syria.

The devastation spreads across a wide swath of Turkey, affecting 10 provinces in the country's southeast, and it has strained the ability of domestic and foreign crews to quickly execute rescue efforts. In the first few days after the quake, Turkish television and social media showed people waiting helplessly beside piles of debris in frigid conditions, or using their bare hands to claw through rubble.

"We'll still have to see the outcome of the relief efforts, whether subzero temperatures continue, casualties increase, whether international assistance which is flowing could make a difference," said Cagaptay.

Erdogan, who toured the region this week, conceded shortcomings in the initial stages of the response but insisted that everything was now under control.

"If the disaster response is strong, the ruling administration will be rewarded, likely in the polls — if it is poor, the opposite," Timothy Ash, an analyst at BlueBay Asset Management in London, wrote in an email.

Ecevit blamed the poor response after the 1999 quake that killed some 18,000 people on the vastness of the destruction. Similarly, Erdogan said the response to this week's quake — which he described as the "strongest in the history of this geography" — has been hampered by winter weather and the destruction of a key airport, making it difficult to quickly reach people trapped in the rubble.

"It is not possible to be prepared for such a disaster," Erdogan said, promising that "we will not leave any of our citizens uncared for."

While the bumpy quake response so far hasn't been great for Erdogan's reputation, analysts say there is time for him to turn things around before the election set for May 14.

"He has the levers of state at his command and Turkish politics was hardly a level playing field before the earthquake," Hamish Kinnear, Middle East and North Africa analyst for risk-intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, said in an email.

Right after the quake, Erdogan declared a three-month state of emergency, giving him the power to "lavish public spending" in those areas, said Kinnear, who believes an Erdogan victory is still likely.

Erdogan has promised to donate 10,000 Turkish lira (\$530) to people affected by the quake and to subsidize their rent. On Friday he said an additional 100 billion lira (\$5.3 billion) would be allocated for post-quake efforts.

In the last presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018, Erdogan and his alliance for parliament overwhelmingly won in seven of the 10 provinces devastated by this week's earthquakes. And in recent years he has pushed through changes that eliminated checks and balances between different branches of government, concentrating more power within the presidency.

In Turkey, freedom of expression is limited and the government largely controls the media, which has meant television stations mostly show scenes of "miracle rescues," while appearing to censor scenes of hardship.

In the face of crushing inflation, Erdogan has increased the minimum wage, pensions and civil-servant salaries. While these steps may have been popular with voters, others have earned him severe criticism.

For example, he has insisted on fighting inflation by repeatedly lowering interest rates to stimulate growth — a strategy that mainstream economists around the world have said only makes the problem worse.

For now, all eyes are on the earthquake response.

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In the hard-hit city of Adiyaman, Ahmet Aydin, a resident who lost six relatives as well as his home, his shop and his car in the earthquake, complained about the slow emergency response. But he said he would never stop supporting Erdogan — highlighting the Turkish leader's potentially lasting appeal.

"We trust our president," Aydin said. "He would never leave us alone, he would never leave us hungry or thirsty. May Allah protect him."

Erdogan's political rivals tell a different story.

This week, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of Turkey's main opposition party, blamed the devastation on Erdogan's two-decade rule.

"Let me be very clear; if there one person responsible for this process, it is Erdogan," Kilicdaroglu said in a video address. "For 20 years, this government has not prepared the country for an earthquake."

He also accused the government of mispending taxes imposed in the wake of the 1999 quakes that were intended to prepare the country for future disasters.

As the death toll continues to rise with each passing day, Erdogan says the country's leaders should strive to be above the political fray.

"This time is one of unity and standing together," he said on Wednesday. "I cannot tolerate how in a time like this such filthy and negative campaigns are led for the sake of basic, political interests."

Hilltop coal-mining town a tactical prize in Ukraine war

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — In a small coal-mining town on Ukraine's eastern front line, a fight for strategic superiority is being waged in a battlefield steeped with symbolism as the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion nears.

The town of Vuhledar — meaning "gift of coal" — has emerged as a critical hot spot in the fight for Donetsk province that would give both sides, the Ukrainian forces who hold the urban center, and the Russians positioned in the suburbs, a tactical upper hand in the greater battle for the Donbas region.

Located on an elevated plane that is one of the few high-terrain spots in the area, its capture would be an important step for Russia to disrupt Ukrainian supply lines. Securing Vuhledar would give Ukraine a potential launching pad for future counter-offensives south.

Then there is the symbolic weight: Vuhledar is close to the administrative border of Donetsk province, and winning it would play into Russia's greater aim of controlling the region as a whole.

"The center of gravity of the Russian military effort is in Donetsk, and Vuhledar is basically the southern flank of that," said Gustav Gressel, a senior policy fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations' Berlin office.

The grinding fight to win the area has cost Russia manpower and weapons, as Ukrainians continue to hold up defensive lines. Russia sends battalion-sized scout groups to probe Ukrainian lines and shoot artillery toward their positions with an eye to pushing north toward the critical N15 highway, a key supply route.

In remarks this week, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russian troops were advancing "with success" in Vuhledar. Meanwhile, a British defense intelligence briefing said Russia's aim was to capture unoccupied areas of Ukrainian-held Donetsk but it was unlikely to build up the forces required to change the outcome of the war.

Vuhledar's pre-war population of 14,000 has dwindled to about 300. The majority of the town's residents worked in the coal mine and nearby factories before the war.

Olha Kyseliova, who was recently evacuated, worked in a brick factory before the fighting upended her life.

Russian forces ramped up attacks beginning on Jan. 24, residents said. That day, a missile tore through Kyseliova's nine-story building. She was sheltering in the basement with her three children and emerged to find a gaping hole through the roof of her third-floor apartment.

That was the moment she decided she had to leave her hometown. "I cried the entire way out, I didn't want to leave," she said.

Three Ukrainian brigades are positioned in Vuhledar and on the outskirts of the town. The Associated

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Press spoke to five commanders in units from all three, who provided only their first names in keeping with Ukraine's military policy. Russia's 155 Marine infantry troops are positioned just four kilometers (two miles) away in Vuhledar's suburbs.

For both sides, the town is tactically important.

"It's one of the main logistics points of the Donbas region, and also one of the main points of elevation," said Maksym, the deputy commander of a Ukrainian marine infantry battalion. "By capturing Vuhledar, Russians can easily occupy the entire Donetsk region."

Seizing Vuhledar would enable Russia to push forward and threaten Ukrainian supply lines feeding into the fierce Marinka front line to the north, said Gressel of the European Council on Foreign Relations. For Ukraine, Vuhledar would be a launching pad for future counter-offensives toward Mariupol and Berdiansk.

From their perch in the town, Ukrainian forces can see into Russian lines and have so far been able to repel Russian attempts to encircle Vuhledar. Columns of Russian tanks and armored vehicles transporting infantrymen continuously assault and attempt to break Ukrainian defenses. Aviation, rockets and artillery target the town.

"But with our fighters and anti-tank equipment their attempts have not been successful," said Maksym, the Ukrainian deputy commander. "The situation is strained, but controlled."

Similar to other front lines along the east, the Russians are losing scores of infantrymen in an attempt to tire and weaken Ukrainian defensive lines. Serhii, the commander of a Ukrainian intelligence unit, said he saw Russian soldiers sent straight through fields mined by the Ukrainians following Russia's capture of the village of Pavlivka, south of Vuhledar, in November.

"They de-mine our fields by using their own people," he said.

Ukrainian commanders said some of their units are suffering from dire ammunition shortages.

That view was not shared across brigades, suggesting some are better supplied than others. Taras, the commander of a mortar unit, said his forces were suffering very serious shortages. Faced with orders to target an enemy position, he said, "I have just two or three rounds of ammunition to do it. It's nothing."

Two commanders of a brigade inside Vuhledar reported the Russians hurled gas-laden projectiles that caused severe disorientation for hours, and burning of the throat and skin. Higher-ranking commanders did not comment on the type of gas used and said an investigation was ongoing.

"They are probing and testing us across the eastern front line, including in Vuhledar," said Oleksandr, a commander who was recently rotated out of the town. "They are trying to find our points of weakness."

For now, Russia's activities around Vuhledar are not "operationally significant," said Kateryna Stepanenko, a Russia analyst with the U.S.-based think tank Institute for the Study of War. More combat power is required to execute breakthroughs that would achieve the stated aim of the Russian invasion — the capture of the entire Donetsk province.

Even in the event of victory in Vuhledar, Russia would still need a lot of combat power to push north. Three months after capturing the village of Pavlivka in November, Russian forces have yet to make breakthroughs in Vuhledar, which is only four kilometers — a six-minute drive — away.

"It's not operationally significant because Russians will still have to fight for more territory to make a meaningful disruption of Ukrainian ground lines of communication to western Donetsk," Stepanenko said. Vuhledar is just "one settlement on their way, where they are already suffering significant losses and where they already seem to have suffered losses in the area before."

Meanwhile, the last of Vuhledar's residents said they are staying put.

Oleksandra Havrylko, police press officer for the Donetsk region, pleads with those who remain to leave the devastated area. Most spend their days hiding in basements, coming out when there are lulls in fighting to charge phones and gather supplies in the town's points of refuge, called "invincibility centers".

All but one of the town's children have been evacuated. The father of a 15-year-old, the last remaining minor in the town, refuses to part with his son or leave the area, she said.

"There are people in the city who don't want to be evacuated, we tried many times," she said. Most have never ventured far from their hometown.

In Kenya, an electric transport plan for clean air, climate

By WANJOHI KABUKURU, BRIAN INGANGA and DESMOND TIRO Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — On the packed streets of Nairobi, Cyrus Kariuki is one of a growing number of bikers zooming through traffic on an electric motorbike, reaping the benefits of cheaper transport, cleaner air and limiting planet-warming emissions in the process.

“Each month one doesn’t have to be burdened by oil change, engine checks and other costly maintenance costs,” Kariuki said.

Electric motorcycles are gaining traction in Kenya as private sector-led firms rush to set up charging points and battery-swapping stations to speed up the growth of cleaner transport and put the east African nation on a path toward fresher air and lower emissions.

But startups say more public support and better government schemes can help further propel the industry.

Ampersand, an African-based electric mobility company, began its Kenyan operations in May 2022. The business currently operates seven battery-swapping stations spread across the country’s capital and has so far attracted 60 customers. Ian Mbote, the startup’s automotive engineer and expansion lead, says uptake has been relatively slow.

“We need friendly policies, taxes, regulations and incentives that would boost the entry into the market,” said Mbote, adding that favorable government tariffs in Rwanda accelerated its electric transport growth. Ampersand plan to sell 500 more electric motorbikes by the end of the year.

Companies say the savings of switching to electric and using a battery-swap system, rather than charging for several hours, are key selling point for customers.

“Our batteries cost \$1.48 to swap a full battery which gives one mobility of about 90 to 110 kilometers (56 to 68 miles) as compared to the \$1.44 of fuel that only guarantees a 30 to 40 kilometer ride (19 to 25 miles) on a motorcycle,” Mbote said.

Kim Chepkoit, the founder of electric motorbike-making company Ecobodaa Mobility, added that “electricity costs are going to be more predictable and cushioned from the fluctuation of the fuel prices.”

Ecobodaa’s flagship product is a motorcycle with two batteries, making it capable of covering 160 kilometers (100 miles) on one battery charge. The motorcycle costs 185,000 shillings (\$1,400) without the battery, about the same as a conventional motorbike.

Other cleaner transport initiatives in the country include the Sustainable Energy for Africa program which runs a hub for 30 solar-powered charging stations for electric vehicles and battery-swapping in Kenya’s western region.

Electric mobility has a promising future in the continent but “requires infrastructural, societal and political systemic changes that neither happen overnight nor will be immune to hesitance,” said Carol Mungo, a research fellow at the Stockholm Environment Institute.

The move to electric transport “will require African governments to rethink how they deliver current services such as reliable and affordable electricity” and at the same time put in place adequate measures to address electric waste and disposal, Mungo added.

Some financial incentives are on the way.

Earlier in February the African Development Bank announced that it will provide \$1 million in grants for technical assistance in Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and South Africa.

The African continent records a million premature deaths annually from air pollution, according to a soon-to-be-released study by the U.N. environment agency, Stockholm Environment Institute and the African Union obtained by The Associated Press.

Studies by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition say a reduction of short-lived climate pollutants can cut the amount of warming by as “much as 0.6 degrees Celsius (1.1 degrees Fahrenheit), while avoiding 2.4 million premature deaths globally from annual outdoor air pollution.”

But Mungo warned that cleaning up transport is just one step of many toward better air quality.

“There are so many emission factors in cities,” she said. “E-mobility, however, looks broadly beyond the

transport sector to infrastructure development and urban planning, which in the end can solve complex pollution issues on in Africa.”

Schools become flashpoint for Republicans eyeing White House

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump has called for parents to elect and fire school principals. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has banned instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade. And Nikki Haley, the former United Nations ambassador who is expected to announce her White House bid next week, is among the Republicans taking aim at critical race theory.

In the opening stages of the GOP presidential primary, the “parents’ rights” movement and lessons for school children are emerging as a critical flashpoint.

Ahead of what could be a bruising Republican presidential primary, the focus on issues related to racism, sexuality and education is emerging as a way for potential White House hopefuls to distinguish themselves in a crowded field, suggesting new and deeper ways for the federal government to shape what happens in local classrooms. But the effort has prompted criticism from LGBTQ advocacy groups, teachers’ unions, some parents and student activists and those worried about efforts to avoid lessons about systemic racism. Democrats have cast the efforts as race-baiting and improperly injecting politics into schools.

“What we’re seeing now, at least in this period, is much more focus on so-called ‘culture war’ issues,” said Jeffrey Henig, a professor of political science and education at Columbia University’s Teachers’ College.

Nowhere is the drive more visible than in Florida, where DeSantis has made an aggressive push against what he calls “woke” policies.

He gained national attention last year for signing the so-called Don’t Say Gay bill into law, barring instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity for young elementary schoolers, as well as material deemed not age-appropriate, which critics have argued is vague and could stifle classroom discussions. He also signed the “Stop WOKE” act in 2022, a law that restricted teaching that members of one race are inherently racist or should feel guilt about past actions by other people of the same race, among other things.

DeSantis has also extended his political influence to local school board races, endorsing candidates last year in what had been nonpartisan contests and flipping at least three boards from a liberal majority to a conservative majority.

More recently, he blocked high schools from teaching a new Advanced Placement course on African American studies, contending it was a violation of a state law and historically inaccurate. Beyond K-12 schools, he appointed six conservative trustees to the board of a small liberal arts college and he has announced plans to restrict state colleges from having programs on diversity, equity and inclusion, and critical race theory.

Critical race theory, a way of thinking about America’s history through the lens of racism, has been a top target. The theory, which DeSantis has called “pernicious,” was developed by scholars in the 1970s and 1980s in response to what they viewed as a lack of racial progress following the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. It centers on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation’s institutions, which function to maintain the dominance of white people in society.

As DeSantis emerges as the most formidable potential challenger to Trump, the former president has staked out his own positions on the same issues and recently released a nearly 5-minute video outlining what his campaign called a “Plan to Save American Education and Give Power Back to Parents.”

Declaring that “public schools have been taken over by the radical left maniacs,” and warning about “pink haired communists teaching our kids,” Trump pledged, if elected president again, that he would cut federal funding for any school or program promoting “critical race theory, gender ideology or other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content on to our children.”

Trump said he planned to create a national credentialing organization that would certify teachers “who embrace patriotic values, support our way of life and understand that their job is not to indoctrinate children” and would set up favorable treatment for states and school districts that adopt reforms such as

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allowing parents to directly elect school principals.

"If any principal is not getting the job done, the parents should have the right and be able to vote or to fire them and to select someone else that will do the job properly," Trump said at a campaign appearance in South Carolina.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, who is considering a presidential campaign, is using a group he formed to rally conservatives against transgender-affirming policies in schools. The group's plans to run ads, hold rallies and canvass in early voting state Iowa comes as a federal appeals court is set to consider a case involving an Iowa school district's policy to support transgender students.

In the U.S., public education is run by states and largely paid for by state and local taxpayers. The federal government does not, for instance, certify teachers nor regulate how schools hire staff. And the feds also don't control curriculum standards like those DeSantis has backed in Florida. But Congress or the Department of Education can incentivize certain education practices by tying them to federal money.

So it's not unheard of for presidential candidates to talk about education.

George H.W. Bush declared he wanted to be known as the 'Education President' and started a push for national standards and goals. His son, George W. Bush, centered his message in the 2000 campaign in part on education reform and during the first year of his administration, signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, which ignited a national debate over the proper use of standardized testing in schools.

The more recent divisive shift to social issues in schools is an outgrowth of Gov. Glenn Youngkin's successful bid in 2021 to become the first Republican in more than a decade to win Virginia's governorship. Youngkin, himself a potential presidential candidate, campaigned on parental rights, appealing to parents frustrated over school closures during the pandemic and said he would ban the teaching of critical race theory in public schools.

Once in office, his administration began the process of rewriting the state's model policies for the treatment of transgender students, issuing guidance for school divisions that would roll back some accommodations and tighten parental notification requirements.

Kristin Davison, a strategist for Youngkin's gubernatorial campaign, said Youngkin focused on education after the pandemic thrust parents into the classroom, leading to frustrations with remote learning to the curriculum itself.

"Voters want their leaders to understand the issues that they're talking about at their kitchen table," she said. "Right now, families are sitting at their kitchen table looking at report cards, looking at homework assignments, frustrated at curriculum."

The debate over education still carried weight during last year's midterms, potentially giving Republican presidential candidates a reason to stay focused on the issue. Half of voters in the 2022 elections said their local K-8 schools were teaching too much about gender identity issues, according to AP VoteCast, a national survey of the electorate. Only about a quarter said schools teach too little on the subject.

About 4 in 10 voters said too little is taught on racism in the U.S., while about a third said schools were teaching too much on related issues. Roughly a quarter of voters said the focus on each is "about right."

There was broad agreement among Republicans — about 8 in 10 of whom said gender identity is taught too much in schools. A smaller majority — 56% — said that about racism.

Among Democrats, about two-thirds said there's too little taught about racism. But there was less consensus around teaching gender identity. About 4 in 10 said too little is taught, about 2 in 10 said too much is taught and about 4 in 10 said schools handle it about right.

Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster and strategist who worked on President Joe Biden's 2020 campaign, said the GOP messages about protecting children seem to be aimed at trying to win over suburban women, who have drifted away from Trump and the GOP, particularly after the Supreme Court ended constitutional protections for abortion last year.

"I think it's getting extra energy because of its appeal or its presumed appeal to women voters," she said.

Pence subpoena could set up fight over executive privilege

By ERIC TUCKER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The subpoena to former Vice President Mike Pence is a milestone moment in an ongoing Justice Department special counsel investigation. But it doesn't guarantee he's going to be testifying before a grand jury anytime soon.

Pence is the latest official in former President Donald Trump's administration to be subpoenaed as part of the investigation into efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, but the push for Pence's testimony is unique because he's the highest-ranking official known to have been summoned.

The subpoena, the most aggressive step to date taken by special counsel Jack Smith, sets the stage for a potential dispute over executive privilege, creating a dynamic that could test — or at least delay — the Justice Department's ability to get from Pence the testimony it believes it needs.

Representatives for Pence have not said publicly whether he intends to comply with the subpoena or will instead look to try to limit his grand jury appearance or avoid it altogether. Trump, for his part, has not said whether he plans to assert executive privilege to prevent Pence's cooperation. But some legal experts say he faces significant hurdles in succeeding if he tried to do so.

"This will be fairly straightforward because the Department of Justice will be able to make a very compelling showing for the testimony," said W. Neil Eggleston, a former White House counsel in the Obama administration.

Spokespeople for Pence and Smith declined to comment on the subpoena, which a person familiar with the matter said followed back-and-forth negotiations between the two sides. A lawyer for the former vice president did not return emails seeking comment. Pence has been represented by veteran attorney Emmet Flood, who over decades in Washington has navigated other high-profile political figures through executive privilege disputes.

Pence's interest to investigators is obvious. Despite having only a ceremonial role in overseeing the election, Pence was hectoring for weeks by Trump to help him stay in power, with the president falsely insisting that Pence could simply reject the results and send them back to the battleground states he contested.

Some of the Trump loyalists who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as Pence was presiding over the counting of electoral votes chanted "Hang Mike Pence!" as the vice president was steered to safety.

Since then, Pence, who is considering launching a 2024 presidential bid against Trump, has distanced himself from the former president, saying last year that "President Trump is wrong" and that "I had no right to overturn the election."

Despite that criticism, Pence opted against testifying voluntarily before the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection and was never subpoenaed to appear. Whether he views cooperation with the grand jury differently is unclear, as is whether he and his lawyers will try to avoid being forced to discuss private conversations with Trump.

In the event he does ultimately testify, a subpoena might give him a degree of political cover, helping him avoid further alienating Trump supporters he may need for his own election bid by allowing him to say that he was compelled to cooperate rather than did so voluntarily.

If he does not wish to comply, he may look for Trump to intervene by invoking executive privilege, a doctrine meant to protect the confidentiality of the Oval Office decision-making process. Such an action could result in closed-door arguments before the D.C. court's chief federal judge, Beryl Howell.

Even then, though, the prospects for success is uncertain at best, in part because the privilege is not absolute and courts have held it can be overcome if the evidence being sought is deemed necessary for a criminal trial or a grand jury proceeding.

The Supreme Court made that clear in a 1974 decision that forced President Richard Nixon to turn over damning Oval Office recordings, saying using the principle to "withhold evidence that is demonstrably relevant in a criminal trial would cut deeply into the guarantee of due process of law and gravely impair the basic function of the court."

Trump has also been unsuccessful in asserting executive privilege in instances where the current Biden

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administration disagrees. For instance, the Biden White House repeatedly rejected Trump efforts to use executive privilege to prevent the National Archives and Records Administration from producing presidential records about Jan. 6 to the House committee. The Supreme Court in January 2022 also rebuffed Trump's efforts to withhold the documents.

Other Trump administration officials have already testified before the grand jury, including former White House counsel Pat Cipollone and his top deputy as well as Pence's own chief of staff, Marc Short.

Former Trump administration national security adviser Robert O'Brien has also been subpoenaed by the special counsel as part of the Jan. 6 investigation and a separate probe into the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate, according to a person familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss the action.

"It's a little uncomfortable that that evidence is being sought from his vice president. But the law has not generally differentiated among people in a White House," Eggleston said.

Other potential complicating factors include the fact that the episodes investigators presumably want to question Pence about — such as Trump's efforts to influence counting of the votes — don't concern conventional presidential duties like the ones typically thought to be shielded by executive privilege, said Daniel Farber, a presidential powers expert and Berkeley Law professor.

He also wrote in detail about many of those episodes in a book published last year, "So Help Me God." That includes descriptions of a Trump pressure campaign aimed at getting Pence to reject the election results, as well as numerous conversations ahead of Jan. 6, when Pence says he told Trump that he did not believe he had the power to do what Trump wanted.

"I think there are arguments that Pence can make or the Trump could make," Farber said. "And of course, you can never 100% predict what the courts will do. But it doesn't seem like an especially strong argument."

Nicaraguan bishop who refused exile gets 26 years in prison

By GABRIELA SELSER and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Roman Catholic Bishop Rolando Álvarez, an outspoken critic of Nicaragua's government, was sentenced to 26 years in prison and stripped of his Nicaraguan citizenship Friday, the latest move by President Daniel Ortega against the Catholic church and his opponents.

A day after he refused to get on a flight to the United States with 222 other prisoners, all opponents of Ortega, a judge sentenced Álvarez for undermining the government, spreading false information, obstruction of functions and disobedience, according to a government statement published in official outlets.

The sentence handed down by Octavio Ernesto Rothschuh, chief magistrate of the Managua appeals court, is the longest given to any of Ortega's opponents over the last couple years.

Álvarez was arrested in August along with several other priests and lay people. When Ortega ordered the mass release of political leaders, priests, students and activists widely considered political prisoners and had some of them put on a flight to Washington Thursday, Álvarez refused to board without being able to consult with other bishops, Ortega said.

Nicaragua's president called Álvarez's refusal "an absurd thing." Álvarez, who had been held under house arrest, was then taken to the nearby Modelo prison.

Álvarez had been one of the most outspoken religious figures still in Nicaragua as Ortega intensified his repression of the opposition.

Nicaragua's Episcopal Conference did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the sentence. Reached by the AP, Managua vicar Mons. Carlos Avilés said he hadn't heard anything official. "Maybe tomorrow."

The church is essentially the last independent institution trusted by a large portion of Nicaraguans and that makes it a threat to Ortega's increasingly authoritarian rule.

Andrew Chesnut, a professor of religious studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, said Álvarez's sentence "constitutes the most severe repression against the Catholic Church in Latin America since the assassination of Guatemalan Bishop Juan José Gerardi in 1998."

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"Since first becoming the ruling party in 1979 the Sandinistas have repressed the Catholic Church like few other regimes in Latin America," Chesnut said. "Pope Francis has refrained from criticizing President Ortega for fear of inflaming the situation, but many believe that now is the time for him to speak out prophetically in defense of the most persecuted Church in Latin America."

Monsignor Silvio Báez, the former outspoken Managua auxiliary bishop who was recalled to the Vatican in 2019, said on Twitter "the Nicaraguan dictatorship's hatred toward Mons. Rolando Álvarez is irrational and out of control."

Álvarez, the bishop of Matagalpa about 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Managua, has been a key religious voice in discussions of Nicaragua's future since 2018, when a wave of protests against Ortega's government led to a sweeping crackdown on opponents.

When the protests first erupted, Ortega asked the church to serve as mediator in peace talks.

On April 20, 2018, hundreds of student protesters sought refuge at Managua's cathedral. When police and Sandinista Youth descended, the students retreated inside, leaving only after clergy negotiated their safe passage.

"We hope there would be a series of electoral reforms, structural changes to the electoral authority — free, just and transparent elections, international observation without conditions," Álvarez said a month after the protests broke out. "Effectively the democratization of the country."

By that summer, the Church was under attack by Ortega's supporters.

A pro-government mob shoved, punched and scratched at Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and other Catholic leaders as they tried to enter the Basilica San Sebastian in Diriamba on July 9, 2018.

For nearly 15 hours overnight on July 13-14, 2018, armed government backers fired on a church in Managua while 155 student protesters who had been dislodged from a nearby university lay under the pews. A student who was shot in the head at a barricade outside died on the rectory floor.

More recently, Ortega has accused the Church of being in on an alleged foreign-backed plot to depose him.

Last summer, the government seized several radio stations owned by the diocese. At the time, it appeared Ortega's administration wanted to silence critical voices ahead of municipal elections.

The Holy See has been largely silent on the situation in Nicaragua, believing that any public denunciation will only inflame tensions further between the government and the local church.

The Vatican's last comment came in August when Pope Francis expressed concern about the raid of Álvarez's residence and called for dialogue.

Earlier this week, judges sentenced five other Catholic priests to prison. They were all aboard Thursday's flight.

Before the sentence was announced Friday, Emily Mendrala, a deputy assistant secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, said "we see yesterday's event as a positive step that could put the (bilateral) relationship on a more constructive trajectory." But she added that "we still have concerns with the human rights situation and the situation with democracy in Nicaragua."

The State Department said Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by phone Friday with Nicaragua Foreign Minister Denis Moncada about the prisoners' release and "the importance of constructive dialogue between the United States to build a better future for the Nicaraguan people." Presumably the conversation occurred before Álvarez's sentence was announced.

Vilma Núñez, director of the Nicaragua Center for Human Rights, which had been supporting prisoners in their cases, called the sentence "arbitrary and last minute," noting that it included crimes that were not part of his original conviction.

"The personal well-being and life of the Monsignor is in danger," Núñez said.

After expelling nearly all of his most vocal critics, Ortega found himself stuck with the bishop in a still heavily Catholic country.

"The Catholic Church, I think, is one of the main institutions that the Ortega regime really, really fears," Antonio Garrastazu, regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Republican

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Institute in Washington, said before the the sentencing. "The Catholic Church are really the ones that can actually change the hearts and minds of the people."

Prior to the release of prisoners, sanctions and public criticism of Ortega had been building for months, but both United States and Nicaraguan officials say the decision to put 222 dissidents on a plane to Washington came suddenly.

The majority had been sentenced in the past couple years to lengthy prison terms. The release came together in a couple of days and the prisoners had no idea what was happening until their buses turned into Managua's international airport.

"I think the pressure, the political pressure of the prisoners, the political prisoners became important to the Ortega regime, even for the people, the Sandinista people who were tired of abuses," opposition leader Juan Sebastian Chamorro, who was among those released, said during a press conference Friday. "I think (Ortega) wanted to basically send the opposition outside of the country into exile."

In Ortega's mind, they are terrorists. Funded by foreign governments, they worked to destabilize his government after huge street protests broke out in April 2018, he maintains.

Ortega said Vice President Rosario Murillo, his wife, first came to him with the idea of expelling the prisoners.

"Rosario says to me, 'Why don't we tell the ambassador to take all of these terrorists,'" Ortega recounted in a rambling speech Thursday night. In a matter of days, it was done.

AP source: Trump team turns over items marked as classified

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for former President Donald Trump have in recent months voluntarily turned over to federal investigators additional papers marked as classified as well as a laptop belonging to a Trump aide, a person familiar with the situation said Friday night.

The legal team also provided an empty folder with classified markings, according to the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press to discuss an ongoing investigation. It was not immediately clear what material was supposed to have been in the folder.

A Justice Department special counsel has been investigating the retention by Trump of hundreds of documents marked as classified at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago. FBI agents who served a search warrant at the property in August recovered roughly 100 classified documents, including records classified at the top-secret level. A federal grand jury has been hearing evidence in the case for months. Prosecutors are investigating whether Trump willfully hoarded the material and whether he or anyone else sought to obstruct their probe, court filings show.

ABC News first reported the discovery of the additional documents.

The person familiar with the matter said a handful of pages with classified markings were found during a search weeks ago at the Mar-a-Lago complex that was supervised by the Trump legal team, and were promptly provided to the Justice Department. The documents were found in a box containing thousands of pages, the person said. The Trump legal team had enlisted investigators to search for any other classified documents that had not yet been recovered by the government.

Separately on Friday, the FBI searched the Indiana home of former Vice President Mike Pence and found an additional document with classified markings, following the discovery by his lawyers last month of sensitive documents. FBI officials have also searched the Delaware homes of President Joe Biden after his lawyers found documents with classified markings at his former office in Washington and at his Wilmington property.

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Health crisis leads scores of Yanomami to roam the streets

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE and EDMAR BARROS Associated Press

BOA VISTA, Brazil (AP) — From a distance, the small group lying on the sidewalk outside the city market could be confused with hundreds of homeless people spread through Boa Vista.

But they are Yanomami, an Indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest who traditionally live in relative isolation. Years of neglect during the previous government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro led to a health crisis that got worse while illegal gold miners swarmed into their territory. Dozens of Yanomami ended up roaming in the region's largest city.

The eldest ones in a group living in Boa Vista's food market are a couple — Oma Yanomami, 46, and Bonita Yanomami, 35. Both are from the Koroasipiitheri community, only accessible by air. In September, they were medivaced to Boa Vista to accompany their 3-year-old son, who was ill with malaria.

Initially, they stayed in the Indigenous Health House known as Casai, a federal facility on the outskirts of Boa Vista, a sprawling city of 440,000 people and capital of Roraima state. But in the first few days, the family left the facility and began living on the streets.

"It was too crowded," Oma Yanomami told The Associated Press Thursday in broken Portuguese while sitting on the dirty sidewalk. Beside him, his wife was asleep despite the heavy car traffic nearby. Both had sustained bruises and appeared in poor health.

A report published this week by the Ministry of Health paints a grim picture of Casai, which was built to host Yanomami under treatment and their relatives. Its capacity is 200 people, but it harbors many as 700, representing 2% of the Yanomami population. The figure doesn't include those hospitalized, including several children with severe malnutrition.

"The bathrooms are unhealthy, and the dining areas are insufficient and unpleasant. In addition, the food was insufficient until a few months ago," the report says. "The Yanomami lack space to prepare their food and other activities, so at night, there are several drunken people and reports of violence and car hit-and-runs."

According to the report, 150 Yanomami are eligible to return to their villages, but the wait for a place on a return flight can be very long — 10 years in one extreme case.

An estimated 30,000 Yanomami people live in Brazil's largest Indigenous territory, which covers an area roughly the size of Portugal and stretches across Roraima and Amazonas states in the northwest corner of Brazil's Amazon.

Life in the streets took its toll on Oma and Bonita Yanomami. Their son soon contracted pneumonia, while his parents fell into drinking sprees. Health workers found out about the situation and took the baby to a local hospital. There, he was admitted as "indigent," which put him on the adoption path without the parents' consent.

For four months, the couple did not see their child. Then social workers affiliated with the Indigenous movement intervened to get them inside to visit. The future of the child now hinges on a judicial order.

It is not uncommon to meet Yanomami in the streets of Boa Vista, most with drinking problems. Some go back to Casai during the night, while others end up under viaducts.

Their life is rough. Two weeks ago, a Yanomami woman gave birth on a sidewalk. On Thursday, a Yanomami man died several days after being injured in a fight inside a prison, according to the State Secretary of Justice. There are 269 Indigenous inmates in Roraima of various peoples.

In January, the federal government, led by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, declared a public health emergency for the Yanomami people. Since then, military doctors treated over 1,000 people in a field hospital in Boa Vista, and 4,000 food baskets were distributed in the vast territory.

In parallel, security forces started to destroy equipment and control entry of illegal gold miners, estimated at 20,000 people. As a result, dozens have decided to leave the Indigenous territory, while many others keep mining gold.

The Indigenous organizations now want the Yanomami child, now four years old, to be returned to his parents so they can board a plane and go back to Koroasipiitheri, where six siblings are waiting for them.

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US jet shoots down unknown object flying off Alaska coast

By ZEKE MILLER, COLLEEN LONG and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. military fighter jet shot down an unknown object flying off the remote northern coast of Alaska on Friday on orders from President Joe Biden, White House officials said.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the object was downed because it was flying at about 40,000 feet (13,000 meters) and posed a “reasonable threat” to the safety of civilian flights, not because of any knowledge that it was engaged in surveillance. Asked about the object’s downing, Biden on Friday said only that “It was a success.”

Commercial airliners and private jets can fly as high as 45,000 feet (13,700 meters).

Kirby described the object as roughly the size of a small car, much smaller than the massive suspected Chinese spy balloon downed by Air Force fighter jets Saturday off the coast of South Carolina after it transited over sensitive military sites across the continental U.S.

The twin downings in such close succession are extraordinary, and reflect heightened concerns over China’s surveillance program and public pressure on Biden to take a tough stand against it. Still, there were few answers about the unknown object downed Friday and the White House drew distinctions between the two episodes. Officials couldn’t say if the latest object contained any surveillance equipment, where it came from or what purpose it had.

The Pentagon on Friday declined to provide a more precise description of the object, only saying that U.S. pilots who flew up to observe it determined it didn’t appear to be manned. Officials said the object was far smaller than last week’s balloon, did not appear to be maneuverable and was traveling at a much lower altitude.

Kirby maintained that Biden, based on the advice of the Pentagon, believed it posed enough of a concern to shoot it out of the sky — primarily because of the potential risk to civilian aircraft.

“We’re going to remain vigilant about our airspace,” Kirby said. “The president takes his obligations to protect our national security interests as paramount.”

The president was briefed on the presence of the object Thursday evening after two fighter jets surveilled it.

Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, told reporters Friday that an F-22 fighter aircraft based at Alaska’s Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson shot down the object using an AIM-9X short-range air-to-air missile, the same type used to take down the balloon nearly a week ago.

The object flew over one of the most desolate places on the nation. Few towns dot Alaska’s North Slope, with the two apparently closest communities — Deadhorse and Kaktovik — combining for about 300 people. The Prudhoe Bay oil field on the North Slope is the largest such field in the United States.

Unlike the suspected spy balloon, which was downed to live feeds and got U.S. residents looking up to the skies, it’s likely few people saw this object given the blistering frigid conditions of northern Alaska this time of the year, since there are few people outside for a prolonged period of time.

Ahead of the the shoot-down, the Federal Aviation Administration restricted flights over a roughly 10-square mile (26-square kilometer) area within U.S. airspace off Alaska’s Bullen Point, the site of a dis-used U.S. Air Force radar station on the Beaufort Sea about 130 miles (210 kilometers) from the Canadian border, inside the Arctic Circle.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a tweet Friday that he had been briefed and supported the decision. “Our military and intelligence services will always work together,” he said.

The object fell onto frozen waters and officials expected they could recover debris faster than from last week’s massive balloon. Ryder said the object was traveling northeast when it was shot down. He said several U.S. military helicopters have gone out to begin the recovery effort.

Later Friday, the Pentagon said: “Recovery is happening in a mix of ice and snow. Units located in Alaska under the direction of U.S. Northern Command, along with the Alaska National Guard, are involved in the response.”

The unknown object was shot down in an area with harsh weather conditions and about six and a half

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hours of daylight at this time of year. Daytime temperatures Friday were about minus 17 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius).

After the object was detected Thursday, NORAD — North American Aerospace Defense Command — sent F-35s to observe it, a U.S. official said, adding that the military queried U.S. government agencies to make sure it did not belong to any of them, and had confidence it was not a U.S. government or military asset. The official was not authorized to speak publicly about sensitive national security matters and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Because it was much smaller than the suspected Chinese spy balloon, there were fewer safety concerns about downing it over land, so the decision was made to shoot it down when it was possible. That happened over water.

The mystery around what exactly the flying object was lingered late into Friday night. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a statement saying it was “not a National Weather Service balloon.”

“They do not hover,” said NOAA spokesperson Scott Smullen.

The development came almost a week after the U.S. shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon off the Carolina coast after it traversed sensitive military sites across North America. China insisted the flyover was an accident involving a civilian craft and threatened repercussions.

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

The balloon was part of a large surveillance program that China has been conducting for “several years,” the Pentagon has said. The U.S. has said Chinese balloons have flown over dozens of countries across five continents in recent years, and it learned more about the balloon program after closely monitoring the one shot down near South Carolina.

China responded that it reserved the right to “take further actions” and criticized the U.S. for “an obvious overreaction and a serious violation of international practice.”

Biden, Lula focus on democracy, climate during visit

By DAVID BILLER, AAMER MADHANI and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva met at the White House on Friday and reflected on how their nations were tested in their respective battles to preserve democracy, with the U.S. president declaring that democracy ultimately “prevailed” over the far-right mobs that stormed their governments’ halls of power in an attempt to overturn election victories.

Biden defeated incumbent Donald Trump in a fraught 2020 race, securing victory with thin margins in several battleground states. In Brazil’s recent election, its tightest since its return to democracy over three decades ago, Lula, the leftist leader of the Workers’ Party, squeaked out a win against right-wing incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, who earned the nickname “Trump of the Tropics” and was an outspoken admirer of the former U.S. president.

Both Trump and Bolsonaro sowed doubts about the vote, without presenting evidence, but their claims nevertheless resonated with their most die-hard supporters. In the U.S. Capitol, Trump supporters staged the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection seeking to prevent Biden’s win from being certified. Last month, thousands of rioters stormed the Brazilian capital aiming to oust the newly-inaugurated Lula.

“Both our nations’ strong democracies have been tested of late ... very much tested,” Biden said at the start of their Oval Office meeting. “But both in the United States and Brazil, democracy prevailed.”

Lula said that he was moving to restore Brazil on the world stage after Bolsonaro’s term.

“Brazil marginalized itself for four years,” Lula said. “His world started and ended with fake news.”

Biden joked that Lula’s complaint “sounds familiar,” an apparent knock on Trump.

Both Biden and Lula sought to spotlight that Brazil’s democracy remains resilient and that relations between the Americas’ two biggest democracies are back on track.

The leaders also discussed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, insecurity in Haiti, migration and climate change,

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including efforts to stem deforestation of the Amazon, according to the White House.

During his 2020 run for the White House, Biden proposed working with global partners to create a \$20 billion fund that would encourage Brazil to change its approach to the Amazon, and there was speculation that the U.S. administration would use the visit to announce a major contribution. But following the meeting, the leaders said in joint statement that the Biden administration only "announced its intent to work with Congress to provide funds for programs to protect and conserve the Brazilian Amazon, including initial support for the Amazon Fund."

The Amazon Fund is the most important international cooperation effort to preserve the rainforest, raising donations for efforts to prevent, monitor and combat deforestation and promote sustainability.

The fund has mostly been financed by Norway, and has received a total \$1.29 billion. In 2019, Bolsonaro dissolved the steering committee that selects sustainable projects to finance. He argued the rainforest is a domestic affair. In response, Germany and Norway froze their donations. After Lula took office, Germany's government announced a fresh donation.

Climate was a prominent topic in two recent phone calls between the leaders since Lula's October victory, according to the White House.

After their meeting Friday, reporters asked Lula whether the U.S. would join the initiative. Lula responded that he believes so and that its participation is necessary.

"I didn't specifically discuss an Amazon Fund. I discussed the need for rich countries to assume the responsibility of financing all the countries that have forests," he said, specifically noting Brazil then listing its South American neighbors.

But Lula's biggest objective going into the visit was securing ringing support for the legitimacy of his presidency as unease continues at home. It remains unclear how the animus Bolsonaro generated will be channeled going forward, and some opposition lawmakers allied with the former president are already calling for Lula's impeachment. Lula sacked the army's commander, with the defense minister citing "a fracture in the level of trust" in the force's top levels.

"You have the environment and other stuff, but Lula sitting down with Biden is an exercise in coup-proofing Brazil's democracy," said Oliver Stuenkel, an international relations professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university and think tank. "There is still genuine concern in the Brazilian government about the armed forces, and the biggest partner in containing the armed forces is the United States."

Bolsonaro, who is facing several investigations in Brazil, traveled to Florida during the final days of his presidency and has remained there since. He applied late last month for a six-month tourist visa to extend his U.S. stay. A group of Democratic lawmakers urged Biden to expel the former president on the grounds that the U.S. shouldn't provide safe harbor to would-be authoritarians.

The White House and State Department have declined to comment on Bolsonaro's visa status, citing privacy concerns.

Analysts have noted that Bolsonaro's absence from Brazil is a welcome change for Lula, and he told CNN earlier Friday that he didn't plan to discuss the former president with Biden.

Lula also met with several lawmakers, including Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, and union officials before his meeting with Biden.

"It is enormously important for the future of this planet that we stop the deforestation of the Amazon," Sanders said after his meeting. "Bolsonaro encouraged that in a terrible way. Lula has turned that around, but Brazil is going to need help globally. The issue of the Amazon is not just a Brazilian issue. It's a global issue."

Ukraine marked a divergence between the Lula and Biden. Lula previously said the country was as much to blame for the war as Russia, though he more recently clarified that he thought Russia was wrong to invade.

Lula has declined to provide Ukraine with munitions, and he told reporters Friday night that he had proposed to Biden the creation of a group of nations to negotiate peace.

"I am convinced that we need to find a way out to put an end to this war," he said. "The first thing is

ending the war, then negotiating what will happen.”

Asked about Lula’s proposal, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said it is up to Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to determine “if and when negotiations are appropriate, and certainly under what circumstances.”

1st officer in Nichols arrest accused of brutality at prison

By TRAVIS LOLLER and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Years before Memphis Police officer Demetrius Haley pulled Tyre Nichols from his car on Jan. 7, setting in motion a deadly confrontation, Haley was accused of taking part in the savage beating of an inmate at a county prison.

The 2015 assault of the inmate was so disturbing that 34 others — the entire cellblock — signed a letter to the corrections director.

“We are truly asking that this matter gets looked into before someone gets hurt really bad or lose their life because of some unprofessional officers,” the letter stated.

The warning from dozens of inmates at the Shelby County prison is the clearest indication yet that one of the five officers who took part in the violent beating of Nichols had an event in his past that should have raised concerns before he was hired as a police officer. Nichols died three days after the beating.

The letter asks how the inmates are supposed to feel “safe and secure when the staff members at the Shelby County Correctional Center are assaulting and threatening us?”

It concludes, “Please put a stop to this madness.”

Shelby County did not respond to a request Friday seeking information about its investigation into the beating allegations, so it is unclear if Haley was disciplined or cleared of the assault. An email was sent Friday to a police spokesperson asking if the department knew about the allegations when Haley was hired.

There is no national database of officers found guilty of misconduct who resign or are fired, meaning in a lot of cases they can apply for jobs in other police agencies and departments. There is a national database for officers who lose their certification — the equivalent of their professional license to be a police officer in a particular state. That wouldn’t have made a difference in Haley’s case because his job at the county prison didn’t require police certification.

The former officer has been charged with second-degree murder in Nichols’ death, along with ex-officers Tadarrius Bean, Desmond Mills Jr., Emmitt Martin III and Justin Smith. All except Bean have infractions in their work records. Policy violations include using minor physical force during an arrest and failing to fill out a form about it; failing to report a domestic violence situation; and a car crash, records show.

The prior accusations against Haley came to light because the inmate, Cordarius Sledge, filed a federal lawsuit in 2016 against him and two others. It accused Haley and another officer of punching him, and a third of slamming his head into the floor. The suit was ultimately dismissed on procedural grounds, because Sledge had failed to file a grievance with the prison, which houses inmates in the Memphis area who have been tried and convicted.

Haley continued to work for the Division of Corrections until hired by Memphis Police in 2020, at a time when the department was lowering its standards for recruits in an attempt to fill vacancies. According to records in his personnel file, a previous application to the police department was rejected, but the reason for that rejection is blacked out.

A sixth officer who participated in Nichols’ arrest and beating, Preston Hemphill, has been fired but not criminally charged. He initially failed a physical after he was hired in 2019 and spent several months in a civilian position.

Van Turner, president of the NAACP’s Memphis branch, said Tyre Nichols’ death could have been prevented if the police department had not hired Haley.

“The culture of violence and bravado and the lack of empathy for individuals is not only here in our neighborhoods and communities, but unfortunately also in our jails and prison system,” said Turner, who is running for mayor.

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Haley, Hemphill, and the four other officers were all eventually assigned to the Scorpion unit, an acronym for Street Crimes Operations to Restore Peace In Our Neighborhoods. The anti-crime task force that Memphis Police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis started when she took over the department in June 2021 was designed to focus on repeat violent offenders, but has been accused of violent and illegal tactics.

Black residents of Memphis have described police sweeps in which unmarked cars roll into neighborhoods and armed plainclothes officers jump out, rushing traffic violators and issuing commands. The resulting fear has led people to text, call and use social media to caution each other to stay inside or avoid the area when police operations are underway.

Davis initially defended but later disbanded the Scorpion unit after Nichols' death.

Haley has not spoken publicly about his role in Nichols' arrest and beating. He declined to make a statement at his disciplinary hearing, and his attorney has declined to comment. When a reporter from The Associated Press knocked on Haley's door this week, no one answered.

Neighbors who live in single-family homes near Haley, in a quiet section of the Memphis suburb of Cordova, said he moved into the house about two years ago. Michael Cassie said he didn't have many conversations with Haley, but the ones he did have were friendly. Haley mostly kept to himself and has not been seen around the neighborhood in recent weeks, said Cassie, a 74-year-old minister.

Asked about his reaction when he learned of Haley's involvement with Nichols, Cassie said, "I was totally shocked that it was him."

Rescuers rejoice as more quake survivors emerge from rubble

By JUSTIN SPIKE, GHAITH ALSAYED and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

ISKENDERUN, Turkey (AP) — Six relatives huddled in a small air pocket, day after day. A desperate teenager grew so thirsty that he drank his own urine. Two frightened sisters were comforted by a pop song as they waited for rescuers to free them.

These earthquake survivors were among more than a dozen people pulled out of the rubble alive Friday after spending over four days trapped in frigid darkness following the disaster that struck Turkey and Syria.

The unlikely rescues, coming so long after Monday's 7.8-magnitude quake brought down thousands of buildings, offered fleeting moments of joy amid a catastrophe that has killed nearly 24,000 people, injured at least 80,000 others and left millions homeless.

In the Mediterranean coastal city of Iskenderun, a crowd chanted "God is great!" as Haci Murat Kilinc and his wife, Raziye, were carried on stretchers to a waiting ambulance.

"You've been working so many hours, God bless you!" a relative of the couple told one of their saviors.

One rescue worker said that Kilinc had been joking with crew members while still trapped beneath the rubble, trying to boost their morale.

Two hours earlier in Kahramanmaras, the city closest to the epicenter, rescuers embraced and chanted their thanks to God after pulling a man from his collapsed home.

In Adiyaman, a hard-hit city of more than a quarter-million people, rescuers and onlookers suppressed their joy so as not to frighten 4-year-old Yagiz Komsu as he emerged from the debris, according to HaberTurk television, which broadcast the rescue live.

To distract him, he was given a jelly bean. Teams later rescued his 27-year-old mother, Ayfer Komsu, who had a broken rib.

But the flurry of dramatic rescues could not obscure the devastation spread across a sprawling border region that is home to more than 13.5 million people. Entire neighborhoods of high-rises have been reduced to rubble, and the quake has already killed more people than Japan's Fukushima earthquake and tsunami, with many more bodies yet to be recovered and counted.

Relatives wept and chanted as rescuers pulled 17-year-old Adnan Muhammed Korkut from a basement in the Turkish city of Gaziantep, near the quake's epicenter. He had been trapped for 94 hours, forced to drink his own urine to survive.

"Thank God you arrived," he said, embracing his mother and others who leaned down to kiss and hug

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him as he was being loaded into an ambulance.

For one of the rescuers, identified only as Yasemin, Adnan's survival hit home hard.

"I have a son just like you," she told him after giving him a warm hug. "I swear to you, I have not slept for four days. ... I was trying to get you out."

Elsewhere, HaberTurk television said rescuers had identified nine people trapped inside the remains of a high-rise apartment block in Iskenderun and pulled out six of them, including a woman who waved at onlookers as she was being carried away on a stretcher. The crowd shouted "God is great!" after she was brought out.

The building was only 600 feet (200 meters) from the Mediterranean Sea and narrowly avoided being flooded when the massive earthquake sent water surging into the city center.

Video of another rescue effort in Kahramanmaras showed an emergency worker playing a pop song on his smartphone to distract the two teenage sisters as they waited to be freed.

There were still more stories: A German team said it worked for more than 50 hours to free a woman from a collapsed house in Kirikhan. And a trapped woman could be heard speaking to a team trying to dig her out in video broadcast by HaberTurk television. She told her would-be rescuers that she had given up hope of being found — and prayed to be put to sleep because she was so cold. The station did not say where the operation was taking place.

Even though experts say trapped people can live for a week or more, the odds of finding more survivors were quickly waning.

Death loomed everywhere: Morgues and cemeteries were overwhelmed, and bodies wrapped in blankets, rugs and tarps lay in the streets of some cities.

Temperatures remained below freezing across the large region, and many people have no shelter. The Turkish government has distributed millions of hot meals, as well as tents and blankets, but was still struggling to reach many people in need.

The disaster compounded suffering in a region beset by Syria's 12-year civil war, which has displaced millions of people within the country and left them dependent on aid. The fighting sent millions more to seek refuge in Turkey.

The conflict has isolated many areas of Syria and complicated efforts to get aid in. The United Nations said the first earthquake-related aid convoy crossed from Turkey into northwestern Syria on Friday — a day after an aid shipment planned before the disaster arrived.

The U.N. refugee agency estimated that as many as 5.3 million people have been left homeless in Syria. Sivanka Dhanapala, the country representative in Syria for UNHCR, told reporters Friday that the agency is focusing on providing tents, plastic sheeting, thermal blankets, sleeping mats and winter clothing.

Syrian President Bashar Assad and his wife, Asmaa, visited survivors at the Aleppo University Hospital, according to Syrian state media. It was the leader's first public appearance in an affected area of the country since the disaster. He then visited rescuers in one of the city's hardest-hit areas.

Aleppo has been scarred by years of heavy bombardment and shelling — much of it by the forces of Assad and his ally, Russia — and it was among the cities most devastated by the earthquake.

The Syrian government also announced that it will allow aid to reach all parts of the country, including areas held by insurgent groups in the northwest.

Also Friday, the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, declared a cease-fire in its separatist insurgency in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, including some areas affected by the quake.

Turkey's disaster-management agency said more than 20,200 people had been confirmed killed in the disaster so far in Turkey, with more than 80,000 injured.

More than 3,500 have been confirmed killed in Syria, bringing the total number of dead to nearly 24,000.

Some 12,000 buildings in Turkey have either collapsed or sustained serious damage, according to Turkey's minister of environment and urban planning, Murat Kurum. Turkey's vice president, Fuat Oktay, said more than 1 million people were being housed in temporary shelters.

Engineers suggested that the scale of the devastation was partly explained by lax enforcement of build-

ing codes.

New classified document found in FBI search of Pence home

By JILL COLVIN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI discovered an additional document with classified markings at former Vice President Mike Pence 's Indiana home during a search Friday, following the discovery by his lawyers last month of sensitive government documents there.

Pence adviser Devin O'Malley said the Department of Justice completed "a thorough and unrestricted search of five hours" and removed "one document with classified markings and six additional pages without such markings that were not discovered in the initial review by the vice president's counsel."

The search, described as consensual after negotiations between Pence's representatives and the Justice Department, comes after he was subpoenaed in a separate investigation into efforts by former President Donald Trump to overturn the 2020 election and as Pence contemplates a Republican bid for the White House in 2024.

Pence is now the third current or former top U.S. official, joining Trump and President Joe Biden, to have their homes scoured by FBI agents for classified records. The willingness of Pence and Biden to permit the FBI to search their homes, and to present themselves as fully cooperative, reflects a desire by both to avoid the drama that enveloped Trump last year and resulted in the Justice Department having to get a warrant to inspect his Florida property.

Police blocked the road outside Pence's neighborhood in Carmel, just north of Indianapolis, on Friday afternoon as the FBI was inside the home. They were seen leaving shortly after 2 p.m. Pence and his wife were out of state, visiting family on the West Coast following the birth of their second and third grandchildren.

A member of Pence's legal team was at the home during the search and the FBI was given what was described as unrestricted access to search for documents with classified markings, documents that could be classified but without markings and any other documents subject to the Presidential Records Act.

O'Malley said Pence has directed his legal team to continue to cooperate with the DOJ and "to be fully transparent through the conclusion of this matter."

The FBI had already taken possession of what Pence's lawyer previously described as a "small number of documents" that had been "inadvertently boxed and transported" to Pence's Indiana home at the end of the Trump administration.

The Justice Department did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Separate special counsels have been investigating the discovery of documents with classification markings at Biden's home in Delaware and his former Washington office, as well as Trump's Florida estate. Officials are trying to determine whether Trump or anyone on his team criminally obstructed the probe in refusing to turn over the documents before the FBI seizure. The FBI recovered more than 100 documents marked classified while serving a search warrant at Mar-a-Lago last August.

In yet another document development, emails released late Friday revealed that after the National Archives became aware of the discovery of the classified papers at Biden's former Washington office, Archives officials requested and received papers that had been shipped to a law office in Boston by the president's personal attorney.

No classified documents were believed to be in the Boston documents.

The circumstances of the Biden and Pence cases are markedly different from that of Trump.

Pence, according to his lawyer Greg Jacob, had requested a review by his attorneys of records stored at his home "out of an abundance of caution" during the uproar over the discovery of classified documents at Biden's home and former private office. When the Pence documents were discovered on Jan. 16 among four boxes that had been transferred to Pence's home during the transition, Jacob said, they were secured in a locked safe and reported to the National Archives. FBI agents then collected them.

Material found in the boxes came mostly from the Naval Observatory residence where Pence lived while he was vice president. Other material came from a West Wing office drawer.

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Pence has said he was unaware the documents had been in his possession.

"Let me be clear: Those classified documents should not have been in my personal residence," Pence said recently at Florida International University. "Mistakes were made, and I take full responsibility."

"We acted above politics and put national interests first," he said.

The National Archives last month asked former U.S. presidents and vice presidents to recheck their personal records for any classified documents following news of the Biden and Pence discoveries.

The Presidential Records Act states that any records created or received by the president while in office are the property of the U.S. government and will be managed by the Archives at the end of an administration.

Archives wanted Boston Biden docs, not believed classified

By COLLEEN LONG and SEUNG MIN KIM The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the National Archives became aware of classified documents in President Joe Biden's old office in Washington, Archives officials also took custody of papers that had been shipped to a law office in Boston by the president's personal attorney, according to emails released Friday.

No classified documents were believed to be in the Boston documents. But the emails show Archives officials were concerned enough to take them into their possession.

"Pat, we would like to pick up the boxes that are in your Boston office and move them to the JFK Library. Would it be possible to do that tomorrow?" Archives General Counsel Gary Stern wrote to Pat Moore, one of Biden's lawyers handling the preservation of the documents, in a Nov. 8, 2022, email.

That note was among a series of emails released under a Freedom of Information request from The Associated Press and more than two dozen other entities. The notes do not go into detail on why the Archives would have sought the material that was sent to Boston. But a person familiar with the matter said Moore had been packing up papers at the Penn Biden Center, a Washington think tank where Biden had an office, that could be of use for a potential future presidential library, mostly personal details about Biden's family.

Moore had sent the boxes to Boston, where his law offices were located, and as he continued to sort through other boxes at the Washington-based think tank he came across a classified document, said the person, who had knowledge of the investigation but was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Since the November discovery, Biden's attorneys have uncovered other documents and so has the FBI, which searched his Wilmington and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, homes as well as the Penn Biden Center, the think tank affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania. Biden has turned over records voluntarily and agreed to the searches.

Discovery of the classified documents touched off a special counsel probe by the Justice Department.

In a Nov. 7, 2022, email, Stern advised Moore to "ensure that the boxes in your office in Boston remain secure in a locked space and are not accessed by anyone." But no classified records appear to have been discovered in the boxes, according to the person.

The White House Counsel's Office had no comment on the material in Boston. Biden's personal lawyers didn't respond to a request for comment.

The dozens of pages of emails between the National Archives and Biden's lawyers released on Friday were mostly on arranging logistics for Archives staff to take custody of material from the Penn Biden Center.

After the news first surfaced about Biden documents, former Vice President Mike Pence said he also had found classified information at his home, and the FBI on Friday discovered an additional document with classified markings after he allowed them to search his home in Indiana. Archives officials have asked administrations going back to the Reagan presidency to comb through their records to make sure there are no more classified records or other items that should belong with the Archives.

Occasionally, former officials from various levels of government discover they are in possession of classified materials and turn them over to the authorities at least several times a year, the AP has reported. It's been a problem off and on for decades, from presidents to Cabinet members and staff across multiple administrations stretching as far back as Jimmy Carter.

But the issue has taken on greater significance since former President Donald Trump insistently retained classified material at his Florida estate, prompting the unprecedented FBI seizure of thousands of pages of records last year.

Biden has said he was surprised by the presence of classified documents. He said the items were "to the best of my knowledge ... from 1974, stray papers."

"There may be something else. I don't know," Biden told PBS NewsHour's Judy Woodruff earlier in the week.

Alec Baldwin says part of shooting charge unconstitutional

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

Alec Baldwin on Friday asked a judge in New Mexico to dismiss a five-year firearm sentencing enhancement in the charges against him, saying it is unconstitutionally based on a law passed after the shooting on the set of the film "Rust."

"The prosecutors committed a basic legal error by charging Mr. Baldwin under a version of the firearm-enhancement statute that did not exist on the date of the accident," a court filing from Baldwin's attorneys said.

Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the weapons supervisor on the set of the Western, were charged last month with felony involuntary manslaughter in the shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins.

Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during rehearsals at a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe on Oct. 21, 2021. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when the gun went off, killing her and wounding the director, Joel Souza. Hutchins' parents and sister filed a lawsuit over the shooting Thursday, after a similar suit filed by her husband and son was settled.

Baldwin's attorneys also filed a motion on Tuesday to disqualify the special prosecutor in the case, asserting that her position as a state lawmaker constitutionally prohibits her from holding any authority in a judicial capacity.

Baldwin's legal team is mounting an aggressive legal fight against the charges before he has even made his initial court appearance, which is scheduled to take place by videoconference later this month. Baldwin has not been arrested.

"Another day, another motion from Alec Baldwin and his attorneys in an attempt to distract from the gross negligence and complete disregard for safety on the 'Rust' film set that led to Halyna Hutchins' death," district attorney's spokeswoman Heather Brewer said in an email.

She added that the prosecution team "will review all motions — even those given to the media before being served to the DA. However, the DA's and the special prosecutor's focus will always remain on ensuring that justice is served and that everyone — even celebrities with fancy attorneys — is held accountable under the law."

The manslaughter charges against Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed include two alternative standards and sets of penalties, and a jury can decide which to pursue, according to prosecutors.

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

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

But legal experts said Baldwin has a strong chance of seeing it thrown out.

"This is a violation of the ex post facto clause of the constitution," said Neema Rahmani, president of West Coast Trial Lawyers. "The government can't pass a law and retroactively punish someone under that law. The judge is likely going to toss that enhancement and so Baldwin is just looking at a maximum sentence of 18 months in jail."

In court documents, the district attorney's office said reckless safety failures accompanied the film production from the outset, and that Baldwin's "deviation from known standards, practices and protocol

directly caused" Hutchins' death.

They cited Baldwin's failure as an actor to appear for mandatory firearms training prior to filming and his decision as a producer to work with Gutierrez-Reed, who was an uncertified and inexperienced armorer.

Baldwin's attorney Luke Nikas said when the charges were announced that they were "a terrible miscarriage of justice." He said Baldwin relied on the professionals with whom he worked and "had no reason to believe there was a live bullet in the gun."

Abortion pill could be pulled off market by Texas lawsuit

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Texas lawsuit with a key deadline this month is posing a threat to the nationwide availability of medication abortion, which now accounts for the majority of abortions in the U.S.

The case filed by abortion opponents who helped challenge Roe v. Wade seeks to reverse a decades-old approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

If a federal judge appointed by former President Donald Trump sides with them, it could halt the supply of the drug mifepristone in all states, both where abortion is banned and where it remains legal.

"It could have an immediate impact on the country," said Mini Timmaraju, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. "In some ways this is a backdoor ban on abortion."

On Friday, a group of 22 Democratic-led states weighed in, saying the consequences of reversing the approval could be "nothing short of catastrophic. A similar-sized group of Republican states also filed briefs supporting the reversal, saying the ability to order pills by mail undermines their laws banning abortion.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk has not indicated exactly when or how he will rule, but groups like Timmaraju's have been preparing for a possible decision shortly after a Feb. 24 filing deadline. There is scant precedent for a lone judge overruling the FDA's scientific decisions. A swift appeal of any ruling is likely.

The lawsuit was filed by the group Alliance Defending Freedom, which was also involved in the Mississippi case that led to Roe v. Wade being overturned.

"Our representatives in Congress created the FDA and gave the FDA the responsibility to make sure that drugs are safe before they're allowed on the market ... the FDA failed that responsibility," said Julie Blake, senior counsel for the group.

They argue the FDA overstepped its authority in approving mifepristone by using an accelerated review process reserved for drugs to treat "serious or life-threatening illnesses."

But in its legal response, the agency said it didn't accelerate the drug's approval, which came four years after the manufacturer first submitted its application to market the pill.

The FDA approved mifepristone — in combination with a second drug — as a safe and effective method for ending a pregnancy in 2000. Common side effects include cramping and light bleeding. Cases of more severe bleeding requiring emergency care are very rare.

Halting access to the drug more than 20 years after approval would be "extraordinary and unprecedented," federal attorneys stated in a legal filing.

Kacsmaryk, who previously ruled against a program providing free birth control to minors in Texas, could also issue a ruling rolling back regulators' decisions to ease restrictions on the pill's availability. Those have been based on scientific studies showing women can safely use the drug at home.

In late 2021, the FDA removed a requirement that women pick up the drug in person. Last month the agency dropped another requirement that prevented most pharmacies from dispensing the pill.

Medication abortion accounted for over half of abortions before Roe v. Wade was overturned, according to research from the Guttmacher Institute. It's grown more important since then, said Elizabeth Nash, state policy analyst for the science-based research group that supports abortion rights.

"The clinics that are open in the receiving states are stretched thin, they don't have a lot of give in their capacity and being able to provide medication abortion is very, very important," she said.

Abortion medication is approved for use up to the 10th week of pregnancy. Mifepristone is taken first,

swallowed by mouth. The drug dilates the cervix and blocks the effects of the hormone progesterone, which is needed to sustain a pregnancy.

Misoprostol, a drug also used to treat stomach ulcers, is taken 24 to 48 hours later. It causes the uterus to cramp and contract, causing bleeding and expelling pregnancy tissue. The combination has been shown to be more than 95% effective in ending pregnancies up to 10 weeks.

If mifepristone is pulled, providers could prescribe misoprostol alone instead, an approach that is used in many parts of the world, but would be a big shift in U.S. practice and has not been found to be quite as effective.

Such a ruling could also increase the need for surgical abortion and further increase wait times at clinics, which are already weekslong in some cases after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe, Nash said.

Florida backs off athlete menstrual data, but debate lingers

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Florida has backed off its effort to force athletes to give their high schools information about their menstrual cycles after the debate sparked opposition nationwide, and now, the state is facing questions about whether the plan was based on politics or policy.

Doctors often ask students about their periods to figure out whether they are healthy enough to compete. But the issue exploded when the Florida High School Athletic Association proposed using a form that called for providing that information directly to schools, rather than just to health providers.

Critics questioned whether there were political motives as Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis weighs a run for the presidency. Opposition to abortion and transgender female athletes are core GOP tenants, and DeSantis has signed bills on both issues.

Amid the backlash, the association voted Thursday to recommend that most personal information revealed on medical history forms stay at the doctor's office and not be stored at school. The new form, though, was changed to ask athletes their sex assigned at birth, rather than just their sex.

Here is a guide on the conflict, what experts have to say about it and the lack of data on what other states have been asking families to share.

WHAT CHANGES WERE PROPOSED?

The proposed revisions to the form included four mandatory questions about menstruation: if the student has ever had a period, the age they had their first period, the date of their most recent period and how many periods they've had in the past year.

An earlier version had asked questions about periods, too, but answering them was optional.

WHO WAS BEHIND THE PUSHBACK?

Anger erupted over the proposal, with Democratic state lawmakers sending a letter calling the requirement "highly invasive" and American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten decrying it as "dystopian" in a tweet.

Hundreds also went online to sign a Change.org petition called, "Privacy. Period!" Petition writer Jenn Meale Poggie said her 16-year-old, soccer-playing daughter was moved almost to the point of tears when she heard about the proposal.

"That," Poggie said, "is how profound these young girls are emotionally affected by this type of policy."

Questions about transgender athletes and abortion added to the debate.

"If this is being used to screen for risk for abortion or transgender, it's a really misguided screen," said Dr. Judith Simms-Cendan, a pediatric-adolescent gynecologist in Miami, noting that irregular periods are commonplace among young teens.

DeSantis thrust himself into the national cultural debate over transgender rights in 2021 when he signed a bill restricting participation in girls sports in public schools to athletes identified as female at birth. He also signed into law last year a ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

The association's spokesperson has said the proposed changes were not in response to concerns about transgender athletes competing in women's sports, as some social media users have said. And associa-

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tion president John Gerdes stressed that neither the governor nor politics played a role in the discussions
WHY DID THE COMMITTEE WANT THE CHANGES?

The association's medical advisory committee said it recommended making menstrual histories mandatory based on guidance from groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The pediatrician group, though, insisted that they never intended for information about menstrual histories to be provided to schools. "They're not following our guidance," said Dr. Rebecca Carl, the chair-elect of the AAP's Council on Sports Medicine & Fitness.

Gerdes didn't immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press asking why the association had misstated the medical group's guidance.

WHAT DOES THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY RECOMMEND?

The American Academy of Pediatrics worked with sports organizations to come up with a set of forms that doctors could use to evaluate would-be athletes, said Carl, also a professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University in Chicago.

One form, designed to be filled out by athletes and their families, inquires about things like drug use, eating disorders, mental health and menstrual histories. Period questions are important because heavy exercise can make menstruation stop temporarily, lowering estrogen levels and increasing the risk of broken bones, Carl said.

But only a medical eligibility form — with no information on menstrual histories — is intended to be provided to a school or sports organization, and it states that clearly. That form includes a spot for the doctor to include information about allergies, medications and whether the student is healthy enough to compete.

There are 26 states that use the latest version of the pediatrician group's forms. Another 23 states and the District of Columbia use a variation of it. Only one state, New Hampshire, does not have a stated preferred form, said Andrea Smith, a nursing professor at Auburn University, who researched which forms states use as part of a study on cardiac risks in athletes.

The National Federation of State High School Associations recommends that each state has an evaluation process, but doesn't have details on what has been put in practice.

Carl, the pediatrician, said that there is variation.

"But," she stressed, "they really should only be asking for this medical eligibility form. The AAP has been very clear and consistent on this."

WHAT IS THE CONCERN ABOUT PRIVACY?

Even making menstrual history questions optional, as they were in the earlier form, raised alarms this fall. The Palm Beach County School District asked the association to ditch the menstruation questions altogether because it was offering a digital option for submitting the forms. In the past, the district maintained the records only in paper form.

"Our concern is really that this is the information for health care providers," Carl said. "So where does it go when it goes to the schools? I mean, it could go to a third party to store it online. It could go into a filing cabinet that's not protected adequately."

That was exactly the concern the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists expressed in a statement, noting the information supplied to schools isn't subject to HIPAA, the federal privacy rules that govern the health care industry.

Simms-Cendan, a fellow with ACOG, said she spends lots of time instructing adolescents to even be careful about which period-tracking apps they use to ensure their data stays private.

"There are really unscrupulous people out there," she said.

Marines, bonded by kidney donation, now head to Super Bowl

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two former Marines bonded by a kidney donation and their love of football are now headed to the Super Bowl.

John Gladwell, a Kansas City resident and Chiefs fan, donated a kidney to Philadelphia Eagles backer Billy Welsh two years ago after Welsh, who lives in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was diagnosed with polycystic

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kidney disease.

The two men first met at a military base in the early 2000s and remained in touch through social media after they left the service. When Welsh made a post in 2019 asking if anyone was willing to become a donor, Gladwell responded and soon learned he was a 99% match. He eventually flew to Philadelphia, where the 10-hour surgical procedure was performed.

"It meant the world to me. I was speechless. John Gladwell is my hero," Welsh said Wednesday when the two men appeared on NBC's Today show.

Gladwell said he didn't hesitate to make the donation because Welsh has a son who is a little older than his own grandson.

"I wasn't going to let his son grow up without his dad being there for everything," Gladwell said.

The all-expenses-paid Super Bowl trip was put together by Eagles President Don Smolenski and his Chiefs counterpart Mark Donovan. Smolenski said the story symbolizes the unifying aspects of the Marine Corps and the NFL. The team presidents spoke with the two men during a video call last Sunday, letting them know they would be flown to Arizona on Friday, put up in hotel rooms and have side-by-side seats for the big game.

"The opportunity to bring these two guys together, their two teams playing on the biggest stage in sports, it's very, very humbling and gratifying," Smolenski told The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Welsh said he was "speechless" when he got the news. Gladwell, meanwhile, thought he was getting a spam call when a Super Bowl Host Committee representative contacted him Sunday morning.

"They're like, 'You're going to the Super Bowl,'" Gladwell said, remembering the shock. "I'm like, 'I am?'"

Rescuers push to find survivors of 'disaster of the century'

By JUSTIN SPIKE, GHAITH ALSAYED and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

KAHRAMANMARAS, Turkey (AP) — Rescue workers made a final push Thursday to find survivors of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria that rendered many communities unrecognizable to their inhabitants and led the Turkish president to declare it "the disaster of the century." The death toll topped 20,000.

The earthquake affected an area that is home to 13.5 million people in Turkey and an unknown number in Syria and stretches farther than the distance from London to Paris or Boston to Philadelphia. Even with an army of people taking part in the rescue effort, crews had to pick and choose where to help.

The scene from the air showed the scope of devastation, with entire neighborhoods of high-rises reduced to twisted metal, pulverized concrete and exposed wires.

In Adiyaman, Associated Press journalists saw someone plead with rescuers to look through the rubble of a building where relatives were trapped. They refused, saying no one was alive there and that they had to prioritize areas with possible survivors.

A man who gave his name only as Ahmet out of fear of government retribution later asked the AP: "How can I go home and sleep? My brother is there. He may still be alive."

The death toll from Monday's 7.8 magnitude catastrophe rose to nearly 21,000, eclipsing the more than 18,400 who died in the 2011 earthquake off Fukushima, Japan, that triggered a tsunami and the estimated 18,000 people who died in a temblor near Istanbul in 1999.

The new figure, which is certain to rise, included over 17,600 people in Turkey and more than 3,300 in civil war-torn Syria. Tens of thousands were also injured.

Even though experts say people could survive for a week or more, the chances of finding survivors in the freezing temperatures were dimming. As emergency crews and panicked relatives dug through the rubble — and occasionally found people alive — the focus began to shift to demolishing dangerously unstable structures.

The DHA news agency broadcast the rescue of a 10-year-old in Antakya. The agency said medics had to amputate an arm to free her and that her parents and three siblings had died. A 17-year-old girl emerged alive in Adiyaman, and a 20-year-old was found in Kahramanmaras by rescuers who shouted "God is great."

In Nurdagi, a city of around 40,000 nestled between snowy mountains some 35 miles (56 kilometers)

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from the quake's epicenter, vast swaths of the city were leveled, with scarcely a building unaffected. Even those that did not collapse were heavily damaged, making them unsafe.

Throngs of onlookers, mostly family members of people trapped inside, watched as heavy machines ripped at one building that had collapsed, its floors pancaked together with little more than a few inches in between.

Mehmet Yilmaz, 67, watched from a distance as bulldozers and other demolition equipment began to bring down what remained of the building where six of his family members had been trapped, including four children.

He estimated that about 80 people were still beneath the rubble and doubted that anyone would be found alive.

"There's no hope. We can't give up our hope in God, but they entered the building with listening devices and dogs, and there was nothing," Yilmaz said.

Mehmet Nasir Dusan, 67, sat watching as the remnants of the nine-story building were brought down in billowing clouds of dust. He said he held no hope of reuniting with his five family members trapped under the debris.

Still, he said, recovering their bodies would bring some small comfort.

"We're not leaving this site until we can recover their bodies, even if it takes 10 days," Dusan said. "My family is destroyed now."

In Kahramanmaras, the city closest to the epicenter, a sports hall the size of a basketball court served as a makeshift morgue to accommodate and identify bodies.

On the floor lay dozens of bodies wrapped in blankets or black shrouds. At least one appeared to be that of a 5- or 6-year-old.

At the entrance, a man wept over a black body bag that lay next to another in the bed of a small truck. "I'm 70 years old. God should have taken me, not my son," he cried.

Workers continued to conduct rescue operations in Kahramanmaras, but it was clear that many who were trapped in collapsed buildings had already died. One rescue worker was heard saying that his psychological state was declining and that the smell of death was becoming too much to bear.

In northwestern Syria, the first U.N. aid trucks since the quake to enter the rebel-controlled area from Turkey arrived, underscoring the difficulty of getting help to people there. In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens scrambled for aid in front of a truck distributing children's coats and other supplies.

One survivor, Ahmet Tokgoz, called for the government to evacuate people from the region. Many of those who have lost their homes found shelter in tents, stadiums and other temporary accommodation, but others have slept outdoors.

"Especially in this cold, it is not possible to live here," he said. "If people haven't died from being stuck under the rubble, they'll die from the cold."

The winter weather and damage to roads and airports have hampered the response. Some in Turkey have complained that the government was slow to respond — a perception that could hurt Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a time when he faces a tough battle for reelection in May.

"As you know, the earthquake hit an area of 500-kilometer (311-mile) diameter where 13.5 million of our people live, and that made our job difficult," Erdogan said Thursday.

In the Turkish town of Elbistan, rescuers stood atop the rubble from a collapsed home and pulled out an elderly woman.

Rescue teams urged quiet in the hopes of hearing stifled pleas for help, and the Syrian paramedic group known as the White Helmets noted that "every second could mean saving a life."

But more and more often, the teams pulled out dead bodies. In Antakya, more than 100 bodies were awaiting identification in a makeshift morgue outside a hospital.

With the chances of finding people alive dwindling, crews in some places began demolishing buildings. Authorities called off search-and-rescue operations in the cities of Kilis and Sanliurfa, where destruction was not as severe as in other areas. Vice President Fuat Oktay said rescue work was mostly complete in

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Diyarbakir, Adana and Osmaniye.

Across the border in Syria, assistance trickled in. The U.N. is authorized to deliver aid through only one border crossing, and road damage has prevented that thus far. U.N. officials pleaded for humanitarian concerns to take precedence over wartime politics.

It wasn't clear how many people were still unaccounted for in both countries.

Turkey's disaster-management agency said more than 110,000 rescue personnel were now taking part in the effort and more than 5,500 vehicles, including tractors, cranes, bulldozers and excavators had been shipped. The Foreign Ministry said 95 countries have offered help.

Super Bowl Guide: Where to watch and who to watch

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — The Super Bowl between the Philadelphia Eagles and Kansas City Chiefs is rapidly approaching. Here are some things to know ahead of Sunday's game:

HOW DO I WATCH?

The game begins at 6:30 p.m. EST on Sunday and can be viewed on Fox, Fox Deportes and the NFL+ app. It can also be streamed on multiple services, including YouTube TV. The national radio broadcast is on Westwood One.

WHO ARE THE TEAMS AND PLAYERS?

The Kansas City Chiefs are back in the Super Bowl for the third time in four years after winning another AFC Championship. The Chiefs won Super Bowl 54 against the 49ers after the 2019 season but lost to the Buccaneers after 2020.

The Chiefs are led by quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who claimed his second MVP award on Thursday night. They've also got several other stars, led by tight end Travis Kelce and defensive lineman Chris Jones.

The Philadelphia Eagles won the NFC championship and are trying to win their second Super Bowl in six years. They're led by quarterback and MVP finalist Jalen Hurts, receivers A.J. Brown and DeVonta Smith and linebacker Haason Reddick.

WHAT'S THE HALFTIME SHOW?

Nine-time Grammy Award winner Rihanna is the headline act of this year's halftime show.

She's had 14 No. 1 Billboard Hot 100 hits, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia." She and rapper A\$AP Rocky recently welcomed her first child.

"The setlist was the biggest challenge. That was the hardest, hardest part. Deciding how to maximize 13 minutes but also celebrate — that's what this show is going to be. It's going to be a celebration of my catalog in the best way that we could have put it together," Rihanna said.

WHERE'S THE GAME BEING PLAYED?

The Super Bowl will be played at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, which is home to the NFL's Arizona Cardinals. Glendale is a suburb of Phoenix.

It's the third Super Bowl the stadium has hosted.

The Phoenix area is no stranger to big events: In fact, two of them are happening right now. The Super Bowl is obviously attracting a lot of attention but the yearly WM Phoenix Open is also this week, drawing thousands of golf fans — and a steady stream of private planes — to the city to watch players like top-ranked Rory McElroy.

The NBA even made a brief cameo: The Phoenix Suns acquired superstar Kevin Durant in a trade with the Brooklyn Nets late Wednesday that rocked the sport and galvanized the city's fan base.

WHO IS FAVORED?

The Eagles are favored by 1 1/2 points to beat the Chiefs, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, and the line has stayed fairly constant over the past two weeks. The over-under is 50.5 points.

Picking the game's winner is one of the basic ways to bet, but there are many, many prop bets gamblers can also choose.

Sportsbooks have taken advantage of the increasing popularity of prop bets, which could range from

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whether there will be a safety to whether the Chiefs or Eagles will score more points than NBA stars LeBron James or Steph Curry when their teams meet the day before the big game.

Professional sports bettors tend to make the more traditional wagers and look for value in the props if they believe they can find a betting number to exploit. For the most part, the props belong to the general public.

WHAT WERE THE TOP MOMENTS FROM NFL HONORS?

The league had its yearly "NFL Honors" show on Thursday night, with Mahomes receiving his second MVP and Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott earning the NFL Walter Payton Man of the Year.

Another highlight: Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin made his second appearance of the week, paying tribute to those who had a hand in giving him a second chance at life.

Hamlin was on stage a little more than a month after he went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field in Cincinnati.

First war, now earthquake: Many Syrians displaced again

By BASSEM MROUE, ABBY SEWELL and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Living for years in a tent camp for displaced people in Syria's rebel-held northwest, Ali Abu Yassin used to envy friends and relatives who had brick walls around them and solid ceilings over their heads.

The situation was turned on its head after Monday's devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Turkey and Syria, killing more than 23,000 people, collapsing and damaging tens of thousands of buildings and potentially leaving millions displaced.

More than 20 of Abu Yassin's relatives were killed when their apartment buildings collapsed from the quake in the nearby village of Bisnya, he said, including one cousin's entire family of 14.

Abu Yassin made it to the village to help with rescue efforts.

"It took us two days to pull out their bodies and bury them in a mass grave," Abu Yassin said by telephone from the rebel-held province of Idlib. From the tent he had once wished to leave, the father of three said, "I am so lucky. It's God's will."

Before the earthquake, Syria's 12-year-old uprising-turned-civil war had already displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million. Abu Yassin was among them, fleeing from his home in another part of Idlib years ago.

Now the earthquake has caused a new wave of displacement.

The swath of destruction included the rebel-held enclave, centered on Idlib province, as well as heavily populated government-held cities like Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. The U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, said Friday that as many as 5.3 million people in Syria may have been left homeless.

For many, this is their second displacement.

Wassim Jaadan left his house in the rebel-held village of Zardana in Idlib, then under bombing by government forces, and fled to Lebanon with his family in 2013. Nine years later, after Lebanon collapsed into a protracted economic crisis and they could no longer afford rent, Jaadan brought his wife and four children home to Zardana.

"The economic situation was better than Lebanon, and we had our family, our parents here," he said.

When the earthquake struck on Monday, the family was awoken by a light shaking that quickly became more violent. They escaped before the building fell and crumbled to rubble.

The family now lives in a tent, which is nearly empty since all their possessions were destroyed. "We are about to die from the cold," Jaadan said. "I am unable to think because of the shock."

UNHCR said in a statement that it is trying to ensure that shelters housing displaced people have adequate facilities, as well as tents, plastic sheeting, thermal blankets, sleeping mats and winter clothing.

However, aid has been slow to reach many areas. The first earthquake-related aid convoy of 14 trucks crossed through Turkey into northwestern Syria on Friday, a U.N. spokesperson told The Associated Press. The road to the Bab al-Hawa border crossing was obstructed for days following the earthquake due to

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road damage and debris from collapsed buildings.

In the rural areas of northwest Syria, there are "tens of thousands of displaced people staying under olive trees in freezing temperatures," Raed Saleh, head of the opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets, said during a news conference Friday. Saleh said 500 buildings in northwest Syria have been completely destroyed, 1,400 partially crumbled and tens of thousands of homes were damaged.

In other earthquake-damaged areas, displaced people crowded into temporary shelters in churches and mosques, schools, hotels and gyms.

On Friday, in his first visit to areas hit by the earthquake, President Bashar Assad and his wife Asma visited two shelters in the northern city of Aleppo and a kitchen preparing 3,000 meals a day for displaced people.

In the coastal city of Latakia, a base of support for Assad, some 2,000 people on Friday evening crammed into the city's sports center.

Under a banner with Assad's face and a Syrian flag, the floor of the center's basketball court was crowded with mattresses and sleeping bags. Families huddled in winter jackets to stay warm and ate hot meals provided by a local aid organization.

Wardah al-Hussein, a 67-year-old mother of nine, said she has been sleeping in the stadium since the earthquake. Originally from Aleppo, she was now starting her second displacement.

"We fled from our city and our house was destroyed, and we came here," she said. "Now because of the earthquake we went through it all again."

Those whose homes were spared have opened them to relatives and neighbors.

A resident of the rebel-held northwestern town of Atmeh, Mustafa Ali, said that already two families of relatives moved in with his family in his three-room apartment while they wait to see if experts will make sure their own homes are suitable for living.

"What people urgently need now is tents" as well as warm clothes and baby formula, Ali said.

An aid worker based in northern Syria, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said eight sprawling facilities, including a center where coronavirus patients were once kept, have been opened to host the displaced in the region.

Adding to the troubles of the displaced, he said, food prices are going up in the wake of the earthquake due to limited supplies.

"Our conditions are miserable," he said. "I need aid now."

Danielle Deadwyler cites racism, misogynoir in Oscar snub

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Danielle Deadwyler says racism and misogynoir played a role in this year's Academy Awards nominations, where she and Viola Davis were overlooked in the best actress category.

Going into Oscar nominations last month, Deadwyler was widely seen as a likely nominee for her lauded performance as Mamie Till-Mobley in "Till." But the best actress field, perhaps the most competitive category this year, didn't shake out as expected: Both Deadwyler and Davis were left out.

Davis, a four-time Oscar nominee and one-time winner for her performance in "Fences," had been celebrated for the historical epic "The Woman King." Deadwyler had been nominated by the Screen Actors Guild Awards and the BAFTAs in the run-up to Oscar nominations, and won best lead performance at the Gotham Awards.

That two prominent Black actors were among the most striking snubs has been seen by some as a reflection of racial bias in the film industry. The day after the Oscar nominations, "Till" director Chinonye Chukwu posted on Instagram: "We live in a world and work in industries that are so aggressively committed to upholding whiteness and perpetuating an unabashed misogyny towards Black women."

Asked for her reaction to that comment on an episode of the "Kermode & Mayo's Take" podcast posted on Friday, Deadwyler strongly agreed with Chukwu.

"We're talking about people who perhaps chose not to see the film — we're talking about misogynoir — like it comes in all kinds of ways, whether it's direct or indirect," said Deadwyler. "It impacts who we are."

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Misogynoir, a term coined by the Black feminist author and activist Moya Bailey, refers to misogyny and prejudice directed at Black women.

"I think the question is more on people who are living in whiteness, white people's assessment of the spaces they are privileged by," added Deadwyler. "We've seen it exist in a governmental capacity — it can exist on a societal capacity, be it global or national."

That Deadwyler and Davis were edged out of an Oscar nomination is part of what fueled the initial backlash to the star-studded grassroots campaign for actress Andrea Riseborough. After a string of celebrity-hosted screenings (a regular feature of Hollywood's awards season), Riseborough unexpectedly landed a nomination for her performance in the indie drama "To Leslie," alongside Michelle Yeoh ("Everything Everywhere All at Once"), Cate Blanchett ("Tár"), Ana de Armas ("Blonde") and Michelle Williams ("The Fabelmans").

After the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences announced an inquiry into the Riseborough campaign, it found no reason to rescind her nomination or take any other action — though Bill Kramer, academy president, said some social media and outreach campaigning tactics "caused concern."

But conversation has continued on how money, race, status and connections can influence awards campaigns. "The Woman King" director Gina Prince-Bythewood said earlier this week that she questioned how people in the film industry are using their social capital.

"People like to say, 'Well, Viola and Danielle had studios behind them.' But we just very clearly saw that social capital is more valuable than that," Prince-Bythewood told The Hollywood Reporter. "That type of power is exercised in more casual ways in social circles, where folks are your friends or your acquaintances. There may be diversity on your sets but not in your lives. And Black women in this industry, we don't have that power."

Deadwyler, whom The Associated Press named one of the breakthrough performers of last year, said on the podcast it was everyone's responsibility to ensure an equitable playing field.

"Nobody is absolved of not participating in racism and not knowing that there is a possibility of its lingering effect on the spaces and the institution," she said.

Japan's earthquake recovery offers hard lessons for Turkey

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Mountains of rubble and twisted metal. Death on an unimaginable scale. Grief. Rage. Relief at having survived.

What's left behind after a natural disaster so powerful that it rends the foundations of a society? What lingers over a decade later, even as the rest of the world moves on?

Similarities between the calamity unfolding this week in Turkey and Syria and the triple disaster that hit northern Japan in 2011 may offer a glimpse of what the region could face in the years ahead. They're linked by the sheer enormity of the collective psychological trauma, of the loss of life and of the material destruction.

The combined toll of Monday's 7.8 magnitude earthquake rose past 23,000 deaths on Friday as authorities announced the discovery of new bodies. That has already eclipsed the more than 18,400 who died in the disaster in Japan.

That magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck at 2:46 p.m., March 11, 2011. Not long after, cameras along the Japanese coast captured the wall of water that hit the Tohoku region. The quake was one of the biggest on record, and the tsunami it caused washed away cars, homes, office buildings and thousands of people, and caused a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Huge boats were dropped miles away from the ocean in the towering jumbled debris of what had once been cities, cars toppled on their sides like playthings among the ruined streets and obliterated buildings.

Many wondered if the area would ever return to what it was before.

A big lesson from Japan is that a disaster of this size doesn't ever really have a conclusion — a lesson Turkey itself knows well from a 1999 earthquake in the country's northwest that killed some 18,000 people. Despite speeches about rebuilding, the Tohoku quake has left a deep gash in the national consciousness

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and the landscapes of people's lives.

Take the death toll.

Deaths directly attributable to the quake in Turkey will level off in coming weeks, but it's unlikely to be the end.

Japan, for instance, has recognized thousands of other people who died later from stress-related heart attacks, or because of poor living conditions.

And despite hundreds of billions of dollars spent in Japan on reconstruction, some things won't ever come back — including a sense of place.

Before the quake, Tohoku was filled with small cities and villages, surrounded by farms, the ports filled with fleets of fishing boats. It's one of the wildest, most beautiful coastlines in Japan.

Today, while the wreckage of the quake and tsunami has largely been removed and many roads and buildings rebuilt, there are still large areas of empty space, places where buildings haven't been erected, farms haven't been replanted. Businesses have spent years trying to reconstruct decimated customer bases.

Just as workers once did in Japan, an army of rescuers in Turkey and Syria are digging through obliterated buildings, picking through twisted metal, pulverized concrete and exposed wires for survivors.

What comes next won't be easy.

In Japan, there was initially a palpable pride in the country's ability to endure disaster. People stood calmly in long orderly lines for food and water. They posted notices on message boards in destroyed towns with descriptions of loved ones in the hopes that rescue workers would find them.

After what locals called the Great East Japan Earthquake, the dead in Tohoku were left by piles of rubble, neatly wrapped in taped-up blankets, waiting to be taken away by workers still combing through the detritus for anyone left alive.

The long haul of rebuilding has challenged this resolve. The work has been uneven and, at times, painfully slow, hampered by government incompetence, petty squabbling and bureaucratic wrangling. Nearly half a million people were displaced in Japan. Tens of thousands still haven't returned home.

The issue has seeped into politics, especially as the debate continues about how to handle the aftermath of catastrophic meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. Years later, a fear of radiation permeates, and some areas of northern Japan have placed radiation counters in parks and other public areas. Officials and experts are still undecided how to remove the highly radioactive melted fuel debris in the reactor.

There's already been criticism that the Turkish government has failed to enforce modern construction codes for years, even as it allowed a real estate boom in earthquake-prone areas, and that it has been slow to respond to the disaster.

The years since 2011 have seen another failure, one officials in Japan have acknowledged: an inability to help those traumatized by what they experienced.

Some 2,500 people are unaccounted for across Tohoku, and people are still searching for their loved ones' remains. One man got a diving license and has gone on weekly dives for years trying to find evidence of his wife.

People still occasionally unearth victims' photo albums, clothes and other belongings.

Perhaps the most telling connection, however, is the sharp empathy shared by those who have survived a cataclysmic disaster, and the gratitude at seeing strangers help ease their suffering.

A group of about 30 rescue workers from Turkey were in the hard-hit town of Shichigahama for about six months in 2011 for search and rescue operations.

Shichigahama locals have not forgotten. They have now started a donation campaign for Turkey. One man said this week that he wept as he watched the scenes in Turkey, remembering his town's ordeal 12 years ago.

"They bravely walked through the debris to help find victims and return their bodies to their families," Mayor Kaoru Terasawa told reporters of the Turkish aid workers who came to Japan. "We are still so thankful to them, and we want to do something to return the favor and show our gratitude."

Quake brings chance for Syria's Assad to ease isolation

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — On his first public visit touring the destruction wreaked by this week's deadly earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria, Syrian President Bashar Assad on Friday pointedly shamed the West for shunning his country.

The embattled president may see the disaster, which shattered much of northern Syria, as an opportunity to push for an easing of his country's isolation — if not from the United States and the European Union, which have enforced sanctions for years over the long, brutal civil war, then from Arab nations.

"The West prioritized politics over the humanitarian situation," Assad told a group of reporters while visiting the Aleppo neighborhood of Masharqa, devastated by Monday's 7.8-magnitude quake. "It's natural that they politicize the situation, but there is no humanitarianism, neither now nor in the past."

Assad's carefully choreographed tour came five days after the quake hit, a contrast to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been visiting devastated parts of Turkey for several days.

The tragedy presents a danger for Assad from the sheer weight of new misery the quake brings to Syrians. The country has been crippled by an economic crisis that has pulled 90% of its population into poverty. Now as many as 5.3 million people may have been left homeless in Syria by the disaster, the U.N. refugee agency estimated.

Major fighting in the 12-year-old civil war eased years ago, but Syrians have only seen conditions get worse. Many were already struggling to afford food and fuel for heating. Rising frustration has sparked rare protests and critical voices against Assad in government-held territory for the first time in a decade. Failure to deliver aid or recover from the quake could further stoke public discontent.

The quake — the world's deadliest in decades with more than 23,000 dead — left widespread destruction across southeastern Turkey and northern Syria, both in the last rebel-held pocket of territory in the northwest and in swaths of government-held territory, particularly the city of Aleppo.

Officials in Assad's government claim American and European sanctions are obstructing delivery of aid to Syria and slowing down search and rescue operations to save families still trapped under the rubble.

"Assad is trying to exploit the earthquakes to get out of international isolation," Lina Khatib, director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House, told The Associated Press.

"His regime's call for the lifting of sanctions is an attempt at de facto normalization with the international community," she added.

The EU said Syria did not formally request aid until three days after the quake, and six member countries are sending help via the U.N.'s World Food Program. The U.S. said it has temporarily lifted sanctions that would hamper earthquake relief. Assad and Syrian officials have not commented.

But the U.S. and the EU have made clear they will not end the sanctions imposed over Assad's crackdown on the opposition and his forces' brutal methods against rebels in the civil war.

Assad himself has not called for sanctions to be lifted since the earthquake. Khatib said she expects he won't do so because it would make him look weak in front of his people after years of hard-line rhetoric against Western countries.

He may see hope in Arab countries.

Assad's closest allies, Russia, Iran and China, all sent aid after the disaster. But so did key U.S. Arab allies, notably the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Jordan.

Arab countries that shunned Syria since 2011 have been slowly reestablishing diplomatic ties with Damascus. A growing number of countries have called for Syria to be reinstated into the Arab League.

"These dynamics were already in place, led by the United Arab Emirates," and the earthquake could accelerate them, said Nadim Houry, executive director of the Arab Reform Initiative, a think tank.

The quake allows Arab countries "to work in a non-controversial manner due to the humanitarian urgency and provides space for this rapprochement to materialize," he said.

Delays in getting aid into opposition-held northwestern Syria have renewed debates about the U.N. system already in place to provide humanitarian help to the territory.

U.N. aid is delivered through a single border-crossing from Turkey because Russia has blocked the use of a second. The United Nations has also been delivering some aid to the rebel-held northwest from within

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Syria, across conflict lines, from Damascus.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Friday that the U.N. has been in contact with the Syrian government about getting a cross-line convoy into the northwest quickly.

Assad and Russia have called for aid deliveries to the enclave to be done exclusively through Damascus, which the U.N. agencies and Western countries oppose, fearing he would divert aid to supporters. But experts say the Syrian leader and Moscow may use the urgency of the situation to push for a change.

"There is an urgent need now for more assistance. There needs to be a solution that doesn't get politicized, while at the same time does not play into the hands of the regime," Houry said.

Russia hits targets across Ukraine with missiles, drones

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia used strategic bombers, cruise missiles and killer drones in a wave of attacks across Ukraine early Friday, while Moscow's military push that Kyiv says has been brewing for days appeared to pick up pace in eastern areas ahead of the one-year anniversary of its invasion.

Russian forces have launched 71 cruise missiles, 35 S-300 missiles and seven Shahed drones since late Thursday, Ukraine's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi said.

Ukrainian forces downed 61 cruise missiles and five drones, he added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has campaigned for more Western support against Russia's military ambitions, said: "This is terror that can and must be stopped."

Meanwhile, the Kremlin's ground forces were focusing on Ukraine's industrial east, especially the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces that make up the industrial Donbas region where recent fighting has been most intense, the Ukrainian military said. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces there since 2014.

Kremlin is striving to secure areas it illegally annexed last September — the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions — and where it claims its rule is welcomed, according to Kyiv officials.

Moscow's goals have narrowed since it launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24 2022, military analysts say. At that time, the capital, Kyiv, and the installation of a puppet government were among its targets, but numerous battlefield setbacks, including yielding Donbas areas it had initially captured, have embarrassed Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Kremlin is currently concentrating its efforts on gaining full control of the Donbas, Kyiv claims, and is pushing at key points on several fronts, though Russian progress is reportedly slow.

In the Donetsk region, local Ukrainian officials reported that the Russian military deployed additional troops and launched offensive operations. "There is a daily escalation and Russian attacks are becoming active throughout the region," Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

In Luhansk province, the Russian army is trying to punch through Ukrainian defenses, according to regional Gov. Serhii Haidai.

"The situation is deteriorating, the enemy is constantly attacking, the Russians are bringing in a large amount of heavy equipment and aircraft," Haidai said.

There has been little change in battlefield positions for weeks amid freezing winter conditions.

Denis Pushilin, the Moscow-appointed head of the Donetsk region, said that Russian forces had secured positions on the southern outskirts of Vuhledar. He added that Ukraine has sent additional reinforcements to the city that slowed the Russian advance.

Pushilin's claim couldn't be independently verified.

Vuhledar is a strategically important town that sits next to a railway link crossing the region on the way to Crimea. Capturing the town is important for Russia to secure the safety of the railway connection to Crimea and advance its goal of seizing the entire Donetsk region.

The cruise missiles aimed at Ukraine were launched by Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers and from Russian navy ships in the Black Sea, military chief Zaluzhnyi said, while the S-300 missiles were launched from the Belgorod region just inside Russia and the occupied part of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region.

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Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Moscow once again targeted the power supply in "another attempt to destroy the Ukrainian energy system and deprive Ukrainians of light, heat, water." The International Atomic Energy Agency said two of Ukraine's three operating nuclear power plants reduced power "due to renewed shelling of the country's energy infrastructure."

The barrage was broad, also taking aim at the capital, Kyiv, and Lviv, near Ukraine's Western border with Poland. It also struck critical infrastructure in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the northeast. Seven people were wounded there, two of them seriously, regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov said.

Air raid sirens sounded across much of the country.

Also Friday, Moldova's Ministry of Defense said that a missile was detected traversing its airspace near the border with Ukraine. Moldova's foreign ministry said in a statement that the Russian ambassador in Chisinau has been summoned for talks over the "unacceptable violation".

The ministry said that the missile was detected in its airspace at around 10 a.m. and flew over two border villages before heading toward Ukraine.

The spokesperson for Ukraine's Air Forces, Yuriy Ihnat, told The Associated Press that another missile crossed the airspace of Romania, a NATO member country. Romania's defense ministry denied that, however, saying the closest the missile came to Romania's airspace was approximately 35 kilometers (20 miles).

High-voltage infrastructure facilities were hit in the eastern, western and southern regions, Ukraine's energy company, Ukrenergo, said, resulting in power outages in some areas. It was the 14th round of massive strikes on the country's power supply, the company said. The last one occurred on Jan. 26 as Moscow seeks to demoralize Ukrainians by leaving them without heat and water in the bitter winter.

Zaporizhzhia City Council Secretary Anatolii Kurtiev said the city had been hit 17 times in one hour, which he said made it the most intense period of attacks since the beginning of the full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Ukraine's Air Force shot down 10 Russian missiles over Kyiv, according to the Kyiv City Administration. The fragments of one missile damaged two cars, a house and electricity wires. No casualties were reported.

The Ukraine Air Force said Russia launched S-300 anti-aircraft guided missiles on the Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia provinces. Those missiles cannot be destroyed in mid-air by air defenses but they have a relatively short range so the Russians have used them for attacks on areas not far from Russian-controlled territory.

The Khmelnytskyi province in Western Ukraine was also attacked with Shahed drones, according to regional Gov. Serhii Hamalii.

Russia has in the past used Iranian-made Shahed drones to strike at key Ukrainian infrastructure and sow fear among civilians, according to Western analysts. They are known as suicide drones because they nosedive into targets and explode on impact like a missile.

How the 'boneless wing' became a tasty culinary lie

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — One day in 2020, at the pandemic's height, an earnest-looking man with long hair the color of Buffalo sauce stepped up to a podium in Lincoln, Nebraska, to address his city council during its public comment period. His unexpected topic, as he framed it: It was time to end the deception.

"I propose that we as a city remove the name 'boneless wings' from our menus and from our hearts," said Ander Christensen, who managed to be both persuasive and tongue-in-cheek all at once. "We've been living a lie for far too long."

With the Super Bowl at hand, behold the cheerful untruth that has been perpetrated upon (and generally with the blessing of) the chicken-consuming citizens of the United States on menus across the land: a "boneless wing" that isn't a wing at all.

Odds are you already knew that — though spot checks over the past year at a smattering of wing joints (see what we did there?) suggest that a healthy amount of Americans don't. But those little white-meat nuggets, tasty as they may be, offer a glimpse into how things are marketed, how people believe them — and whether it matters to anyone but the chicken.

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This weekend, according to the National Chicken Council, Americans are set to eat 1.45 billion chicken wings. So if you ever wanted a deep dive into what it means to eat the wings that aren't — and how the chicken wing's proximity to beer, good times and football sent it soaring — now's the time.

Today's food landscape is brimming with these gentle impostors — things we eat that pass as other things we eat.

Surimi is fish that effectively becomes crab or lobster meat for many of us — and stars in California rolls across the land. Carrots are cut and buffed until their edges are curved and smooth, becoming "baby carrots" or, slightly more truthfully, "baby-cut carrots." Impossible Burgers are plant-based delicacies that carry many of meat's characteristics without ever having been near an animal. And "Chilean sea bass"? Not a bass at all, but a rebrand of something called a Patagonian toothfish.

Part of the reason for the rise of the "boneless wing" is money. In recent years, with prices of actual chicken wings rising, the alternative became more cost effective. The average price for prepared "boneless wings" is \$4.99 a pound compared with \$8.38 a pound for bone-in wings, according to Tom Super, senior vice president of communications for the National Chicken Council, citing the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He calls it "a way to move more boneless/skinless breast meat that continues currently to be in ample supply."

"While many wing consumers argue that the wing needs a bone to impart a special taste, the ongoing success of the boneless wings has proven there are plenty of boneless wing diners," Super said in an email.

Why? Part of it is because "boneless wings" — the quotation marks will remain for the duration of our time together — summon a powerful backstory.

"You're associating it with the Super Bowl and parties and fun, so you transform the perception of the product," says Christopher Kimball, founder of Christopher Kimball's Milk Street, a company whose magazine and instructional TV show help people cook and teach them about food.

"Most people have no idea where any of this stuff comes from," Kimball says. "You can blame the food companies, but we're buying it."

We accept them — embrace them, even. And what does it really matter, you say? They're delicious, they're convenient. So why poke into things that pair so perfectly with beer and make the sports-watching world a better place?

Here's one possible reason: Could they be a microcosm of the national willingness to accept things that aren't what they purport to be? And isn't that something that this country struggles with mightily, particularly in the misinformation- and disinformation-saturated years since the "boneless wing" entered our world?

"It's not really wrong, but are we tricking people?" wonders Matthew Read, who teaches advertising at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, after two decades with ad agencies. He hosts a cooking show on local television called "Spatchcock Funk."

"The wing," he says, "has gone from being an actual part of chicken to being just something you can sauce and eat with your hands."

Whether cut from actual flying-related appendages or not, "boneless wings" have taken hold. The chicken council, which credits the behemoth chain Buffalo Wild Wings with inventing them, asked wing eaters in 2018 which kind of wings they preferred, and 40% placed themselves on Team Boneless. Previous years were even higher.

Christensen, a chemical engineer by day, has been on his wing crusade for years. It began when he was in college, and a group of friends had all just split with their girlfriends. Suddenly they had extra money and time, so they started going to wing restaurants three times a week. He began noticing how many "boneless wings" were ordered with no sense that they weren't what they purported to be. A semi-comedic cause was born.

"I'm looking around and saying, 'Why doesn't anybody care?'" he said in an interview this week.

He has done informal surveys, accosting people about their wing habits, including at one recent college football game in Ohio. "The vast majority of people have no clue. Most people think it's part of the wing. Some think it's part of the thigh. A small group realized that it was from the chicken breast."

His theory: Generations that grew up on chicken nuggets turn to "boneless wings" as a way of allow-

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ing themselves to continue those eating habits. "They get to pretend they're eating like adults," he says. Could the very definition of the word "wing" be changing? Many wing places now offer a "cauliflower wing" alternative, whose only relationship with an actual wing is the sauce. And some vegan "wing" recipes even suggest inserting a popsicle stick into the cauliflower to approximate a chicken bone.

"Our idea of what a wing is comes from what we're told we're eating," says Alexandra Plakias, who teaches at Hamilton College in New York and is the author of "Thinking Through Food: A Philosophical Introduction." "These kinds of mini-deceptions that seem fun kind of normalize manipulation," Plakias says. "Is a wing a part of a bird, or is a wing a style of sauce? And that ambiguity is where I think we open up room for deception."

And so perhaps the language evolves, though there are pockets of skeptics.

"Personally, I do think it matters. I want to know exactly what it is that I'm ordering and what's in my food," says Natalie Visconti, 20, of Bridgewater, New Jersey, a sophomore at Penn State University and a self-described "traditional wing" aficionado.

Christensen vows to carry on, and mentions — almost in passing — that he's gunning to become "the world's first chicken-wing lobbyist." His efforts have drawn some scorn; people right and left accuse him of carrying a coded message about something political. He insists it's nothing more than culinary truth-seeking.

"Genuinely, I really only care about boneless wings," he says. "I have one small hill to die on. But it's mine."

Don't feed the bears! But birds OK, new Tahoe research shows

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Don't feed the bears!

Wildlife biologists and forest rangers have preached the mantra for nearly a century at national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite, and for decades in areas where urban development increasingly invaded native wildlife habitat.

But don't feed the birds? That may be a different story — at least for one bird species at Lake Tahoe.

Snowshoe and cross-country ski enthusiasts routinely feed the tiny mountain chickadees high above the north shore of the alpine lake on the California-Nevada border. The black-capped birds of Chickadee Ridge will even perch on extended hands to snatch offered seeds.

New research from University of Nevada scientists found that supplementing the chickadees' natural food sources with food provided in feeders or by hand did not negatively impact them, as long as proper food is used and certain rules are followed.

"It's a wonderful experience when the birds fly around and land on your hand to grab food. We call it 'becoming a Disney princess,'" said Benjamin Sonnenberg, a biologist/behavioral ecologist who co-authored the six-year study.

But he also recognized "there's always the question of when it is appropriate or not appropriate to feed birds in the wild."

State wildlife officials said this week they generally frown on feeding wildlife. But Nevada Department of Wildlife spokeswoman Ashley Sanchez acknowledged concerns about potential harm are based on speculation, not scientific data.

The latest research project under the wings of Professor Vladimir Pravosudov's Chickadee Cognition Lab established feeders in the Forest Service's Mount Rose Wilderness and tracked populations of mountain chickadees at two elevations — both those that did and didn't visit feeders.

"If we saw increases in the population size or decreases in the population size, that could mean we were hurting the animals by feeding them," co-author Joseph Welklin said. "Our study shows that feeding these mountain chickadees in the wild during the winter has no effect on their population dynamics."

Sonnenberg said he understood concerns about supplementing food for wild creatures at Tahoe, where bears attracted to garbage get into trouble that sometimes turns fatal, and not for humans. The bears may ultimately be killed because they no longer fear people. He grew up in Bozeman, Montana, and has fond memories of grizzly and black bears at Yellowstone National Park where he learned at an early age

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"not to intentionally or to accidentally feed them."

"Feeding wildlife is context-specific and comes with nuance," he said.

Bear-human conflicts were extremely rare at Tahoe when Ranger Smith started battling Yogi and Boo-Boo over "pic-a-nic" baskets at fictional Jellystone Park in the popular cartoon that debuted in 1960. But between 1960 and 1980 the human population around Lake Tahoe exploded from 10,000 to 50,000 — 90,000 in the summer. Peak days now approach 300,000 visitors.

The growth spurred more development encroaching on native bear habitat, which led some so-called "garbage bears" to become dependent on unsecured trash for food. In a few cases, wildlife officials have blamed resulting bear deaths on north Tahoe residents feeding bears in their backyards.

"Should you feed the bears? Of course not," Sonnenberg said. "But given the millions of people that are feeding birds around the world, understanding the impact of this food on wild populations is important, especially in a changing world."

Mountain chickadees are of particular interest because they're among the few avian species that hunker down for the cold Sierra winters instead of migrating to a warmer climate. They stash away tens of thousands of food items every fall then return to the hidden treasure throughout the winter to survive.

They're "prolific scatter hoarders and rely on specialized spatial memory abilities to recover cached food from their environment during harsh winter months," according to the findings published last month in the journal *Ornithology*.

"When they come to your hand and grab a food item," Sonnenberg said, "if they fly away into the woods and you can't see them anymore, they are likely storing that food for later."

Their visits to feeders instead of tapping their own stash, the study said, "may be partially driven by the seemingly compulsive-like nature of caching behavior, as chickadees will cache available resources until they are depleted."

The project included scientists from Canada's University of Western Ontario's Department of Psychology, Kennesaw State University's Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology in Georgia and the University of Oklahoma's Biological Survey.

Sanchez said the Nevada Department of Wildlife's concerns include observations the chickadees are exhibiting a level of tameness around potential predators — humans — which could make them more susceptible to other predators in nature.

She also said in an email the number of people hand-feeding the birds at Chickadee Ridge has increased significantly in recent years, "which means the odds that somebody will feed them inappropriate food items or handle them inappropriately has also increased."

Sonnenberg added in an email the researchers are "not directly advocating for or against the feeding of chickadees at Chickadee Ridge."

But "what our results do show is that this extra food does not cause chickadee populations in the Sierra Nevada to boom (increase to densities that could be harmful) or bust (decrease dramatically due to harmful effects)," he wrote.

Anyone feeding the birds should only provide food similar to what is found in their natural environment such as unsalted pine nuts or black-oil sunflower seeds, never bread or other human food, he said.

"And always be respectful of the animal," Sonnenberg said. "Behave like you're in their house and you're visiting them."

'It just rang': In crises, US-China hotline goes unanswered

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Within hours of an Air Force F-22 downing a giant Chinese balloon that had crossed the United States, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reached out to his Chinese counterpart via a special crisis line, aiming for a quick general-to-general talk that could explain things and ease tensions.

But Austin's effort Saturday fell flat, when Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe declined to get on the line, the Pentagon says.

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China's Defense Ministry says it refused the call from Austin after the balloon was shot down because the U.S. had "not created the proper atmosphere" for dialogue and exchange. The U.S. action had "seriously violated international norms and set a pernicious precedent," a ministry spokesperson was quoted as saying in a statement issued late Thursday.

It's been an experience that's frustrated U.S. commanders for decades, when it comes to getting their Chinese counterparts on a phone or video line as some flaring crisis is sending tensions between the two nations climbing.

From Americans' perspective, the lack of the kind of reliable crisis communications that helped get the U.S. and Soviet Union through the Cold War without an armed nuclear exchange is raising the dangers of the U.S.-China relationship now, at a time when China's military strength is growing and tensions with the U.S. are on the rise.

Without that ability for generals in opposing capitals to clear things up in a hurry, Americans worry that misunderstandings, false reports or accidental collisions could cause a minor confrontation to spiral into greater hostilities.

And it's not about any technical shortfall with the communication equipment, said Bonnie Glaser, managing director of Indo-Pacific studies at the German Marshall Fund think tank. The issue is a fundamental difference in the way China and the U.S. view the value and purpose of military-to-military hotlines.

U.S. military leaders' faith in Washington-to-Beijing hotlines as a way to defuse flare-ups with China's military has been butting up against a sharply different take — a Chinese political system that runs on slow deliberative consultation by political leaders and makes no room for individually directed, real-time talk between rival generals.

And Chinese leaders are suspicious of the whole U.S. notion of a hotline — seeing it as an American channel for trying to talk their way out of repercussions for a U.S. provocation.

"That's really dangerous," Assistant Secretary for Defense Ely Ratner said Thursday of the difficulty of military-to-military crisis communications with China, when Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley pressed him about China's latest rebuff on Beijing's and Washington's hotline setup.

U.S. generals are persisting in their efforts to open more lines of communication with Chinese counterparts, the defense official said, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "And unfortunately, to date, the PLA is not answering that call," Ratner said, referring to China's People's Liberation Army.

Ratner accused China of using vital channels of communication simply as a blunter messaging tool, shutting them down or opening them up again to underscore China's displeasure or pleasure with the U.S.

China's resistance to military hotlines as tensions increase puts more urgency on efforts by President Joe Biden and his top civilian diplomats and security aides to build up their own communication channels with President Xi Jinping and other top Chinese political officials, for situations where military hotlines may go unanswered, U.S. officials and China experts say.

Both U.S. and Chinese militaries are building up for a possible confrontation over U.S.-backed self-ruled Taiwan, which China claims as its territory. The next flare-up seems only a matter of time. It could happen with an expected event, such as House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's promised visit to Taiwan, or something unexpected, like the 2001 collision between a Chinese fighter and a U.S. Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane over the South China Sea. Without commanders talking in real-time, Americans and Chinese would have one less way of averting greater conflict.

"My worry is that the EP-3 type incident will happen again," said Lyle Morris, a country director for China for the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2019 to 2021, now a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute. "And we will be in much different political environments of hostility and mistrust, where that could go wrong in a hurry."

Biden has emphasized building lines of communications with China to "responsibly manage" their differences. A November meeting between Xi and Biden yielded an announcement the two governments would resume a range of dialogues that China had shut down after an August Taiwan visit by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Last weekend, the U.S. canceled what would have been a relationship-building visit by Secretary of State

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Antony Blinken after the transit of the Chinese balloon, which the U.S. says was for espionage. China claims it was a civilian balloon used for meteorological research.

The same week that China's balloon flew over the U.S., Austin was in the Philippines to announce an expanded U.S. military footprint there, neighboring China, noted Tiehlin Yen, director of the Taiwan Center for Security Studies, a think tank. "America is also very nationalistic these days," Yen said.

"From a regional security perspective, this dialogue is necessary," Yen said.

What passes for military and civilian hotlines between China and the U.S. aren't the classic red phones on a desk.

Under a 2008 agreement, the China-U.S. military hotline amounts to a multistep process by which one capital relays a request to the other for a joint call or videoconference between top officials on encrypted lines. The pact gives the other side 48 hours and up to respond, although nothing in the pact stops top officials from talking immediately.

Sometimes when the U.S. calls, current and former U.S. officials say, Chinese officials don't even pick up.

"No one answered. It just rang," recounted Kristen Gunness, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corporation. Gunness was speaking about a March 2009 incident when she was working as an adviser to the Pentagon's chief of naval operations. Chinese navy vessels at the time surrounded a U.S. surveillance ship in the South China Sea and demanded the American leave. U.S. and Chinese military officials eventually talked - but some 24 hours later.

It took decades of Washington pushing to get Beijing to agree to the current system of military crisis communications, said David Sedney, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense who negotiated it.

"And then once we had it in place, it was clear that they were very reluctant to use it in any substantive purpose," Sedney said.

Americans' test calls on the hotline would get picked up, he said. And when Americans called to give congratulations on some Chinese holiday, Chinese officials would pick up and say thanks, he said.

Anything more sensitive, Sedney said, the staffers answering the phone "would say, 'We'll check. As soon as our leadership is ready to talk, we'll get back to you.' Nothing would happen."

Corruption endangers world's shrinking fisheries

By FU TING, GRACE EKPU and HELEN WIEFFERING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Indonesia's fisheries minister, Edhy Prabowo was tasked with protecting one of his country's most precious resources: baby lobsters so tiny one can fit on the tip of a finger.

The waters off the nation's many islands and archipelagos had once teemed with lobster. But overfishing in recent decades decimated the crustacean's population, so much so that fishermen turned to catching the hatchlings. They scooped them up by the thousands and shipped them to Vietnamese lobster farms, where the babies are raised to adulthood and sold mostly to dealers in China to meet its enormous demand for seafood.

Concerned that such harvesting was harming lobster populations, Indonesia's fishing ministry in 2016 prohibited the export of the tiny crustaceans. Shortly after taking office, Prabowo lifted the ban. Court documents show that just a month later, in June 2020, the minister accepted a \$77,000 bribe from a seafood supplier to grant it a permit to sell the hatchlings abroad.

The money kept flowing. In his short stint as minister, Prabowo accepted bribes of nearly \$2 million. He was arrested in 2020 by Indonesian authorities, having used the graft to purchase 26 road bikes, Old Navy children's clothes, Louis Vuitton bags, Rolex watches and two luxury pens. Prabowo, 50, was sentenced to five years in prison for corruption. His attorney declined to comment.

Prabowo's case is not an outlier. At least 45 government officials have been accused of corruption in the past two decades, the AP found. The allegations range from high-ranking officials like Prabowo, accepting large payments from fishing companies to obtain lucrative contracts, to low-level civil servants accepting a few thousand dollars to ignore fishermen bringing illegal catch ashore.

"Fisheries corruption can have devastating impacts on marine ecosystems and local communities that

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may depend on them," said Ben Freitas, manager of ocean policy at the World Wildlife Fund, based in Washington. "It is a global problem."

The situation is most critical in areas managed by developing nations because many industrialized countries have already overfished their own waters, forcing their trawlers to go afar. Many coastal developing countries depend on fish for millions of jobs and to feed their people.

Those wishing to conceal their operations or pay bribes to get around restrictions have found fishing to be a welcoming industry.

"The lack of accountability, I think, is even greater in the fisheries sector than it is in other environmental-related activities," said Juhani Grossmann at the Basel Institute on Governance, which is working on anti-corruption efforts with Indonesia's fishing ministry.

At least with illicit lumber operations, Grossmann said, "you don't have a different shell corporation for every single truck."

The AP review found that most cases of corruption and graft were low-level schemes, like one in India in which prosecutors last year alleged two fisheries officers extorted \$1,100 to approve subsidies for a fish farm. Another involved fishermen said to have bribed Malaysian officers with at least \$11,000 for every boat they agreed not to report.

But some involve global financial institutions. In 2021, the Swiss bank Credit Suisse admitted to fraudulently financing a massive loan to Mozambique to expand its tuna fishing fleet. A contractor handling the loan paid kickbacks of \$150 million to Mozambican government officials.

And in the "Fishrot" scandal, Namibian authorities allege the Icelandic seafood company Samherji paid roughly \$6 million in bribes to Namibian officials to be permitted to fish in the country's waters. Samherji has denied committing crimes.

Stephen Akester, a fisheries management adviser who has worked in Africa and South Asia for four decades, cited a long history of foreign companies — particularly from China — forging corrupt relationships with fisheries officials.

"They exploited the weakness of these governments for whom any kind of revenue was big money, even small dollars," he said. "And that still continues today."

In Gambia, a small West African nation nestled along Senegal's coast, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources, Bamba Banja, was charged in 2021 with accepting a bribe from a Chinese company to free a vessel detained for illegal fishing. The case is ongoing; Banja's lawyer told AP that the fisheries secretary denies any wrongdoing.

Corruption is not limited to developing countries. Malta's fisheries director in 2019 was linked to a criminal network that sought to launder illegally caught bluefin tuna that arrived in Spain from Italy and Malta via French ports. The newspaper El Confidencial said Spanish police intercepted a phone call in which the director was heard telling a tuna magnate, "You have to pay me." Malta's fisheries ministry said the director was on unpaid leave.

The cases reviewed by AP probably represent a small fraction of the corruption that takes place daily as seafood is transported and sold around the world.

In Ghana, for instance, the fishing ministry has been unmarked by any major corruption scandal. Yet the Environmental Justice Foundation, which has investigated abuses in the fishing sector for two decades, issued a report last year documenting how the West African nation has become ensnared in "a culture of corruption in which bribery and intimidation pervades all levels of fisheries management."

Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah advocates for better fisheries management in Ghana as convener of the Fisheries Alliance. In reviewing infractions reported by observers on fishing vessels for a World Bank project in 2016, Yamoah found wide, unexplained gaps in enforcement. The government had penalized some companies, he said, but others were granted a renewed fishing license without question.

"There was no clarity as to why these vessels were not even booked or sanctioned, while there was a clear case of a breach of law," Yamoah said.

Overfishing and illegal fishing have pushed Ghana's fish stocks to near collapse, prompting presidential action and putting the livelihoods and the health of millions of Ghanaians at risk.

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The situation, Yamoah said, is growing dire: Some days fishermen spend all day on the water and come back with nothing.

Today in History: FEB 11, Pope Benedict XVI resigns

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Feb. 11, the 42nd day of 2023. There are 323 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 11, 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin signed the Yalta Agreement, in which Stalin agreed to declare war against Imperial Japan following Nazi Germany's capitulation.

On this date:

In 660 B.C., tradition holds that Japan was founded as Jimmu ascended the throne as the country's first emperor.

In 1847, American inventor Thomas Alva Edison was born in Milan, Ohio.

In 1937, a six-week-old sit-down strike against General Motors ended, with the company agreeing to recognize the United Automobile Workers Union.

In 1963, American author and poet Sylvia Plath was found dead in her London flat, a suicide; she was 30.

In 1975, Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of Britain's opposition Conservative Party.

In 1979, followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (hoh-MAY'-nee) seized power in Iran.

In 1990, South African Black activist Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in captivity.

In 2006, Vice President Dick Cheney accidentally shot and wounded Harry Whittington, a companion during a weekend quail-hunting trip in Texas.

In 2008, the Pentagon charged Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (HAH'-leed shayk moh-HAH'-med) and five other detainees at Guantanamo Bay with murder and war crimes in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.

In 2011, Egypt exploded with joy after pro-democracy protesters brought down President Hosni Mubarak, whose resignation ended three decades of authoritarian rule.

In 2020, the World Health Organization gave the official name of COVID-19 to the disease caused by the coronavirus that had emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

Ten years ago: With a few words in Latin, Pope Benedict XVI did what no pope had done in more than half a millennium: announced his resignation. The bombshell came during a routine morning meeting of Vatican cardinals. (The 85-year-old pontiff was succeeded by Pope Francis.)

Five years ago: A Russian passenger plane crashed into a snowy field six minutes after taking off from Moscow, killing all 65 passengers and six crew members; investigators would blame human error, saying the pilots had received flawed air speed readings after failing to turn on a heating unit for the measurement equipment. Amid swirling winds, 17-year-old snowboarder Red Gerard won the United States' first gold medal of the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, capturing the men's slopestyle event. Singer Vic Damone, who possessed what Frank Sinatra once called "the best pipes in the business," died in Florida at the age of 89.

One year ago: President Joe Biden called on President Vladimir Putin to pull back more than 100,000 Russian troops massed near Ukraine's borders and warned that the U.S. and its allies would "respond decisively and impose swift and severe costs" if Russia invades. A tense standoff at a key U.S.-Canadian border bridge eased as protesters opposed to COVID-19 restrictions withdrew their vehicles.

Today's birthdays: Gospel singer Jimmy Carter is 91. Actor Tina Louise is 89. Fashion designer Mary Quant is 89. Bandleader Sergio Mendes is 82. Actor Philip Anglim is 71. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush is 70. Actor Catherine Hickland is 67. Rock musician David Uosikinen (The Hooters) is 67. Actor Carey Lowell is 62. Singer Sheryl Crow is 61. Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is 59. Actor Jennifer Aniston is 54. Actor Damian Lewis is 52. Actor Marisa Petroro is 51. Singer D'Angelo is 49. Actor Brice Beckham is 47. Rock vocalist Mike Shinoda (Linkin Park) is 46. Singer-actor Brandy is 44. Country musician Jon Jones (The Eli Young Band) is 43. Actor Matthew Lawrence is 43. R&B singer Kelly Rowland is 42. Actor Natalie Dormer is 41. Singer Aubrey O'Day is 39. Actor Q'orianka Kilcher is 33. Actor Taylor Lautner is 31.