

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 1 of 83

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2— GHS Boys Basketball](#)
- [8- Class A SoDak16 Pairings](#)
- [9- Senator Majority Leader Weekly Column](#)
- [10- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [11- Drought Monitor](#)
- [12- Thaler graduates from SDSU](#)
- [12- Bates Township Notice](#)
- [12- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [13- SD Searchlight: Legislative roundup: Tax talks go topsy-turvy, and the rest of the week's action in Pierre](#)
- [15- Lawmakers nix bill to raise SD's nation-leading juror pay](#)
- [16- Moving nominations from conventions to primaries would put power where it belongs](#)
- [17- Wyoming Legislature passes bills to ban medication abortion and exempt abortion as health care](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [28- Subscription Form](#)
- [29- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [30- News from the Associated Press](#)

Groton Community Calendar

Saturday, March 4

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.

Middle School All-State Band in Huron

Emmanuel Lutheran: Land & Legacy at Bethlehem Lutheran, Aberdeen, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



Sunday, March 5

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 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.

Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM, Grades 6-12; 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Milestones - 7th & 8th graders; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Communion Sunday. Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday school after children's sermon; Family Feast following worship RSVP Pastor Brandon, 11:30 a.m.

Monday, March 6

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, Mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Mini waffles.

School Lunch: Chicken legs, mashed potatoes.

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Lent Bible Study with Pastor Brandon, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 2 of 83



Everyone got excited after Cole Simon pried the ball loose (photo below) and it rolled out of bounce, last touched by the Bulldogs, as Groton got the ball back with 34 seconds left in the game. (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

GHS Boys' Basketball

Tigers hold off Milbank to advance to the SoDak16

Groton Area made seven of eight free throws in the fourth quarter and the Bulldogs had four fourth-quarter turnovers as the Tigers advanced to the SoDak 16 with a 48-39 win over Milbank.

The game was played Friday in Groton.

Milbank jumped out to a 5-0 lead before the Tigers went on a 12-point run to take a 12-5 lead. Groton Area led, 16-9, after the first quarter.

Milbank rallied in the second quarter and after a three-minute scoring drought by both teams, Milbank tied the game at 18 with 2:56 left in the half. The Tigers kept the lead and had a 21-18 lead in the closing seconds of the half. Groton attempted to take time off the clock and go for the last second shot; however, the shot was missed, Milbank got the rebound and on a three-quarter shot attempt, Jaxson Wildung was fouled at the buzzer and went to the free throw line to attempt three free throws. He made two of the three shots and Groton's lead was at one at half time, 21-20.

Milbank reclaimed the lead right away in the third quarter. The lead changed hands four times and the game was tied once during the quarter. Milbank had a 29-28 lead. Milbank committed a foul with 35 seconds left in the quarter and the Tigers had the ball. Groton ran the offence and drew the defense to the left side. Jacob Zak passed the ball to Tate Larson under the basket and the defense collapsed in on him. Larson passed it out to an unguarded Cole Simon and he made a three-point shot at the buzzer and the Tigers reclaimed the lead, 31-29.

Free throws started to take play a big role down the stretch and the Tiger defense started to wear down the Bulldogs. Milbank was within three, 37-34, with five minutes left in the game. Groton Area had a 44-39 lead after Ryder Johnson made one of two free throws. Milbank brought the ball upcourt. Simon was guarding Justus Osborn and right at mid court, Simon got his hand on the ball during Osborn's dribble, prying the ball loose and it rolled out of bounce. It was Groton ball with 34 seconds left and that sealed the fate of the game. Milbank was forced to foul, but the Tigers were four for four from the line in the



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 3 of 83

closing seconds and got the Region 1A second round win.

Tate Larson led the Tigers with 13 points, seven rebounds, three assists and one steal. Cole Simon had 13 points and three rebounds. Jacob Zak had nine points and three rebounds. Lane Tietz had eight points, four rebounds, six assists and three steals. Ryder Johnson had five points, two rebounds and one assist.

Groton Area made 15 of 24 two-pointers for 63 percent, two of 14 three-pointers for 14 percent, 12 of 15 free throws for 80 percent off of Milbank's 13 team fouls and 10 assists. Groton Area had seven turnovers, two of which were steals. Milbank had 16 turnovers four of which were steals. Rebounds were even with each team having around 22 rebounds.

Jaxson Wildung and Joe Schulte led the Bulldogs with 12 points apiece while Garrett Mertens had eight, Yohana Ajwanga four and Justus Osborn three.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton American Legion, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency, Locke Electric, Lori's Pharmacy, Love to Travel, Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc., S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank, Spanier Harvesting & Trucking, Weber Landscaping, Weismantel Insurance Agency.

- Paul Kosel



Coach Brian Dolan presents the SoDak16 Basketball to his team. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 4 of 83



Tate Larson was double teamed under the basket, but that did not stop him from scoring 13 points for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Taylor Diegel is pictured on the left. On the right, Tate Larson sets the screen for Jacob Zak. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 5 of 83



Top Photos: Lane Tietz makes his move under the basket in front of Garrett Mertens in the above photos.

Left Photo: At the start of the game, Coach Brian Dolan presented Lane Tietz with a special basketball after Tietz scored his 1,000th point at the first round of the Region 1A game against Webster Area. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 6 of 83



Pictured are Cole Simon and Ryder Johnson. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 7 of 83

VISITOR: Milbank Bulldogs ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
0	Osborn, Justus	*	1	5	1	3	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	0	0	28:48
4	Ajwanga, Yohana	*	2	3	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	4	0	0	1	0	20:26
5	Mertens, Garrett	*	3	6	2	4	0	0	2	5	7	3	8	3	3	0	0	32:00
10	Wildung, Jaxson	*	4	11	0	3	4	5	0	2	2	2	12	0	5	0	2	32:00
11	Schulte, Joe	*	4	11	1	4	3	3	0	5	5	1	12	0	4	1	0	32:00
3	Lightfield, Graham		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	11:39
15	Hanson, Emmett		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:29
23	Johnson, Eli		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2:04
24	Ludvigson, Aiden		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:34
TEAM REBOUNDS									2	1	3			0				
Team Totals			14	38	4	16	7	8	6	17	23	13	39	4	14	2	2	160

Total FG% - 1st: 7/19 0.368 2nd: 7/19 0.368 Game: 0.368 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/7 0.143 2nd: 3/9 0.333 Game: 0.250 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 5/6 0.833 2nd: 2/2 1.000 Game: 0.875 (1,0)

HOME: Groton Tigers ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
10	Tietz, Lane	*	3	7	0	1	2	2	0	5	5	1	8	4	3	0	2	31:51
11	Simon, Cole	*	6	10	1	5	0	0	1	1	2	1	13	0	3	0	0	27:48
22	Zak, Jacob	*	3	6	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	9	0	2	0	0	25:21
30	Larson, Cade	*	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6:05
40	Larson, Tate	*	4	8	0	0	5	7	2	4	6	0	13	3	1	0	1	30:31
4	Johnson, Ryder		1	3	0	2	3	4	0	2	2	3	5	1	0	0	0	27:32
12	Parrow, Tyson		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:09
20	Tracy, Keegan		0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5:02
24	Diegel, Teylor		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4:12
42	Ringgeberg, Logan		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1:29
TEAM REBOUNDS									1	4	5			0				
Team Totals			17	38	2	12	12	15	5	17	22	11	48	8	9	0	4	160

Total FG% - 1st: 8/20 0.400 2nd: 9/18 0.500 Game: 0.447 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 0/7 0.000 2nd: 2/5 0.400 Game: 0.167 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 5/6 0.833 2nd: 7/9 0.778 Game: 0.800 (1,0)

Technical Fouls: MHS (0)
 : GHS (0)

OFFICIALS :
 ATTENDANCE : 0

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Milbank Bulldogs	9	11	9	10	39
Groton Tigers	16	5	10	17	48

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 8 of 83

Class A SoDak 16 Pairings

#1 -

 1 Dakota Valley	22-0	3/7 TBD
 16 Miller	13-9	

#2 -

 2 St. Thomas M...	19-2	3/7 TBD
 15 McLaughlin	12-8	

#3 -

 3 Sioux Falls Christian	18-4	3/7 TBD
 14 Hanson	15-7	

#4 -

 4 Sioux Valley	20-2	3/7 TBD
 13 Groton Area	16-5	

#5 -

 5 Hamlin	18-3	3/7 TBD
 12 Madison	14-8	

#6 -

 6 Winner	21-1	3/7 TBD
 11 Hot Springs	18-4	

#7 -

 7 Mount Vernon/Plankinton	17-5	3/7 TBD
 10 Pine Ridge	18-3	

#8 -

 8 Elk Point-Jeffer...	16-5	3/7 TBD
 9 Waubay/Summit	19-3	



Listening to Constituents

MADISON—The second to last workweek in Pierre found lawmakers focusing on the issues I most often hear about from the people of District 8—lower taxes, workforce development and public safety. Throughout the past several weeks, I have heard ideas and concerns from people throughout the region, and I am proud that the Senate has delivered on its promises.

I am committed to passing tax relief to South Dakotans this year. On Wednesday, I proposed a property tax rebate for South Dakota homeowners. HB 1141 would offer South Dakota homeowners up to \$425 in property tax relief each year. If passed by the House and approved by the governor, this amounts to the largest tax relief in South Dakota history at \$104 million per year. The Senate and House are also continuing discussions on sales tax reduction. Based on strong revenue projections, I believe we can get the state's obligations and let our residents keep more of their money in their pocket.

South Dakota's economy is cooking. But we need more workers to keep the engine roaring, especially well-trained, highly-skilled people. That's what I regularly hear from the leaders of small businesses and large operations alike. This week, the Senate approved HB 1039 National Guard free tuition at 100 percent at state universities and technical colleges. We are still in discussions to freeze tuition at state institutions. These are top priorities for me because they are important to South Dakota's future.

On Thursday, the Senate concurred with the House's changes to the Truth and Sentencing Bill (SB 146). Supported by police chiefs, sheriffs and mayors, this bill aims to keep violent criminals off the streets and protect South Dakota families.

The Madison Elementary School 4th graders and Deubrook High Schoolers visited the Capitol this week and learned about the legislative process. It was great to see these future leaders show such interest in how the state government operates. I was also honored with a visit from my parents, Ken and Cinda, this week. Two District 8 students concluded two-weeks of service as legislative pages. A big thank you to Greta Larson from Lake Preston and Gabrielle Rebelein from Sioux Valley High School. Both represented their families and schools well during their time in Pierre. Thank you!

Next week is the final workweek for the 2023 legislative session, and we are on track to pass a balanced budget with some incredible one-time investments in the future of the state. As the session winds down, I continue to be confident that South Dakota's best lie ahead.

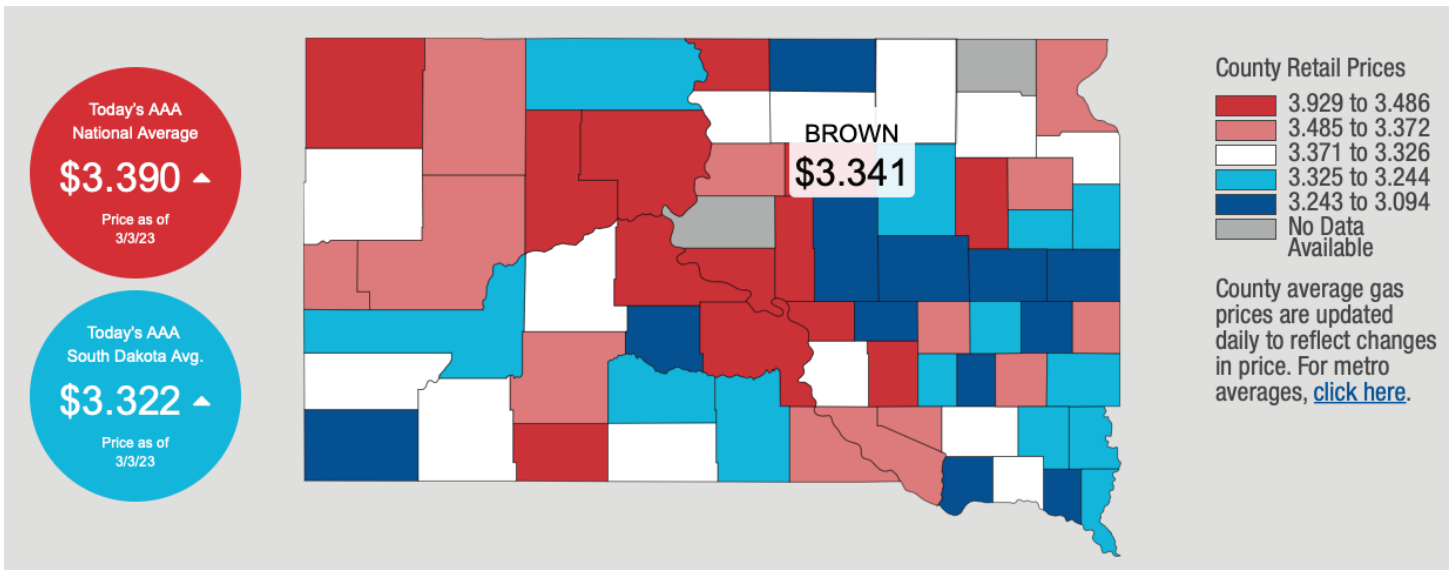
Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 10 of 83

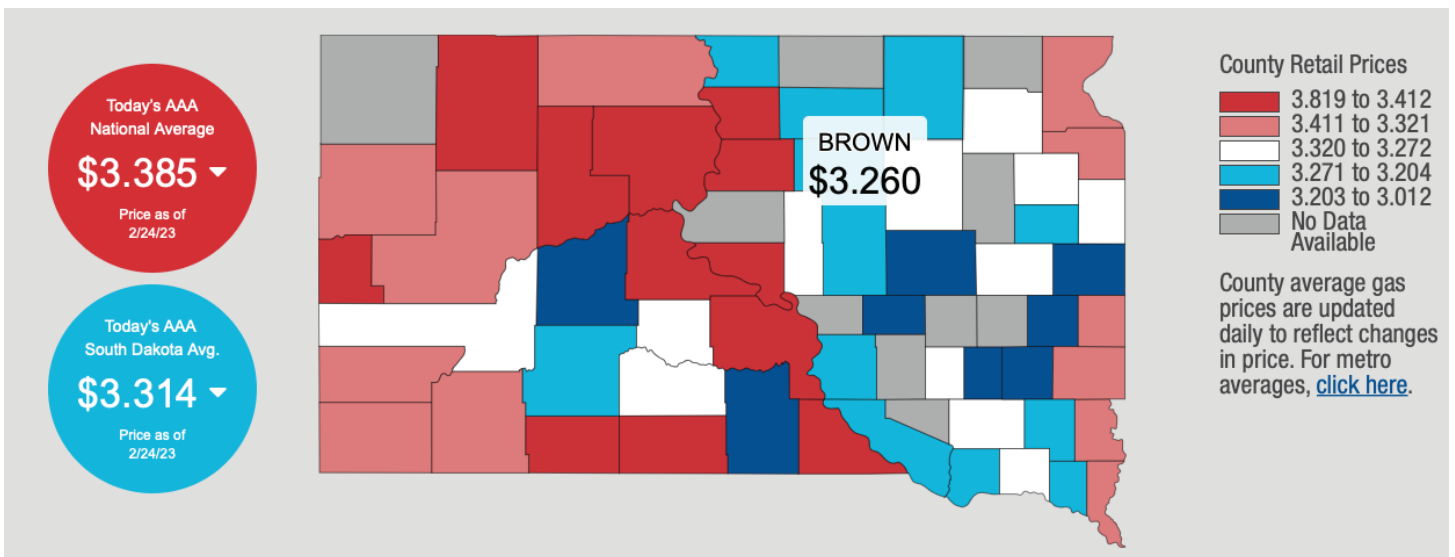
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.322	\$3.475	\$3.930	\$4.166
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.317	\$3.466	\$3.912	\$4.191
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.314	\$3.493	\$3.987	\$4.243
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.429	\$3.562	\$4.029	\$4.447
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.501	\$3.589	\$3.932	\$3.853

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



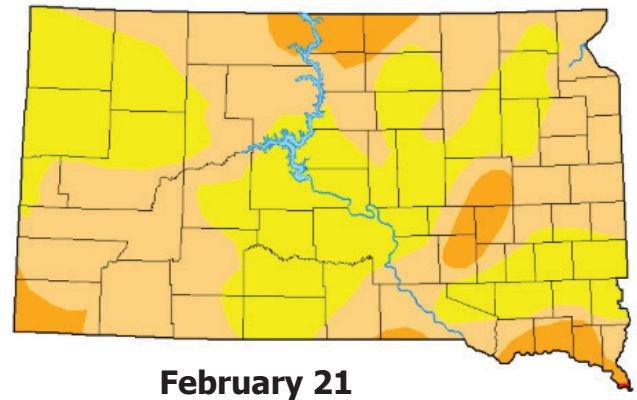
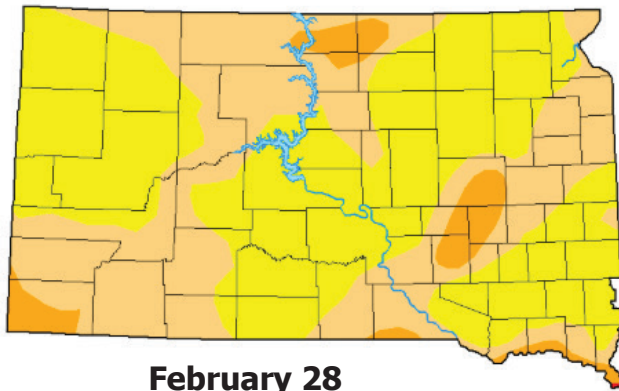
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 11 of 83

Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



The High Plains region experienced a patchwork pattern of precipitation this week. The Rocky Mountain areas of Wyoming and Colorado, as well as the eastern half of Kansas, received half an inch to locally 2 inches or more of precipitation, and half an inch fell across South Dakota and northern and eastern parts of Nebraska. But North Dakota, eastern Colorado, and adjacent parts of Kansas and Nebraska were drier, receiving less than half an inch. This winter has been particularly wet for central to northern portions of the High Plains region, while Kansas and parts of southeast Colorado have missed out on the above-normal winter precipitation. The heat and dryness of last summer and fall dried out soils, and as winter set in the soils froze in the northern states, locking the dryness into place. The precipitation this week and earlier weeks resulted in contraction of moderate to severe drought in the Dakotas to Nebraska, and exceptional drought in Nebraska, but abnormal dryness was kept to reflect the leftover dry state of the frozen soils. Abnormal dryness contracted in parts of Colorado and Wyoming, and abnormal dryness and moderate to exceptional drought contracted in eastern Kansas.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 12 of 83

Thaler graduates from SDSU

South Dakota State University, Brookings, announces Conner Jeffery Thaler of Groton, South Dakota, has graduated following the summer and fall 2022 semesters.

Thaler graduated with a Bachelor of Science in SDSU's College of Natural Sciences.

Bates Township Notice of Caucus

Bates Township
BATES TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Bates Township will hold its annual meeting and election on Tuesday, March 7th, 2023 at the home of the Clerk, 14523 409th Ave, Conde.

Election of officers and business meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m.

We will be receiving bids for road maintenance and gravel. Please mail bids to

Betty Geist, Bates Township Clerk, 14523 409th Ave., Conde, SD 57434 prior to meeting date.

Betty Geist, Township Clerk
Published February 22, March 1, 2023, at the total approximate cost of \$21.85 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 21938

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- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$1,999*



3X 26" TRAC

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- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislative roundup: Tax talks go topsy-turvy, and the rest of the week's action in Pierre

BY: JOHN HULT, MAKENZIE HUBER AND SETH TUPPER - MARCH 3, 2023 4:48 PM

Anyone hoping for some measure of finality this week on the tax relief talks dominating the 2023 legislative session was almost certainly let down.

Those who relish the spectacle of late-session political ping-pong, however, had plenty to watch.

Coming into the session, the state's historic surplus – made possible by a combination of economic growth and federal stimulus funding – was top of mind, with Gov. Kristi Noem and leaders of the House and Senate pledging to pass some form of tax relief.

Last week, lawmakers shot down Gov. Kristi Noem's preferred choice: a repeal of the sales tax on food. The House of Representatives opted instead for an overall sales tax reduction, taking it from 4.5% to 4.2%. At the start of this week, that proposal was amended to return the rate to 4.5% in two years.

On the Senate side, the appetite for tax cuts focused on property owners. Initially, the idea was to offer a property tax reduction. On Thursday, the Senate tossed that idea and replaced it with a bill to pay homeowners a \$425 annual tax credit from state funds. The actual property tax rates and payments to local governments wouldn't change.

Noem, meanwhile, threatened to withhold support for the state budget (mysteriously, without ever using the word "veto") if it doesn't include a food tax repeal.

What happens next? We have one more week of the legislative session to find out. Then, over the next couple of weeks, we'll find out what happens if Noem vetoes any tax relief plan, or the budget. Legislators will come back to Pierre on March 27 to deal with that and other vetoes.

Below is a look at action this week on other bills we're tracking.

Drag shows

The Senate Education Committee killed a bill on Tuesday that would prohibit the use of state resources for hosting "lewd or lascivious content," most notably drag shows on college campuses. Some senators who supported the bill tried to revive it for debate on the Senate floor, but the effort failed.

Nursing homes

The Senate rejected a bill on Tuesday that would have required an updated cost report for community service providers, such as nursing homes, to accurately reflect changes in service costs. Another bill which would require an annual 100% reimbursement rate for such providers will be debated on the Senate floor next week.

Adult day services

A bill that would award \$2 million in startup grants for facilities to expand adult day services for elderly and disabled adults, HB 1078, was unanimously passed in the Senate on Wednesday. It'll head to the governor's desk next.

Pharmacy costs

A bill that would lower costs for pharmacies by requiring greater transparency in the prescription drug supply chain unanimously passed in the Senate on Monday and will head to the governor's desk.

Medical marijuana

A bill that would regulate medical marijuana advertisements was defeated in the Senate Health and Hu-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 14 of 83

man Services Committee last week, but it was revived for reconsideration on Monday. But after a second hearing in the committee on Wednesday, it was tabled.

Moving county seats

Gov. Kristi Noem signed into law a bill that raises the number of signatures needed to let county residents vote on whether to move a county seat.

Legislative spouses and lobbying

The House State Affairs Committee passed a bill on Wednesday in a 9-4 vote that would prohibit the spouses of legislators from being employed as a private lobbyist. The bill came in the wake of the Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller controversy, and will now head to the House floor.

New prisons

Bills to fund construction of a new women's prison in eastern Rapid City, HB 1016, and a replacement penitentiary at an as-yet undetermined location in or near Sioux Falls, HB 1017, each passed the Senate on Wednesday and are headed to the governor.

Truth in sentencing

SB 146, which would upend South Dakota's parole system for violent offenders, is headed to Gov. Noem's desk. If she signs it, people who commit violent felonies will serve between 85% and 100% of their sentences. The House passed the bill Tuesday despite some impassioned opposition. The Senate signed off on two minor House amendments.

Drunken driving

Another tough-on-crime bill, HB 1170, is still alive and on its way to the Senate floor after passing the House earlier. It would attach mandatory minimum sentences to drunken driving convictions after the fourth offense. The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the bill 5-1 on Thursday.

Foster care

The last of three bills that targeted the overrepresentation of Native American children in foster care, SB 191, went down in a House vote on Wednesday. It would have created a two-year task force to look into the disparity, which has Native children representing 60% of the children removed from their homes (Native Americans make up about 10% of the state's population).

Tribal relations

SB 69 would alter the makeup of the state's tribal relations committee to more accurately reflect the Legislature's political composition. At this point in history, that means more Republicans. The House passed it 57-11 on Wednesday. Next up: Gov. Noem's desk.

Ag lawsuits

HB 1090, which would implement protections for agricultural operations from nuisance claims in court, earned its final passage Tuesday and is on the governor's desk.

Volunteer fire departments

These community institutions would get access to millions of dollars in state aid if HB 1127 is signed by the governor. The bill received its final legislative approval this week.

Ballot measures

The Senate State Affairs Committee rejected HB 1200, which would've required petition circulators to get signatures from all 35 of the state's legislative districts in order to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot.

Statewide candidates

The House almost completely gutted a bill that would've shifted several statewide candidate nominations from political conventions to primary elections. In its new form, SB 40 would merely allow candidates for governor to choose their own running mates, rather than allowing political conventions to choose the running mates. The bill now goes back to the Senate for consideration of that amendment.

Ranked-choice voting

South Dakota will prohibit systems in which voters rank their choice of candidate by ordered preference,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 15 of 83

if Gov. Noem signs SB 55. The bill cleared its final legislative hurdle this week.

Scholarships for foster kids

Noem's proposal to provide state-funded scholarships to foster children for a variety of educational purposes – including private-school tuition – was rejected earlier this session. But the House Local Government Committee brought it back to life Thursday as a wholly amended SB 82 (which was previously an election-law bill) and sent it to the House floor for debate next week.

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.

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.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Lawmakers nix bill to raise SD's nation-leading juror pay Jurors still make less than minimum wage, and state doesn't require employers to compensate

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 3, 2023 4:47 PM

It's illegal to duck jury duty, even if you're too broke to afford time off work.

A bill meant to address the difficulties that reality can cause for blue-collar jurors died in a state Senate committee this week after passing through the House of Representatives.

The 5-2 vote on House Bill 1098 came after testimony from county managers and commissioners who called it an unfunded mandate.

The day rate for jurors under current law – unchanged since 1999 – is \$50, which amounts to \$6.25 an hour for a day in court. Jurors empaneled but not selected get \$10 a day.

That \$50 daily figure used in South Dakota is the highest in the nation. Six states and the federal government pay that rate. But South Dakota does not require employers to compensate employees for jury duty, as eight states and the District of Columbia do.

The proposal would cost Hughes County \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year, she said. Pennington County Commissioner Gary Drewes told the committee it would cost his county \$180,000-\$200,000.

"These dollars, again, would come from our property taxpayers," Drewes said.

Property taxes are the main revenue source for county operations, Jacobson and Drewes reminded lawmakers.

Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish, asked the committee which services might wind up cut if the bill passes.

"Do we cut patrol hours? Do we not move snow? What do we cut to pay for this?" Deibert said. "I'm very concerned that we as legislators continue to legislate, but do not appropriate. This is another burden for counties, and I ask you to stop this bill."

Reform might need governor's support

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, suggested a summer study to ferret out which state mandates for counties are unfunded and potentially worthy of compensatory payments from the state general fund.

Until something like that happens, she said, she can't support proposals like increased juror pay.

"I think counties are to the point where they're on their knees and they need help," Duhamel said. "And we can't put any more on counties."

Duhamel also questioned why counties pick up the tab in the first place. The answer is historical precedent, said Greg Sattizahn of the Unified Judicial System, who testified in support of the measure.

Before 1972, counties were responsible for court operations. The Unified Judicial System created the current state and local court structure. The state pays judges and clerks of court and maintains a state-

wide computer system, while counties pay for prosecution and court-appointed defense, jails, juries and other costs.

"Historically, this has always been a county expense in South Dakota," Sattizahn said. "When you think of it, these cases are brought and captured in the county where they're from, and the jurors are selected from that county. So it's really just how it's been."

After the vote, Reisch told South Dakota Searchlight that in order to secure state funding for something like juror payments, he'd need the support of Gov. Kristi Noem – something he didn't have this year for his bill as written.

"We can pass bills that cost money as legislators, but with something like this, you'd want to get the governor involved," Reisch said.

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

COMMENTARY

Moving nominations from conventions to primaries would put power where it belongs

BRAD JOHNSON ~ MARCH 3, 2023 4:46 PM

In a legislative session jammed with efforts to take rights away from South Dakotans, one bill would have dramatically improved the way our top leaders are elected.

Senate Bill 40, which as previously written would have changed how the two major parties select the state's top constitutional officers, was gutted by the House this week after it had passed the Senate. Now the bill goes back to the Senate for consideration of those changes.

Presently, the lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, state auditor, state treasurer, school and public lands commissioner, and public utilities commissioners are selected by delegates attending the state political conventions. South Dakota is one of only three states that so restricts voter rights. In its earlier form, SB 40 would have required candidates for those offices to be selected at a primary election, with the exception of the lieutenant governor candidate, who would be chosen by the party's candidate for governor.

Unfortunately, the House deleted all of the bill except for the part allowing governor candidates to choose their own running mates.

That means political control in many races will likely stay with party insiders. At the June 2022 Republican convention, 687 Republican delegates were involved in nominating Attorney General Marty Jackley and ultimately winning him a four-year term.

Actually, about 360 South Dakotans elected Jackley as he emerged from the convention on a 52.7 percent to 47.3 percent margin over David Natvig. Jackley had no opponent in the general election, because Democrats did not field one.

In a state that presently does not have a competitive Democratic Party, almost all candidates surviving the state Republican convention are assured of winning the general election.

State Sen. John Wiik, R-Big Stone City, has been a strong defender of the convention system, primarily because he was just elected chair of the state Republican Party. His influence would have been dramatically reduced by the earlier version of SB 40.

The current process also gives outsized representation to the political fringes. Republican far-right activists, which may account for about 20 percent of South Dakota's voters, almost succeeded in saddling Gov. Kristi Noem with a lieutenant governor not to her choosing.

Incumbent Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden had to scramble to beat Steve Haugaard on a 56 percent to 44 percent convention vote. Haugaard challenged Noem for governor in the primary and lost about 76.4 percent to

23.6 percent, indicating the general Republican Party's disdain for Haugaard's politics.

Then there is the Secretary of State's Office, now occupied by Monae Johnson.

Incumbent Republican Steve Barnett had served eight years as state auditor and four years as secretary of state. He was competent and well respected.

But because he did not subscribe to the conspiracy theory that the 2022 election was stolen from President Donald Trump and that voter fraud lurked everywhere, he was a target of the right wingers, and apparently some more mainstream delegates.

Johnson beat him 61 percent to 39 percent at the convention. Odds are, Barnett would have won a statewide primary because of better name recognition and broader Republican Party participation. There's also less statewide belief in election conspiracies.

Sen. David Johnson, R-Rapid City, SB 40's prime sponsor in the Senate, summed it up well as he testified before the House State Affairs committee on Wednesday.

"What we're not getting right now is grassroots representation," he said. "That is not how a healthy republic elects its leaders."

He said many constituents have been asking, "Why can't I vote for my attorney general candidate? The people of South Dakota want to vote for their leaders, and how can we as a healthy republic tell our neighbors, 'No, you can't vote for your leaders in a primary election?'"

He noted that county sheriffs, auditors and treasurers all face primary elections, but many statewide candidates do not.

Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, the prime sponsor in the House, outlined the absurdity of the present system. He noted that in the 2022 Republican primary, there were 119,000 Republican voters overall. In Minnehaha County, 18,500 voted and 71 percent supported Noem while 29 percent backed Haugaard.

But at the state convention, 69 percent of Minnehaha County's delegates dissed Noem by supporting Haugaard over Rhoden for attorney general. "Folks, that's not right," Chase said. "That's not a true representation of the people back home that they are supposed to be representing."

Senate Bill 40, in its previous incarnation, would have given power back to the people. For once, legislators should consider giving their constituents more influence as opposed to continuing to take it away.

Brad Johnson is a Watertown real estate appraiser and journalist whose previous career was as a Colorado newspaper reporter and editor. He has been writing regularly appearing opinion columns for at least 20 years.

Wyoming Legislature passes bills to ban medication abortion and exempt abortion as health care

New law would create path around state's constitutional health care provision adopted in 2012

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - MARCH 3, 2023 6:45 AM

Wyoming legislators approved two bills related to abortion this week, including a ban on medication abortion and a bill stating abortion is not health care, as a means of skirting the Wyoming Constitution in a court challenge to its abortion ban.

Voters in Wyoming approved adding a new section to the state's constitution in 2012 amid criticism of the Affordable Care Act, colloquially known as Obamacare. The amendment states, "Each competent adult shall have the right to make his or her own health care decisions. The parent, guardian or legal representative of any other natural person shall have the right to make health care decisions for that person."

That constitutional provision was the basis for a Wyoming judge to grant a preliminary injunction in August halting enforcement of a trigger law passed by the Wyoming Legislature in 2021 that was set to go into effect following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to return the right to regulate abortion to the states.

The Wyoming Supreme Court is still considering whether to uphold or strike down the trigger law on

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 18 of 83

those constitutional grounds. Until it does, abortion remains legal in Wyoming.

House Bill 152, called the Life is a Human Right Act, states that abortion is not health care.

"It is within the authority of the state of Wyoming to determine reasonable and necessary restrictions upon abortion, including its prohibition," the bill states. "In accordance with (the Wyoming Constitution), the legislature determines that the health and general welfare of the people requires the prohibition of abortion as defined in this act."

The bill includes several exceptions for abortions performed in certain circumstances, including:

Incest or sexual assault, as long as there is an accompanying police report

Treating a woman for cancer or another disease requiring medical treatment which may be harmful or fatal to the fetus

Ectopic or molar pregnancies

Lethal fetal anomalies with a substantial likelihood of fetal demise within hours of birth

The bill was introduced in late January and received final approval from the House and Senate after the two bodies agreed to amendments that added the exceptions on Thursday.

Democratic and Republican legislators raised objections to the bill over constitutional concerns and what they viewed as an attempt to circumvent the Wyoming Supreme Court.

Rep. Ember Oakley, R-Rawlins, expressed opposition to the bill when it was introduced in the House Judiciary Committee but voted for the final bill after its amendments.

"Wyoming has already passed a law that bans abortion. So, unless we were to completely change directions there, that's where we're at. We passed a law ... now it's under judicial review. That's the process, folks, that's the system," Oakley said when the bill was introduced in committee. "The idea that you can take the ball and say nevermind, we're going home, we don't want the courts to do their job, and then write into law that we ... somehow ourselves can do our own interpretation, it's not the way it goes."

New bill criminalizes use of medication to induce abortions

Legislators also passed a bill prohibiting the use of medications that are used with the intention of terminating a pregnancy, including mifepristone, misoprostol, mifeprex, mifegyne, "or any substantially similar generic or non-generic or chemical dispensed for purposes of causing an abortion."

The bill includes prohibitions on manufacturing, distributing, prescribing, dispensing, selling, transferring or using the drugs in the state for the purpose of procuring or performing an abortion. Those who violate the law would be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in prison and a maximum \$9,000 fine.

The measure was passed as the rest of the country waits on a federal judge in Texas to rule on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's authorization of the use of mifepristone in medication abortions.

The bill grants an exception from prosecution for the person who received the abortion. It also does not apply to instances when the drug is used to prevent substantial harm to the pregnant person's life or health, when the pregnancy is a result of incest or sexual assault, and when the drugs are used to treat a natural miscarriage.

The pregnant person's life or health does not apply to their mental or emotional state, according to the bill, such as if the person is suicidal.

Several legislators attempted to add amendments that would exclude misoprostol from the law, as the drug is used for other health conditions such as stomach ulcers, but those amendments failed.

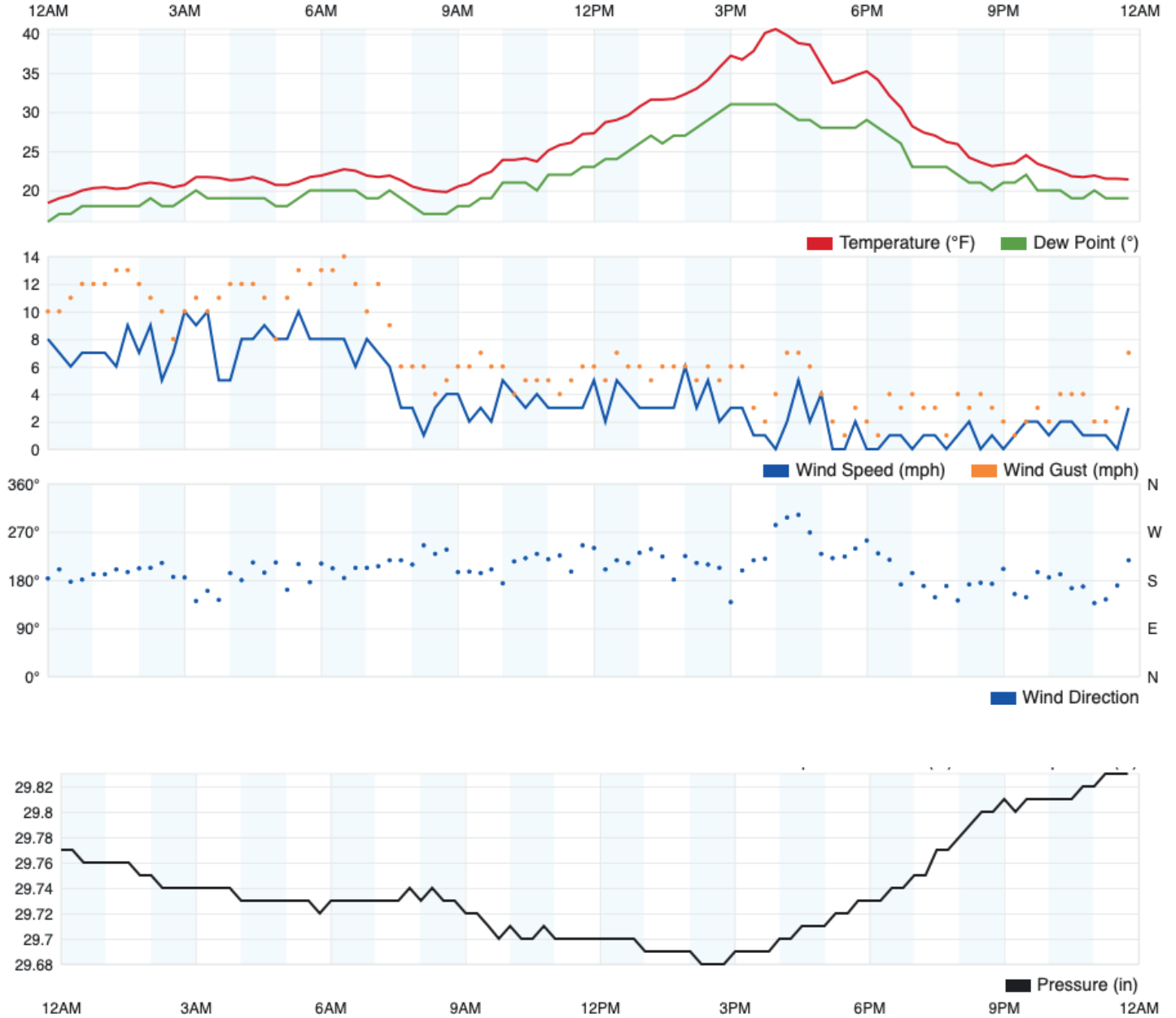
Both bills now await the signature or veto of Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon.

Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.

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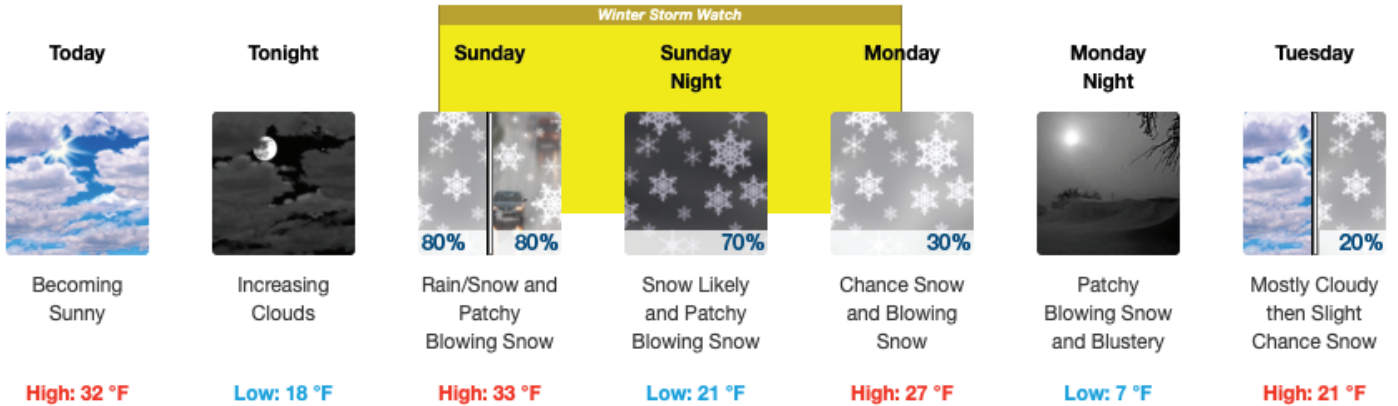
Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 19 of 83

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 20 of 83



Winter Weather Event Sun - Mon

March 4, 2023

4:22 AM

Another Round of Accumulating Snow

Key Messages

- Light to moderate snow and gusty winds expected across northern South Dakota Sunday into Monday. This is expected to come in two waves.
- There is still uncertainty in the exact track of this system and thus the location of heaviest snowfall.
- Right now, accumulating snow looks most likely along the ND/SD border extending further north into ND.

NEW Important Updates

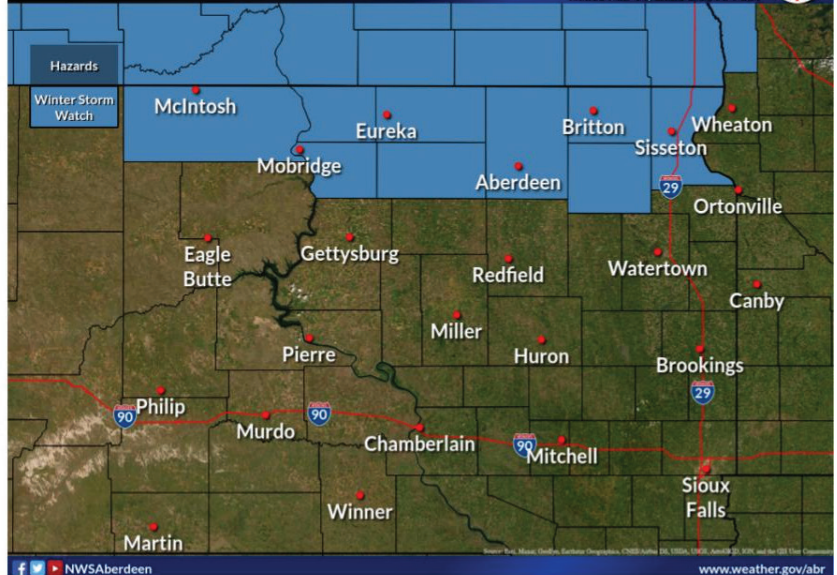
- No new updates
- A Winter Storm Watch remains in effect for north central and northeast South Dakota

Next Scheduled Briefing

- Saturday afternoon

Headlines

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 04, 2023 3:03 AM CST



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

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

We are continuing to track a system moving into the area early Sunday and depart by Monday. Accumulating snow, along with gusty winds will lead to blowing snow, mainly across northern/northeastern SD.

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 21 of 83



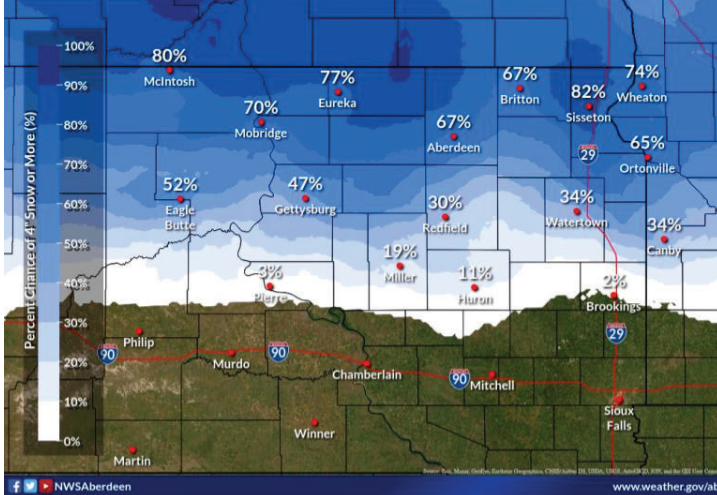
Chance of Snow Sunday - Monday

March 4, 2023
4:22 AM

Percent Chance of 4" Snow or More

Valid Sun 12:00AM through Mon 6:00PM CST

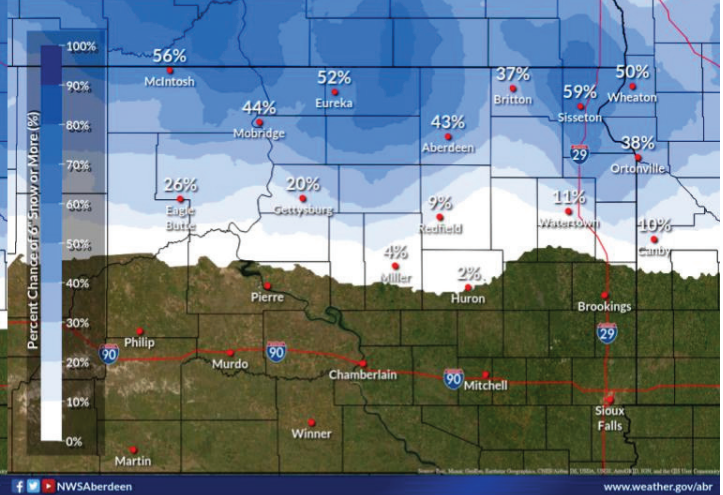
Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 04, 2023 3:24 AM CST



Percent Chance of 6" Snow or More

Valid Sun 12:00AM through Mon 6:00PM CST

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 04, 2023 3:24 AM CST



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Precipitation Type & Timing

March 4, 2023
4:22 AM

Weather Forecast

	3/5 Sun								3/6 Mon					
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm
Aberdeen			70%	90%	80%	75%	65%	65%	55%	55%	25%	25%	5%	5%
Britton	0%	5%	55%	75%	90%	75%	75%	75%	65%	65%	35%	35%	10%	10%
Eagle Butte	60%	75%	40%	30%	25%	30%	55%	55%	45%	45%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Eureka		50%	85%	90%	65%	70%	70%	70%	60%	60%	25%	25%	5%	5%
Gettysburg		85%	70%	55%	35%	40%	55%	55%	45%	45%	20%	20%	5%	5%
Kennebec	40%	50%	25%	20%	15%	10%	20%	20%	20%	20%	10%	10%	0%	0%
McIntosh	25%	90%	70%	55%	45%	60%	75%	75%	60%	60%	20%	20%	10%	10%
Milbank			50%	55%	95%	95%	60%	60%	45%	45%	30%	30%	15%	15%
Miller		35%	55%	65%	35%	40%	40%	40%	35%	35%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Mobridge		85%	65%	55%	40%	55%	65%	65%	55%	55%	20%	20%	5%	5%
Murdo	50%	30%	10%	10%	10%	10%	30%	30%	25%	25%	10%	10%	5%	5%
Pierre	40%	55%	30%	20%	20%	20%	35%	35%	30%	30%	10%	10%	5%	5%
Redfield		25%	65%	75%	55%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	20%	20%	5%	5%
Sisseton			50%	60%	95%	70%	70%	70%	60%	60%	35%	35%	15%	15%
Watertown	0%	5%	55%	90%	90%	90%	50%	50%	40%	40%	20%	20%	5%	5%
Webster	0%	5%	55%	90%	95%	85%	65%	65%	55%	55%	30%	30%	10%	10%
Wheaton			45%	55%	85%	90%	75%	75%	55%	55%	35%	35%	15%	15%

*Created: 2 am CST Sat 3/4/2023. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability of Precipitation ≥ 0%.

- Rain + - Fz Rain + - Wintry Mix + - Snow +



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 22 of 83



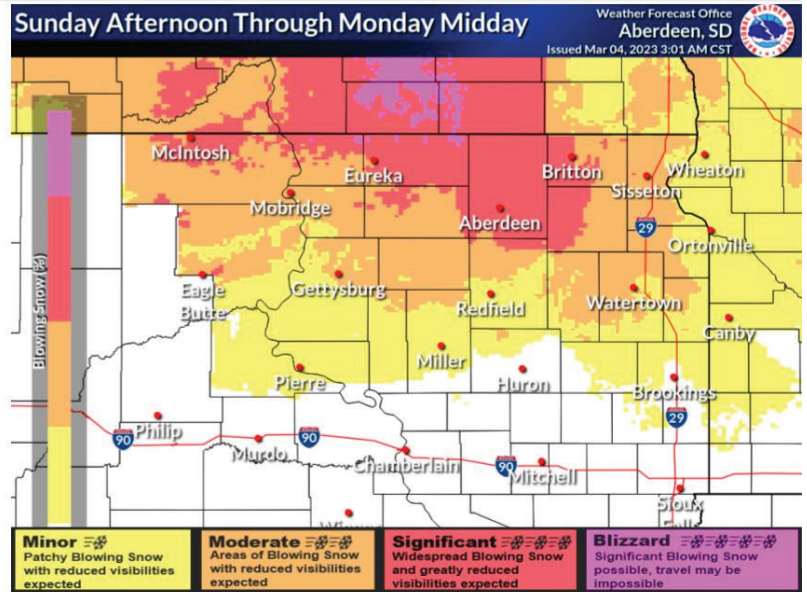
Blowing Snow Potential Sun/Mon

March 4, 2023
4:22 AM

Overview

- Falling snow and gusty winds will combine to create blowing snow, with the greatest moderate to widespread potential across northern/northeast SD.
- Winds will be out of the southeast initially, switch to the east and then finally to the north/northeast on the backside of the system.
- Blowing snow may impact both Sunday and the busier travel time of the morning commute Monday. Blowing snow chances will then continue through the midday before winds diminish Monday night.

Confidence: Blowing Snow



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Winter Storm Watch

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

339 AM CST Sat Mar 4 2023

Brown-Marshall-Roberts-Day-

Including the cities of Aberdeen, Britton, Sisseton, and Webster

...WINTER STORM WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM SUNDAY MORNING THROUGH MONDAY MORNING...

- * **WHAT...**Heavy snow and mixed precipitation possible. Total snow accumulations of 3 to 5 inches and ice accumulations of a light glaze possible. Winds could gust as high as 45 mph.
- * **WHERE...**Brown, Marshall, Roberts and Day Counties.
- * **WHEN...**From Sunday morning through Monday morning.
- * **IMPACTS...**Travel could be very difficult. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning commute.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

ABERDEEN

February 2023 Review

Records since 1893

PRECIPITATION

 **0.79"**

Most on single day: 0.25" on the 21st

42nd Wettest Feb on Record

0.17" Above Normal / 127%
of Normal

SNOWFALL

 **11.5"**

Most on single day: 3.5" on the 22nd

26th Most in Feb on Record

2.9" Above Normal / 134%
of Normal

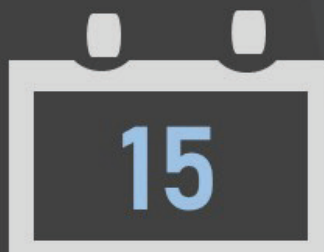
TEMPERATURE

 **15.0°** Average

66th Coldest Feb on Record
2.5° Below Normal for February

41° Warmest High -
February 4th

-23° Coldest Low -
February 24th



Days with Below
Normal Temperatures

WIND

 **62mph**

Peak Gust Recorded on
February 14th

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 24 of 83

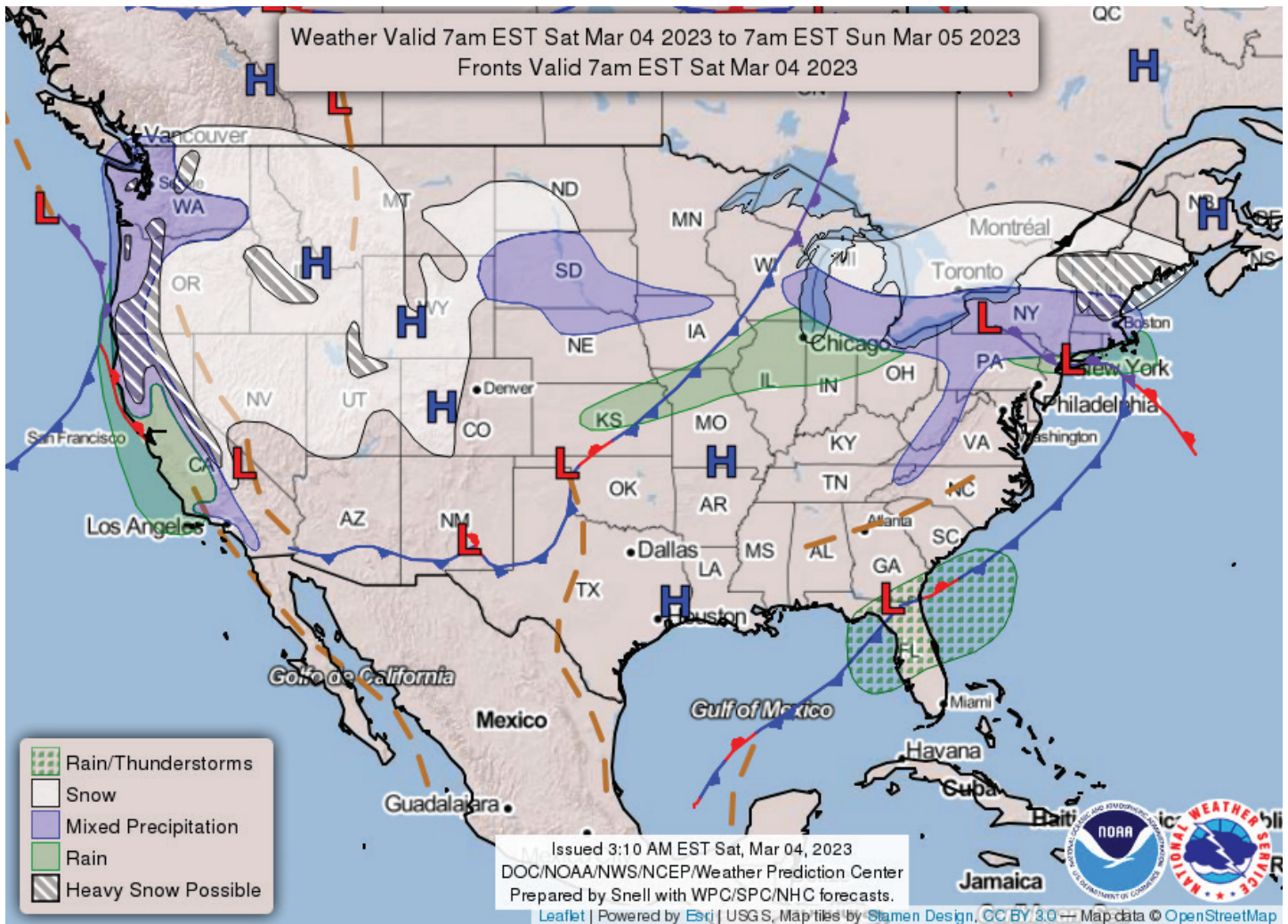
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41 °F at 3:54 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 1:36 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 21 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 73 in 1905
Record Low: -23 in 1917
Average High: 35
Average Low: 14
Average Precip in March.: 0.10
Precip to date in March.: 0.20
Average Precip to date: 1.27
Precip Year to Date: 1.78
Sunset Tonight: 6:24:35 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:01:46 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 25 of 83

Today in Weather History

March 4, 1994: Two to five inches of snow fell across northeast and part of central South Dakota from the 3rd into the 4th. This new snowfall, combined with the already deep and expansive snowpack and winds of 20 to 40 mph, brought widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Snowdrifts blocked many roads. Many schools, as well as several highways, were closed. Several vehicles became stuck and had to be pulled out. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Clear Lake, Britton, Waubay, and Wilmot; and 5 inches at Onida, Blunt, Highmore, Miller, and Milbank.

1841: President William Henry Harrison was sworn into office on a cloudy, cold, and blustery day. His speech lasted one hour and 40 minutes, and he rode a horse to and from the Capitol without a hat or overcoat. Unfortunately, he died from pneumonia a month later, or did he?

1873: The second inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant remains Washington, DC's record cold March day. The low was 4 degrees, and by noon with the sunshine, the temperature was 16 degrees. Wind chills were around 30 degrees below zero. The 40 mph winds made his inaugural address inaudible to most on the platform with him.

1899: Cyclone Mahina, aka "The Bathurst Bay Hurricane" in Australia, was credited with producing the highest storm surge on record worldwide. The cyclone, with an estimated central pressure of 911 millibars or 26.90 inches of mercury, caused a 42.6-foot surge when it came ashore on the coast of northern Australia. The storm killed as many as 400 people and is Australia's deadliest cyclone.

1909 - Though fair weather was forecast, President Taft was inaugurated amidst a furious storm. About ten inches of wet snow disrupted travel and communications. The storm drew much criticism against the U.S. Weather Bureau. (David Ludlum)

1953 - Snow was reported on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. (The Weather Channel)

1960: Eastern Massachusetts' most significant March snowstorm occurred on March 4-5th, 1960. The storm produced record 24-hour snowfall totals 27.2 inches at Blue Hill Observatory, 17.7 inches at Worcester, and 16.6 inches at Boston. Winds gusted to 70 mph.

1966 - A severe blizzard raged across Minnesota and North Dakota. The blizzard lasted four days producing up to 35 inches of snow, and wind gusting to 100 mph produced snow drifts 30 to 40 feet high. Bismarck ND reported zero visibility for 11 hours. Traffic was paralyzed for three days. (2nd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1971: A potent storm system blasted the northeastern U.S. on March 3-5th, 1971. The barometric pressure dropped to 28.36 inches at Worcester, MA, for the lowest pressure recorded at that location.

1983: Brownsville, Texas, recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1987 - Rain and high winds prevailed in the northwestern U.S. A wind gust to 69 mph at Klamath Falls OR was their highest in 25 years, and winds at the Ashland Ranger Station in the Siskiyou Mountains of northern California reached 85 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow and freezing rain made travel hazardous in Ohio and Indiana. A six car pile-up resulted near Columbus OH, with seven injuries reported. Up to two inches of ice glazed central Indiana. Up to ten inches of snow blanketed northern Ohio. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado injured five persons near Brownsville MS, and killed seven cows and two hogs in one pasture. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Canton MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A Pacific cold front working its way across the western U.S. produced heavy snow over parts of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Up to eleven inches of snow blanketed the valleys of northwest Utah, while 12 to 25 inches fell across the mountains of northern Utah. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the valleys of east central Nevada, while more than a foot of snow was reported in the high elevations. In Idaho, 6 to 8 inches of snow was reported around Aberdeen and American Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 26 of 83

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

KNOCK IT OFF!

An artist began working on a large block of marble. A friend watched him as he chipped away, knocking off one piece after another.

Finally the friend asked, "What are you making?"

"A horse," came the reply.

"How do you do that?" he wanted to know.

"By knocking off everything that doesn't look like a horse," said the sculptor.

It is normal to question what God may be doing in our lives from time to time. We often look for meaning or purpose when we enter into a period of suffering or pain, darkness or despair. There are some days when problems pile up, difficulties grow, confusion never ends, and the light never comes on.

Paul said we are "pressed on every side by troubles" - days when we feel like we are being squeezed in a vice. But he quickly adds, "we are not crushed or broken" assuring us of the Great Physician's concern and care. Then he goes on to write that we may feel "perplexed" - as if we were in a state of confusion. Now what? He encourages us not to "give up and quit" - knowing that God can make sense out of nonsense. If we "get knocked down" - we will never get knocked out. God will be there to lift us up, dust us off, and send us on our way. Paul's message: We may be at the end of our rope, but we are not at the end of our hope.

Prayer: Father, help us to grasp the greatness of Your power and value of Your presence no matter the problem or pain. We know You are with us. Help us to trust. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 2 Corinthians 4:1-10



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 27 of 83

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 28 of 83

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 29 of 83



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.03.23

8 25 36 39 67 11

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$188,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.01.23

8 14 17 38 41 7

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$38,760,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 3 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.03.23

9 12 35 37 44 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 33 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.01.23

10 12 14 30 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$73,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 3 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.01.23

7 12 16 17 39 22

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 2 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.01.23

2 9 28 36 53 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$161,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 2 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 30 of 83

News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Class A Region 1=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Groton Area 48, Milbank 39

Waubay/Summit 44, Tiospa Zina Tribal 36

Class A Region 2=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Hamlin 55, Clark/Willow Lake 35

Sioux Valley 77, Deuel 56

Class A Region 3=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Madison 67, Dell Rapids 60

Sioux Falls Christian 71, West Central 46

Class A Region 4=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Dakota Valley 74, Tea Area 65

Elk Point-Jefferson 63, Vermillion 37

Class A Region 5=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Hanson 59, Platte-Geddes 46

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 66, Parkston 45

Class A Region 6=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

McLaughlin 43, Mobridge-Pollock 35

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Miller 68, Crow Creek Tribal School 66

Class A Region 7=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Pine Ridge 47, Red Cloud 44

Winner 52, Lakota Tech 46

Class A Region 8=

SODAK 16 Qualifier=

Hot Springs 77, Rapid City Christian 67

St. Thomas More 48, Belle Fourche 32

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class B Region 1=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Aberdeen Christian 85, Hitchcock-Tulare 49

Northwestern 63, Warner 38

Class B Region 2=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Castlewood 64, James Valley Christian 59

DeSmet 55, Wolsey-Wessington 45

Class B Region 3=

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 31 of 83

SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Ethan 56, Dell Rapids St. Mary 44
Howard 58, Bridgewater-Emery 45
Class B Region 4=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Irene-Wakonda 62, Freeman Academy/Marion 52
Viborg-Hurley 70, Scotland 38
Class B Region 5=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Gregory 53, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 42
Wessington Springs 64, Marty Indian 58
Class B Region 6=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Ipswich 59, Highmore-Harrold 50
Lower Brule 74, Herreid/Selby Area 41
Class B Region 7=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Crazy Horse 55, Philip 52
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
White River 73, Jones County 44
Class B Region 8=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Faith 96, Tiospaye Topa 66
Harding County 70, Lemmon 44

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=
SDHSAA Playoffs=
Class AA SoDak 16=
Harrisburg 35, Spearfish 30
Mitchell 53, Brandon Valley 49
Pierre T F Riggs High School 68, Brookings 42
Rapid City Stevens 62, Huron 48
Sioux Falls Jefferson 57, Aberdeen Central 41
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 63, Rapid City Central 26
Sioux Falls Washington 53, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 40
Watertown 38, Sioux Falls Lincoln 36

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

Fidler's 21 help Omaha down UMKC 73-61 in Summit opener

By The Associated Press undefined

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Frankie Fidler had 21 points as 10th-seeded Omaha knocked off seventh-seed UMKC 73-61 in an opening round game of the Summit League tournament on Friday night. 's 73-61 win against UMKC on Friday.

Omaha advances to face second-seeded South Dakota State in a quarterfinal round game Saturday.

Fidler shot 7 for 11 (2 for 4 from 3-point range) and 5 of 6 from the free throw line for the Mavericks (8-22, 1-0 Summit League). Marquel Sutton scored 15 points while finishing 6 of 12 from the floor, and added six rebounds. Dylan Brougham was 3 of 5 shooting and 9 of 14 from the free throw line to finish with 15 points.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 32 of 83

Tyler Andrews finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Kangaroos (11-20, 0-1). Rayquawndis Mitchell added 13 points for UMKC. Jevin Sullivan also recorded nine points.

Omaha took the lead with 19:36 left in the first half and did not relinquish it. Sutton led their team in scoring with 12 points in the first half to help put them up 45-22 at the break. Omaha was outscored by UMKC in the second half by 11 points, with Brougham scoring a team-high 11 points after halftime.

US to focus bison restoration on expanding tribal herds

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — U.S. officials will work to restore more large bison herds to Native American lands under a Friday order from Interior Secretary Deb Haaland that calls for the government to tap into Indigenous knowledge in its efforts to conserve the burly animals that are an icon of the American West.

Haaland also announced \$25 million in federal spending for bison conservation. The money, from last year's climate bill, will build new herds, transfer more bison from federal to tribal lands and forge new bison management agreements with tribes, officials said.

American bison, also known as buffalo, have bounced back from their near extinction due to commercial hunting in the 1800s. But they remain absent from most of the grasslands they once occupied, and many tribes have struggled to restore their deep historical connections to the animals.

As many as 60 million bison once roamed North America, moving in vast herds that were central to the culture and survival of numerous Native American groups.

They were driven to the brink of extinction more than a century ago when hunters, U.S. troops and tourists shot them by the thousands to feed a growing commercial market that used bison parts in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, only a few hundred bison remained.

Haaland, of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, is the first Native American to serve as a U.S. Cabinet secretary. She's championed tribal concerns on issues ranging from wildlife conservation to energy development, and put a spotlight on past mistreatment of Native Americans through a series of listening sessions about systemic abuses at government-run boarding schools.

She told The Associated Press in an interview last year that the decimation of bison by European settlers eliminated the primary food source for many tribes and opened the way for their land to be taken away.

The return of bison in some locations is considered a conservation success. But Haaland said they remain "functionally extinct" and more work is needed to return the animals to tribal lands and restore the grasslands they depend on.

"This holistic effort will ensure that this powerful sacred animal is reconnected to its natural habitat and the original stewards who know best how to care for it," Haaland said in announcing her order Friday, during a World Wildlife Day event at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C..

"When we think about Indigenous communities, we must acknowledge that they have spent generations over many centuries observing the seasons, tracking wildlife migration patterns and fully comprehending our role in the delicate balance of this earth," she added.

Across the U.S., from New York to Oklahoma to Alaska, 82 tribes now have more than 20,000 bison in 65 herds. Numbers have been growing in recent years along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of the animals.

Many of the tribes' bison came from U.S. agencies, which over the past two decades transferred thousands of the animals to thin government-controlled herds so they don't outgrow the land. The transfers often were carried out in cooperation with the South Dakota-based InterTribal Buffalo Council. The group's director, Troy Heinert, said Haaland's order is an acknowledgement of the work tribes have already done.

"The buffalo has just as long a connection to Indigenous people as we have to it," said Heinert, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. "They are not just a number or a commodity; this is returning a relative to its rightful place."

Past administrations have proposed or advanced bison conservation plans — including under former Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump — and tribes have long been part of that

process.

Haaland's order puts Native American interests at the center of the Interior Department's bison program. It also adds a tribal leader, yet to be named, to a group that's exploring establishing new herds on both tribal and federal lands.

Bison reintroductions could put the Biden administration at odds with state officials in Montana. Republican lawmakers have resisted returning the animals to federal lands and opposed some previous bison transfers to tribes.

State lawmakers voted Thursday to advance a resolution opposing the reintroduction of bison to the million-acre (400,000-hectare) Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in northern Montana — an idea that's been floated by the Biden administration and has support among Native Americans.

"Bison were part of the culture 200, 300 years ago. We aren't going back to that," said Montana state Sen. Mike Lang, who sponsored the resolution. Lang said he doesn't oppose bison on tribal lands but added that as populations grow they can cause problems for ranchers and present a public safety threat.

About half of the \$25 million announced Friday will go to the National Park Service. The remainder will be split among the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

It includes about \$1 million to establish an apprenticeship program that will provide training to tribes on managing bison, including at national parks and national wildlife refuges, officials said.

The Interior Department currently oversees 11,000 bison in herds on public lands in 12 states.

Indonesia fuel depot fire kills 18, over dozen missing

By TATAN SYUFLANA and NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian rescuers and firefighters on Saturday searched for more than a dozen missing under the rubble of charred houses and buildings, after a large fire spread from a fuel storage depot in the capital and killed at least 18 people.

The Plumpang fuel storage station, operated by state-run oil and gas company Pertamina, is near a densely populated area in the Tanah Merah neighborhood in North Jakarta. It supplies 25% of Indonesia's fuel needs.

At least 260 firefighters and 52 fire engines extinguished the blaze just before midnight on Friday after it tore through the neighborhood for more than two hours, fire officials said.

Footage showed hundreds of people running in panic as thick plumes of black smoke and orange flames filled the sky.

A preliminary investigation showed the fire broke out when a pipeline ruptured during heavy rain, possibly triggered by a lightning strike, said Eko Kristiawan, Pertamina's area manager for the western part of Java.

Residents living near the depot said they smelled a strong odor of gasoline, causing some people to vomit, after which thunder rumbled twice, followed by a huge explosion around 8 p.m.

Sri Haryati, a mother of three, said the fire began to spread about 20 minutes later, causing panic.

"I was crying and immediately grabbed our valuable documents and ran with my husband and children," Haryati said, adding that she heard smaller blasts that echoed across the neighborhood as orange flames jumped from the depot.

Rescuers were searching for 16 people who were reported missing or separated from their families amid the chaos. About 42 people were receiving treatment in five hospitals, some of them in critical condition.

National Police chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo said more than 1,300 people were displaced and taking shelter in 10 government offices, a Red Cross command post and a sport stadium.

He said investigators were still working to establish the cause of the fire and questioning dozens of witnesses.

Pertamina's head Nicke Widyawati apologized and said the company would provide help to the community and cooperate in the investigation.

"We will carry out a thorough evaluation and reflection internally to prevent similar incidents from happening again," Widyawati said in a statement, adding that the company ensured the safe supply of fuel oil.

On Saturday, grieving relatives gathered at a police hospital's morgue in eastern Jakarta to try to identify their loved ones. Officials said the victims were burned beyond recognition and could only be identified through DNA and dental records.

In 2014, a fire at the same fuel depot engulfed at least 40 houses, but no casualties were reported.

Indonesia's State Owned Enterprises Minister Erick Thohir told reporters that the government will remap safe zones for residential areas away from vital objects.

He said the incident showed the Plumpang area is not safe for the community, and the government is planning to move the fuel storage depot to Tanjung Priok port in northern Jakarta.

In Chicago, adapting electric buses to winter's challenges

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The No. 66 bus is packed on a recent weekday afternoon as it starts and stops its way from Chicago's near west side to Navy Pier along the Lake Michigan shore.

The seats and windows squeak and rattle just like a regular diesel bus, but no one seems to notice the high-pitched whine of the electric motor that makes it go.

That's just what Chicago Transit Authority wants. Buses that don't pollute the air yet can run the route with the same reliability as those that do, even when cold weather cuts into the battery range.

Yet to make electric buses work, the CTA has had to go to great lengths and expense. It built fast-charging sites on both ends of the No. 66 route that plug into the bus rooftops.

Drivers constantly monitor the batteries to make sure they don't get depleted, risking the bus getting stranded. If they get below 50% charge, they're supposed to top them off at a charger.

"We're working through the day-to-day challenges of inclement weather in Chicago," said Don Hargrove, senior maintenance manager at the garage that's home to most of the authority's 23 electric buses.

The CTA started experimenting with electric buses in 2014, and has developed a system that Hargrove says will work as the transit authority moves to an all-electric fleet by 2040.

Other transit systems are going through the same process to help cut pollution and fight climate change.

Cold weather is the CTA's biggest problem. As the temperature drops, lithium-ion batteries that run the buses aren't as efficient and lose range. Most of the energy drained from the batteries goes to keep the bus interior heated to 70 F (21 C).

"Every time the bus stops to pick up passengers, let people off, the doors are opened," said Richard Lin, assistant chief bus equipment engineer. "You've got to heat that new batch of cold air."

The electric buses do have a small diesel engine that heats the interior in extreme temperatures to extend the battery range, Lin said. But most of the time the buses use electric coil heaters, similar to a giant toaster, which can zap batteries. When the CTA bought its buses, more efficient heat pumps weren't available as an option, he said.

On each 10-mile one-way trip on the No. 66 route, the electric buses lose about 8% of their battery energy. In the winter, they start with roughly 100 miles of range when fully charged. So after about six one-way trips, policy says drivers have to charge as they get below 50%.

Normally the schedule has 10 to 15 minutes built in for charging, and the buses get around 1% of a full charge for every minute they're plugged in.

With enough chargers, the electric buses can run all routes, Lin said. "It's just a matter of our strategy with placing the chargers at the correct locations, having enough chargers available as we scale up our fleet."

At present, the CTA has about 1,900 buses and most run on diesel fuel. The transit system is starting to swap them out for electric ones, but the investment is huge. Each electric bus costs about \$1.1 million, about \$500,000 more than a diesel model.

But after the initial capital outlay for the buses and charging stations, the electric buses are much less expensive to operate. The CTA calculates it costs \$2.01 per mile to run the 40-foot-long electric buses. For a diesel bus it's \$3.08, and \$2.63 per mile for a diesel-electric hybrid.

It would take decades for the authority to get its investment back in the electric buses, but CTA officials

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 35 of 83

say the cost of electric buses will come down as more are sold.

In the capital of Alaska, Juneau, which has a more temperate climate but winter temperatures can still drop below zero, officials also have plans for an all-electric bus fleet, though one they got in 2020 has been plagued by mechanical problems.

Capital City Transit has ordered seven electric buses to replace diesel models from 2010, said Rich Ross, operations superintendent. The new buses are expected to run regular routes due to increased battery capacity, "which wasn't available when we ordered our first bus," he said.

Cold winter conditions could still knock 100 miles off the expected 282-mile range of the new buses, so on the coldest days, they could be put on commuter routes that run only during the peak transit hours, Ross said.

Like Chicago, Capital City Transit is also planning to construct an "on route" charging station for buses to plug in if they run low.

Back on the No. 66 in Chicago, Dawn Carter, 54, says she's glad electric buses are running the route because they're good for the environment.

About the only difference is the electric buses are quieter than those with clattering diesel engines and noisy heaters, but few people notice, she says. "When I'm coming to work, everybody 's just rushing to get on and off," she says. "It's just quieter. It's easier to talk to people. When the heat goes on and off you barely notice it."

Global race to boost electric vehicle range in cold weather

By TOM KRISHER and MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

TOK, Alaska (AP) — Alaska's rugged and frigid interior, where it can get as cold as minus 50 Fahrenheit (minus 46 Celsius), is not the place you'd expect to find an electric school bus.

But here is Bus No. 50, with a cartoon horse decal on its side, quietly traversing about 40 miles of snowy and icy roads each day in Tok, shuttling students to school not far from the Canadian border.

It works OK on the daily route. But cold temperatures rob electric vehicle batteries of traveling range, so No. 50 can't go on longer field trips, or to Anchorage or Fairbanks.

It's a problem that some owners of electric passenger vehicles and transit officials are finding in cold climates worldwide. At 20 degrees F (minus 7 C), electric vehicles just don't go as far as they do at the ideal 70 degrees. Part of it is that keeping passengers warm using traditional technology drains the battery.

So longer trips can be difficult in the coldest weather. Transit authorities like Chicago's, which has pledged to convert its whole bus fleet to electricity by 2040, have to take extraordinary steps to keep electric buses charged and on schedule.

Some automakers and drivers fear lower battery range in the cold could limit acceptance of electric cars, trucks and buses, at a time when emissions from transportation must go down sharply to address climate change. There is hope. Scientists are racing to perfect new battery chemistries that don't lose as much energy in cold weather as today's lithium-ion systems.

Also, cars equipped with efficient heat pumps don't lose as much range in the cold.

"It is a problem to have batteries in cold weather, and we have a pretty cold climate, one of the coldest in North America," said Stretch Blackard, owner of Tok Transportation, which contracts with the local schools.

When the temperature hits zero, his cost to run Tok's electric bus doubles. Tok has among the highest electricity prices in the nation.

In the coldest weather, 0 down to minus 10 F (minus 18-23 C) the electric bus costs roughly \$1.15 per mile, versus 40 cents per mile for a diesel bus, Blackard said. The cost of the electric bus drops to about 90 cents a mile when it's warm, but he says the costs make it unworkable and he wouldn't buy another one.

Many owners of personal electric vehicles also are finding that long-distance wintertime travel can be hard. EVs can lose anywhere from 10% to 36% of their range as cold spells come at least a few times each winter in many U.S. states.

Mark Gendregske of Alger, Michigan, said it starts to get serious when temperatures drop to the 10-20

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 36 of 83

F range (minus 7 to minus 12 C). "I see typically more than 20% degradation in range as well as charging time," he said while recharging his Kia EV6 in a shopping center parking lot near Ypsilanti, Michigan. "I go from about 250 miles of range to about 200."

Gendregske, an engineer for an auto parts maker, knew the range would drop, so he said with planning, the Kia EV still gets him where he needs to go, even with a long commute.

Some owners, though, didn't anticipate such a big decline in the winter. Rushit Bhimani, who lives in a northern suburb of Detroit, said he sees about 30% lower range in his Tesla Model Y when the weather gets cold, from what's supposed to be 330 miles per charge to as low as 230. "They should clarify that one," he said while charging just south of Ann Arbor on a trip to Chicago.

Around three-quarters of this EV range loss is due to keeping occupants warm, but speed and even freeway driving are factors. Some drivers go to great lengths not to use much heat so they can travel farther, wearing gloves or sitting on heated seats to save energy.

And to be sure, gasoline engines also can lose around 15% of their range in the cold.

The range loss has not slowed EV adoption in Norway, where nearly 80% of new vehicle sales were electric last year.

Recent tests by the Norwegian Automobile Federation found models really vary. The relatively affordable Maxus Euniq6 came the closest to its advertised range and was named the winner. It finished only about 10% short of its advertised 354 km (220 mile) range. The Tesla S was about 16% percent under its advertised range. At the bottom: Toyota's BZ4X, which topped out at only 323 kilometers (200 miles), nearly 36% below its advertised range.

Nils Soedal, from the Automobile Federation, calls the issue "unproblematic" as long as drivers take it into account when planning a trip. "The big issue really is to get enough charging stations along the road," and better information on whether they're working properly, he said.

Temperatures ranged from just freezing to minus 2.2 F (0 to minus 19 C) during the test, over mountains and along snow-covered roads. The cars were driven until they ran out of juice and stopped.

Recurrent, a U.S. company that measures battery life in used EVs, said it has run studies monitoring 7,000 vehicles remotely, and reached findings similar to the Norwegian test.

CEO Scott Case said many EVs use resistance heating for the interior. The ones that do better are using heat pumps.

Heat pumps draw heat from the outside air even in cold temperatures, and have been around for decades, but only recently have been developed for automobiles, Case said. "That is definitely what needs to be in all of these cars," he said.

Inside batteries, lithium ions flow through a liquid electrolyte, producing electricity. But they travel more slowly through the electrolyte when it gets cold and don't release as much energy. The same happens in reverse, slowing down charging.

Neil Dasgupta, associate professor of mechanical and materials science engineering at the University of Michigan, likens this to spreading cold butter on toast. "It just becomes more resistant at low temperatures," Dasgupta said.

General Motors is among those working on solutions. By testing, engineers can make battery and heat management changes in existing cars and learn for future models, said Lawrence Ziehr, project manager for energy recovery on GM's electric vehicles.

Last week, GM sent a squadron of EVs from the Detroit area to Michigan's chilly Upper Peninsula to test the impact of cold weather on battery range.

Despite stopping to charge twice on the way, a GMC Hummer pickup, with around 329 miles of range per charge, made the 315 mile trip to Sault Ste. Marie with only about 35 miles left, barely enough to reach GM's test facility. After finding a charging station out of order at a grocery store, engineers went to a nearby hotel to get enough juice to finish the trip.

At universities too, scientists are working on chemistry changes that could make cold weather loss a thing of the past.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 37 of 83

The University of Michigan's Dasgupta says they're developing new battery designs that allow ions to flow faster or enable fast charging in the cold. There also are battery chemistries such as solid state that don't use liquid electrolytes.

He expects improvements to find their way from labs into vehicles in the next two to five years. "There's really a global race for increasing the performance of these batteries," he said.

In Britain, 'warm hubs' emerge to beat soaring energy costs

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, England (AP) — On a blustery late-winter day in Shakespeare's birthplace, the foyer of the Other Place theater is a cozy refuge. Visitors are having meetings over coffee, checking emails, writing poetry, learning to sew.

It looks and feels like an arty café in the pictureque streets of Stratford-upon-Avon, but it's a "warm hub" set up by the Royal Shakespeare Company drama troupe to welcome people struggling to heat their homes because of sky-high energy prices.

Warm hubs have sprouted across Britain by the thousands this winter as soaring food and energy prices drive millions to turn down the thermostat or skimp on hot meals. Research by the opposition Labour Party counted almost 13,000 such hubs, funded by a mix of charities, community groups and the government and nestled in libraries, churches, community centers and even a tearoom at King Charles III's Highgrove country estate.

Wendy Freeman, an artist, writer and seventh-generation Stratfordian, heard about the RSC's warm hub from a friend. She lives in "a tiny house with no central heating" and relies on a coal fire for warmth. Like many, she has cut back in response to the cost-of-living crisis driven by the highest inflation since the 1980s.

"You just adapt," said Freeman, 69, who was using the center as a warm, quiet place to work on a poem. "Little things, like putting less water in the kettle. I was brought up with 'save the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves.' I always cook from scratch and eat what's in season.

"But it's nice to go somewhere warm," she added.

A perfect storm of Russia's war in Ukraine, lingering pandemic disruption and economic aftershocks of Brexit is putting more people in Britain under financial strain. Households and businesses were hit especially hard after Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove up the cost of natural gas needed for heating and helped push the U.K. to the precipice of a recession.

The U.K.'s annual inflation rate was just above 10% in January, with food prices up almost 17% over the year. Some 62% of adults are using less natural gas or electricity to save money, according to the Office for National Statistics. A quarter of households regularly run out of money for essentials, pollster Survation found.

Though oil and natural gas prices have fallen from last year's peaks, the average British household energy bill is still double what it was a year ago. Costs for many are due to rise by another 20% on April 1 when a government-set price cap goes up.

Anne Bolger, a retired math teacher, happened across the warm hub during a walk one day and has come back every week since. She drops in to check emails, prep for math tutoring or do a jigsaw puzzle. "Today's the day that I'm appreciating it, because home is freezing," she said.

The hub runs one afternoon a week in the smallest of the RSC's three theaters. On Tuesday, the space held a mixture of theater staff, actors on the way to rehearsals and visitors looking to get warm. Organizers provide puzzles, games, toys for children, free tea, coffee and Wi-Fi — even a sewing table.

"I like the fact that it's such a creative space," said Bolger, 66. "People are having meetings there, they're talking, they're working. I just feel a bit more alive than sitting at home, a bit more connected."

That's just what organizers want to hear. They say warm hubs exist to ease loneliness as well as energy poverty.

"The warmth is in the welcome as much as a warm building to come to," said Nicola Salmon, who oversees the hub as the RSC's creative place-making manager. "There is always somebody here to chat to."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 38 of 83

Stratford, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of London, is a prosperous town that makes a good living from William Shakespeare, its most famous son. Even on a wintry weekday, tourists traipse through streets of half-timbered Tudor buildings to see the house where the Bard was born, visit the schoolroom where he studied and stand over his grave in the medieval Holy Trinity Church.

The RSC is one of Stratford's main cultural attractions and major employers. Salmon says the warm hub is part of the company's efforts to get closer to its surrounding community, a town that "is often perceived as affluent and well-off" but contains "areas of great deprivation."

Like Britain's food banks — now numbering an estimated 2,500 — warm hubs are a crisis measure showing signs of becoming permanent.

The Warwickshire Rural Community Council, a charity covering the county around Stratford, set up a mobile warm hub — a minibus-turned-pop-up outdoor café — in 2021 as pandemic restrictions plunged many rural residents into isolation.

A year ago, the charity ran five hubs across the county, with backing from Cadent, the private company that distributes much of Britain's heating gas. As winter hit and energy bills soared, the number mushroomed to 90, providing everything from meals to repair workshops and slow-cooking courses meant to reduce gas use.

About 30 of the hubs will stay open this summer — with a view to becoming permanent — and the mobile hub will be on the road five days a week.

"People say we shouldn't be in this situation, and we shouldn't be," said Jackie Holcroft, the charity's warm hubs manager. "But we are. And I think one of the most amazing things is that you've got hundreds, thousands of volunteers around Warwickshire and they're all coming together to make a difference."

The RSC's warm space will close at the end of March, but the company is already planning for its return next year.

"I'll miss it like crazy," said Bolger, one of the regulars. "I'm not hoping that the fuel crisis goes on forever, but I am hoping this place will stay open."

Olympic ticket sales for Paris Games gets off to rocky start

By NICHOLAS GARRIGA and BARBARA SURK Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Organizers of next year's Paris Olympics promised relatively modest prices and "egalitarian" access to events, thanks to an online system meant to revolutionize ticket sales and bring the masses to stadiums and arenas for as little as \$26.

As the month-long opening round of sales winds down, however, many "lucky" winners chosen to shop for the first 3 million tickets (out of 10 million total) are feeling frustrated, angry and cheated because their only option during the 48-hour purchasing window was paying at least 200 euros (\$212) per ticket for the few remaining events on offer. And because the ticketing system requires buying packages for multiple sports, overall costs for many buyers ran into thousands of dollars.

By the time English teacher Amélie Beney and her 9-year-old son won the lottery last week to log in to the Olympic ticket office, affordable tickets for many events were gone, and all but one of their preferred sports — BMX, water polo and soccer — was sold out.

There were tickets for a soccer match at 50 euros (\$53) but Beney would also have to buy at least two tickets for two additional events. Available tickets included basketball or handball at 150 euros (\$160), swimming at 230 euros (\$244) and a whopping 690 euros (\$732) for a qualifying event in track and field.

"Who can afford tickets at that price?" Beney asked. "I can't."

Beney was disappointed and said her son's enthusiasm for attending their home Olympics on his 10th birthday vanished as they logged off without buying anything.

"I really wanted to have tickets for the Olympics. I wanted my son to live that unique experience ... in our city," Beney said. "I became disillusioned (with the ticket system) and the prices. This is just insane."

To buy tickets in the first round, your name had to be drawn from a lottery. Since Feb. 13, the lucky

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 39 of 83

winners have been notified by email of their 48-hour window to buy between three and up to 30 tickets in at least three different events, out of 32 available. The first round of ticketing ends March 15.

Organizers say they are aware of the high demand and acknowledge that not everyone who wants to attend the Paris Olympics will manage to get a ticket, and fewer still will be able to get tickets at a bargain price.

"We know that people are going to be disappointed, and we know that we don't have tickets for everybody," Michael Aloisio, the deputy general manager of the Paris Olympics, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But we also know that we have more selling phases opening soon with more tickets."

Ticket sales are a substantial part of revenue — one third, according to Aloisio — that Paris organizers need to pay for the Olympics.

"The challenge for us was not to have this target compromise our goal to make these Games accessible," Aloisio said.

The announcement last year that there will be 1 million tickets at 24 euros (\$26) and more than 4 million for less than 50 euros (\$53) was received with enthusiasm from fans in France and around the world. However, those tickets were scooped up during the first few days of the lottery, leaving those "lucky" to be drawn later with high prices and few events to choose from.

Aloisio said only 10% of all 10 million tickets cost more than 200 euros (\$212).

"It's these tickets that allow for other tickets to be more accessible and balance it all out," he said.

Robin Allison Davis, a 38-year-old American and a self-declared "Olympics super fan," said she wasn't expecting to find a bargain when it was her turn to hunt for tickets in her favorite sports — gymnastics, swimming and track and field.

She was willing to pay 260 euros (\$276) per ticket to watch two hours of a gymnastics qualifying event but then got frustrated when the online ticketing office appeared to have turned into a virtual casino.

"I knew it will be expensive, but why is the system that promised to give me freedom and choice to form my own Olympic package tricking me into buying expensive tickets in sports I don't want to see if I want to get expensive tickets for an event I really want to see," Davis said. "The ticket pack thing is a racket."

Davis has lived in Paris for six-and-a-half years and works as a freelance journalist. She did not buy any tickets during the first round, saying that she will try her luck again in the second draw in May and splurge on individual tickets.

Aloisio, the organizing committee official, defended the ticket package system and said the Paris organizers aimed to arouse curiosity for other sports during the Olympics.

"These packages are a way to get people interested and buy tickets for a water polo semifinal, hockey or 7-a-side rugby, sports for which there may have been less demand," Aloisio said.

In all, 10 million tickets for the Olympics and 3.4 million for the Paralympics will be made available on the online platform. Individual tickets will become available in the second round, which starts on May 11. Registration for that draw starts March 15.

The third phase is expected to start at the end of the year, when all remaining tickets will be put on sale.

Ukraine plant builds 6-person bunkers for war's front lines

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KRYVYI RIH, Ukraine (AP) — The pops of welding torches and the piecing whine of angle grinders fill the spacious production floor at a steel plant in Kryvyi Rih, the city in central Ukraine that is President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown.

Instead of doing their usual jobs producing and repairing mining equipment, some workers are busy building metal bunkers for front-line troops. Ukrainian mining and metals company Metinvest launched the project, and the plant workers say they are happy contributing to the resistance to Russia's invasion.

For now, that means assembling prefabricated materials into underground shelters using a Soviet-era design. They have already shipped 123 of the 2-meter (6 1/2-foot) -wide, 6-meter (20-foot) -long structures to areas that include eastern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk provinces.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 40 of 83

Each shelter requires nearly 2 tons of steel. The bunkers are built to withstand projectiles with calibers of up to 152 millimeters, can accommodate up to six soldiers and need to be buried 1.5 meters (about 5 feet) underground.

"This is so they can rest, sit out the attacks," said Petro Zhuk, who manages the 40-person team building the shelters. Although the structures take 165 man-hours to produce including the prefabrication, his team can build one a day, Zhuk said.

The six beds inside are made of wood. The shelter also comes with a place to put a portable stove, a double floor that can be used to store weapons and an exit leading to the surface along with an entrance reached by tunnel, he explained.

Zhuk speaks compassionately of the Ukrainian troops he hopes will find a measure of comfort in the bunkers.

"While they are inside, they cannot worry about an attack that could happen while they are asleep," he said. "They can be warm and comfortable."

Metinvest also owns the Azovstal Iron and Steel Works, a fortress-like plant in the destroyed and now occupied city of Mariupol. During the months Mariupol was under siege, civilians and soldiers sheltered there, and the last-ditch stand Ukrainian forces made to defend the plant became a symbol of resistance against Moscow's invasion.

In an interview with Ukrainian media, Metinvest CEO Yurii Ryzhenkov said the drawings for the bunkers were found in the company's archives, dating from when it was a Soviet enterprise. Back then, every plant had to produce something for the army, he said.

Vitalii Yevzhenko, 54, a plant worker involved in assembling the bunkers, said he thinks what he and his colleagues are doing is very important.

"This is for the victory of Ukraine. The sooner the war ends, the better it will be," he said.

Hong Kong court convicts activists behind Tiananmen vigil

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Three Hong Kong activists from a now-defunct group that organized annual vigils commemorating China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters were convicted on Saturday for failing to provide authorities with information on the group in accordance with a national security law.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong were arrested in 2021 during a crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement following massive protests more than three years ago. They were leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China before it disbanded under the shadow of the Beijing-imposed law.

The alliance was best known for organizing candlelight vigils in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests. Critics say its shut-down has shown freedoms that were promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 are eroding.

Before the group voted to disband, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to democracy groups overseas in August 2021, accusing it of being a foreign agent.

But the group refused to cooperate, arguing police were arbitrarily labeling pro-democracy organizations as foreign agents. It added the police did not have a right to ask for its information because it was not a foreign agent and the authorities did not provide sufficient justification.

Under the security law's implementation rules, the police chief can request a range of information from a foreign agent. Failure to comply with the request could result in six months in jail and a fine of 100,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$12,740) if convicted.

On Saturday, principal magistrate Peter Law ruled the defendants were obliged to answer the notice served to them, which he called "sound and legal," and their non-compliance was unjustified.

The alliance had been actively operating with various entities and people abroad, Law said, so it was necessary to explore their dealings and connections to determine their affiliation and ultimate purpose.

"Such requirement for information was nothing like a broad-brush fishing exercise but rather was con-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 41 of 83

strained in terms of periods of time and nature," he said. "The police had taken an abstemious and self-restrained approach."

During previous legal proceedings, the court ordered a partial redaction of some information after prosecutors argued that a full disclosure of information would jeopardize an ongoing probe into national security cases.

The undisclosed details in a redacted police report submitted to the court include the names of groups that were alleged to have links with the alliance.

"Leaking of secret information, such as identities, strategies and interim investigation results of others would definitely seriously jeopardize the ongoing investigation," Law said on Saturday.

The annual vigil organized by the alliance was the only large-scale public commemoration of the June 4th crackdown on Chinese soil and was attended by massive crowds until authorities banned it in 2020, citing anti-pandemic measures.

Chow, along with two other former alliance leaders, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, were charged with inciting subversion of state power under the security law in 2021. The alliance itself was charged with subversion.

The national security law criminalizes secession, subversion, and collusion with foreign forces to intervene in the city's affairs as well as terrorism. Apart from the activists, pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai is also facing collusion charges under the law, which has already jailed or silenced many dissidents.

In Beijing, Wang Chao, spokesperson for the National People's Congress, China's legislature, hailed the enactment of the law in 2020 as an important milestone in the practice of the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

The principle promises the former British colony the right to retain its own political, social and financial institutions for 50 years after the 1997 handover.

"Hong Kong has had a major turn from chaos to stability," he said.

Ohio derailment tests Sen. Brown's push to buck Dem defeats

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Sherrod Brown has survived a decade of statewide Democratic losses in Ohio by building a reputation as the rare person in his party who can still connect with the white working-class voters who have increasingly shifted to Republicans.

But as he heads into what could be a tough reelection campaign, Brown is facing a critical test in the aftermath of a train derailment in an eastern Ohio village. Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, argue the federal response shows Democrats have left such regions behind. Brown is under heightened pressure to prove them wrong.

In the early stages of what will be a fierce fight for control of Congress next year, the response to the train derailment in Ohio is emerging as an early barometer of whether Democrats can rebuild support in working-class communities. Brown has laid the blame for the disaster squarely on the corporation that operated the train that derailed, Norfolk Southern, and positioned himself as a fighter for places like East Palestine.

"It's the kind of community that's too often forgotten about or exploited by corporate America," he told reporters this week. "My job is always to fight for the dignity of work, to fight for these workers, to fight for these communities, to make sure this never happens again. I'll work with anyone to do that and to get these reforms passed."

Brown has also made a pair of visits to East Palestine to meet with emergency workers and local residents. And this week, he followed with bipartisan legislative action to call on federal agencies to make long-term medical testing available to residents as well as proposing new federal safety regulations and financial consequences for train operators.

As the images of black, billowing smoke from the wreck and concerns of local residents morphed from a man-made disaster into a political battleground, there is a growing sense among lawmakers that locals

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 42 of 83

don't appreciate being used as pawns. A parade of political figures, social media influencers and TV producers have descended on the village of 5,000 residents in recent weeks.

Republican Rep. Bill Johnson, who represents the area, called on President Joe Biden to visit the community and said he would hold a field hearing of the House Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing and Critical Minerals in East Palestine. But he also urged caution: "Right now, the residents of that community want the workers to get that place cleaned up. The last thing they want is a circus of politicians coming there to get what they determine to be a photo op."

Johnson and other House Republicans also expressed skepticism this week at any new regulations on train operators, even as Republicans for weeks had eagerly seized on the derailment as proof Democrats are not focused on policy at home.

Trump toured the village last week, both reprising his presidential role of providing disaster assistance and hitting the campaign trail. He handed out red "Make America Great Again" hats and slammed Biden for visiting Ukraine while forgoing Ohio. The state's junior senator, Republican JD Vance, joined Trump's tour, and conservative figures like Rudy Giuliani and Tulsi Gabbard soon followed.

The stretches of eastern Ohio industrial towns have tilted increasingly to Republicans over the last decade, contributing to Ohio's shift from a presidential bellwether to a potential GOP stronghold. Republicans have cast it as a forgotten swath of the country — fertile ground for Trump's grievance politics or Vance's own rags-to-riches story, told in his 2016 memoir "Hillbilly Elegy" that made him a political star.

"They felt like they have been ignored, which is why it's been very strong Trump country," said former Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat who lost the Senate race to Vance last year and urged bipartisanship and an emphasis on economic policy over social issues during the campaign and as part of Vanderbilt University's Project on Unity and American Democracy.

But the region is also familiar ground for Brown, who has become a mainstay in the state's political constellation with a populist brand. Brown, who wears suits purchased from a union shop near his Cleveland home, has developed an old-school network of union support over a decades-long political career that began in the General Assembly.

David Pepper, a former chair of the Ohio Democratic Party, says Brown's "secret sauce" is his willingness to take his made-in-America, union-strong messaging to places outside the cities. Brown doesn't usually win the rural towns and suburbs, but he is able to dampen his losses there to defy the political headwinds.

"There's a sense that's built over decades of work," Pepper said of Brown's brand. "That guy is fighting against big corporations for the little guy."

For Democrats, he's proof they can still win in the Buckeye State. But as Republicans look to Ohio as both a must-win presidential state and a potential path to a Senate majority, Brown sits atop the list of seats that could be flipped.

At times, Brown has appeared uneasy in the aftermath of the East Palestine derailment. He said it was a "mistake" by the Biden administration not to quickly dispatch a high-level official to the scene. He repeatedly emphasized his bipartisan work with Vance, calling their rail safety bill "a signal" that he would work well with the Trump-aligned Republican. And he pointed out that he had made multiple trips to East Palestine in recent weeks.

But already, Brown's political opponents have seized on a Fox News report that Brown also attended a fundraiser in California last week before stopping in northeast Ohio on his way back to Washington.

Matt Dolan, one Republican challenger, called Brown "the toast of Hollywood liberals" this week and has tried to tie him closely to Biden. Dolan, a state lawmaker who lost the GOP primary to Vance last year, is the only Republican to officially enter the 2024 race, though more are expected.

Brown was dismissive both of Trump's visit and the report on the California fundraiser.

But Pepper said he would face a tough reelection that could hinge on whether Trump's wing of the GOP remains dominant in its primary. Statewide, Republicans with a more muted, centrist style, such as Gov. Mike DeWine, have performed best by attracting moderate voters.

Pepper said, "The more Trumpy the candidate against Sherrod, the better Sherrod does."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 43 of 83

In last year's Senate contest against Vance, Ryan complained that national Democrats never saw the race as winnable and spent funds elsewhere — another sign the party had moved on from places like Ohio. But as Democrats try to hold a razor-thin Senate majority next year, Sen. Gary Peters, the chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, vowed to help Brown.

"I will make sure that he has the resources to win in the end," Peters said.

Texas congressman's breaks with GOP could lead to censure

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas was facing a rare potential censure Saturday by his state party over votes that included supporting new gun safety laws after the Uvalde school shooting that was in his district.

A censure by the Republican Party of Texas would underline how the two-term congressman's willingness to break with conservatives on key issues during his short time in office has caused GOP activists and some colleagues alike to bristle.

That independent streak includes opposing a sweeping House GOP immigration proposal over the U.S.-Mexico border, which includes a large portion of his South Texas district. He has also voted to defend same-sex marriage and was an outright "no" against a House rules package after Republican leader Kevin McCarthy became speaker.

Gonzales has been defiant ahead of the vote, which was set to take place at a meeting of Texas GOP leaders and activists in Austin. He was not expected to attend.

"We'll see how that goes," he told reporters in San Antonio on Thursday.

In practical terms, a censure would allow the state party to come off the sidelines if Gonzales runs again in 2024 and spend money to remind primary voters about the rebuke. Passage of a censure requires a three-fifths vote of the State Republican Executive Committee. More than a dozen county GOP clubs in Gonzales' district have already approved local censure resolutions.

Gonzales cruised through his GOP primary and easily won reelection last year in his heavily Hispanic congressional district. He first won in 2020 to fill an open seat left by Republican Will Hurd — who also didn't shy from breaking with the GOP, and whose aides say is now considering a run for president.

The potential censure illustrates the intraparty fights that still flare in America's biggest red state even as Republicans celebrate 20 years of having full control of the Texas Legislature and every statewide office.

Last year, former Texas GOP Chairman Allen West stepped down from the job to mount a faint primary challenge against Republican Gov. Greg Abbott. The state party in 2018 also censured a former moderate Texas House speaker who opposed bathroom restrictions for transgender people.

After the Uvalde school shooting that killed 19 students and two teachers, Gonzales supported a sweeping and bipartisan gun violence bill signed by President Joe Biden. He is also the only Texas Republican in the statehouse or Congress who has called for the resignation of the state's police chief over the fumbled law enforcement response to the attack.

Chris Rock to finally have his say in new stand-up special

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

A year after Will Smith smacked him on the Academy Awards stage, Chris Rock is poised to finally have his say.

The 58-year-old comedian on Saturday night will perform his first stand-up special since last year's Oscars. He's doing it in "Chris Rock: Selective Outrage," streaming live on Netflix at 10 p.m. EST. Not only will Rock present about an hour of stand-up from the Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore, but Netflix — in its first ever live show — will bookend the special with star-studded commentary.

The pre-show, beginning at 9:30 p.m., will feature Paul McCartney, Jerry Seinfeld, Matthew McConaughey, Cedric the Entertainer, Ice-T and two hosts from last year's Oscars: Wanda Sykes and Amy Schumer. Afterward Rock's set, Dana Carvey and David Spade will host guests including Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Arsenio

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 44 of 83

Hall and JB Smoove.

While Smith has apologized and repeatedly spoken about the incident since last March, Rock has avoided all the usual platforms where celebrities often go to air their feelings. He never sat down with Oprah Winfrey, and turned away the many media outlets that would have loved to land an exclusive in-depth interview.

Instead, Rock has for much of the past year been touring new material in a long string of performances as part of his Ego Death tour. The shows, which had been announced before the 2022 Oscars, have featured performances with Dave Chappelle and Kevin Hart.

On the road, Rock has often worked in jokes and reflections on the slap, though it's never been more than an element of his shows. There's no guarantee that he will talk it about Saturday night, but he's widely expected to and has long suggested this would be his chosen forum.

Rock first broke his public silence about the slap three nights after the Oscar ceremony, last year in Boston. "How was your weekend?" he asked the crowd. He added that he was "still kind of processing what happened."

Now, after plenty of processing, Rock will be taking the cultural spotlight just a week before the March 12 Oscars, where the slap is sure to be revisited by this year's host, Jimmy Kimmel. In the aftermath of last year's events, Smith resigned his membership to the film academy. The academy board of governors banned Smith from the Oscars and all other academy events for a decade.

At the annual luncheon for nominees held last month, motion picture academy president Janet Yang voiced regret about how the incident was handled, calling the academy's response "inadequate." Bill Kramer, the academy's chief executive, has said the academy has since instituted a crisis communications team to prepare for and more rapidly respond to the unexpected.

"Selective Outrage" is Rock's second special for Netflix, following 2018's "Tamborine." They're part of a two-special \$40 million deal Rock signed with the streamer in 2016.

While rivals have gotten into live streaming and sports, "Selective Outrage" marks Netflix's first foray into live programming. Netflix, with 231 million global subscribers, also recently signed on to stream next year's Screen Actors Guild Awards, signaling that "Selective Outrage" may be just the start of a new trend.

After Murdaugh trial 'circus,' Walterboro welcomes normality

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press/Report for America

WALTERBORO, S.C. (AP) — Walterboro native Danny Murdaugh is ready for his small South Carolina town to return to normal following the double murder trial of a distant relative that drew global attention and sullied his family's surname.

He lamented the "circus" brought to Walterboro by the six-week trial of Alex Murdaugh, which ended this week with the disgraced attorney sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of murdering his wife and son.

The spectacle altered life in Walterboro for over a month as an influx of locals, tourists and media flocked to the otherwise quiet downtown area to join the gripping trial. Teachers adjusted drop-off and pickup routines at the school down the street from the courthouse. On the other side of the street, entrepreneurs parked food trucks to cash in on the crowds. A newly opened pottery gift shop nearby set up a photo opportunity that read "I was at the Murdaugh trial."

Walterboro Police Chief Kevin Martin said the city incurred \$35,500 in overtime pay, facilities rentals and technology upgrades related to the trial — not including costs this week.

Regular appearances from elected officials like South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson and television personalities like legal analyst Nancy Grace also turned heads.

"The only thing I haven't seen is elephants and acrobats," Danny Murdaugh said.

For some the attention provided a welcome economic jolt. Nyan Tara Ruth, who runs Sister's Seafood and Soul, said the past six weeks brought her Walterboro-based food truck more business than ever before and helped her through a period of financial trouble.

"I'm sorry that the occasion happened in the murder case," Ruth said. "But I definitely had the oppor-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 45 of 83

tunity to set up and I made good money here.”

Rebecca Eggers, an artist who makes clay figures and cartoons at Ahab’s Arts and Crafts Mall near the courthouse, said it was nice to see a buzz around the downtown that is “normally dead.” She called the food trucks a wonderful alternative to other nearby chains.

For some entrepreneurs, the saga’s actual details took a backseat to its boost for business. Jessica Burdick, co-owner of the boutique Twig, said she would only receive trial updates from customers. Between her multiple jobs, she had no time to follow the proceedings intensely.

“It has its side element of intrigue,” she said. “But, alas, I have to work.”

Katie Dearybury arrived Friday from Charleston with her 1-year-old daughter. She could not miss the end to a case where she felt like a “13th juror or 14th juror.” Others poured in from around South Carolina and the East Coast, from New York to Florida.

Now that trial put the town billed as “The Porch of the Lowcountry” on the global map, one resident celebrated that she’d never again have to tell someone where Walterboro is located.

Still, by Friday, many residents were ready for the attention to subside. Sandy Alberts, a teacher, said she was looking forward to no longer needing to allow an extra half-hour for travel when making plans downtown.

Eggers said she was ultimately wary of the attention given the circumstances.

“It brought a lot of people into Walterboro,” she said. “Granted, it wasn’t a good type of publicity because a man’s life was on the line.”

“I’m glad things will return to normal,” she added.

Danny Murdaugh said he falls “on the poor side” of the Murdaugh family, which climbed to prominence with members such as Alex Murdaugh’s father, grandfather and great-grandfather serving as the area’s powerful elected prosecutors for more than 80 years.

“He also hurt the Murdaugh family name,” Danny Murdaugh said. “Our life has been an honorable lifestyle. We don’t go out. We don’t cause trouble. We try to help when we can.”

Other Colleton County residents severely impacted by the frenzy were the 12 jurors and lone alternate left standing by trial’s end.

After the jury delivered its verdict Thursday, Judge Clifton Newman thanked the members. He noted one juror who faced potential job loss. Before dismissing the jury, Newman also assured them he would handle any reports of harassment. And he informed them they would be ineligible for jury duty through the next year and exempt from service for two more years.

“You did not volunteer for this service. You were called upon by being summoned to appear,” Newman said. “Providence have brought you to this moment in time, to these weeks in time.”

Tom Sizemore, ‘Saving Private Ryan’ actor, dies at 61

By The Associated Press undefined

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) — Tom Sizemore, the “Saving Private Ryan” actor whose bright 1990s star burned out under the weight of his own domestic violence and drug convictions, died Friday at age 61.

The actor had suffered a brain aneurysm on Feb. 18 at his home in Los Angeles. He died in his sleep Friday at a hospital in Burbank, California, his manager Charles Lago said.

Sizemore became a star with acclaimed appearances in “Natural Born Killers” and the cult-classic crime thriller “Heat.” But serious substance dependency, abuse allegations and multiple run-ins with the law devastated his career, left him homeless and sent him to jail.

As the global #MeToo movement wave crested in late 2017, Sizemore was also accused of groping an 11-year-old Utah girl on set in 2003. He called the allegations “highly disturbing,” saying he would never inappropriately touch a child. Charges were not filed.

Despite the raft of legal trouble, Sizemore had scores of steady film and television credits — though his career never regained its onetime momentum. Aside from “Black Hawk Down” and “Pearl Harbor,” most of his 21st century roles came in low-budget, little-seen productions where he continued to play the gruff,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 46 of 83

tough guys he became famous for portraying.

"I was a guy who'd come from very little and risen to the top. I'd had the multimillion-dollar house, the Porsche, the restaurant I partially owned with Robert De Niro," the Detroit-born Sizemore wrote in his 2013 memoir, "By Some Miracle I Made It Out of There." "And now I had absolutely nothing."

The book's title was taken from a line uttered by his character in "Saving Private Ryan," a role for which he garnered Oscar buzz. But he wrote that success turned him into a "spoiled movie star," an "arrogant fool" and eventually "a hope-to-die addict."

He racked up a string of domestic violence arrests. Sizemore was married once, to actor Maeve Quinlan, and was arrested on suspicion of beating her in 1997. While the charges were dropped, the couple divorced in 1999.

Sizemore was convicted of abusing ex-girlfriend Heidi Fleiss in 2003 — the same year he pleaded no contest and avoided trial in a separate abuse case — and sentenced to jail. The former Hollywood madam testified that he had punched her in the jaw at a Beverly Hills hotel, and beaten her in New York to the point where they couldn't attend the "Black Hawk Down" premiere.

The sentencing judge said drug abuse was likely a catalyst but that testimony had revealed a man who had deep problems dealing with women. Fleiss called Sizemore "a zero" in a conversation with The Associated Press after his conviction.

Sizemore apologized in a letter, saying he was "chastened" and that "personal demons" had taken over his life, though he later denied abusing her and accused her of faking a picture showing her bruises.

Fleiss also sued Sizemore, saying she suffered emotional distress after he threatened to get her own probation revoked. Fleiss had been convicted in 1994 of running a high-priced call-girl ring. That lawsuit was settled on undisclosed terms.

Sizemore was the subject of two workplace sexual harassment lawsuits related to the 2002 CBS show "Robbery Homicide Division," in which he played a police detective. He was arrested as recently as 2016 in another domestic violence case.

Sizemore ended up jailed from August 2007 to January 2009 for failing numerous drug tests while on probation and after Bakersfield, California, authorities found methamphetamine in his car.

"God's trying to tell me he doesn't want me using drugs because every time I use them I get caught," Sizemore told The Bakersfield Californian in a jailhouse interview.

Sizemore told the AP in 2013 that he believed his dependency was related to the trappings of success. He struggled to maintain his emotional composure as he described a low point looking in the mirror: "I looked like I was 100 years old. I had no relationship with my kids; I had no work to speak off. I was living in squat."

He appeared on the reality TV show "Celebrity Rehab" and its spinoff "Sober House," telling the AP that he did the shows to receive help, but also partly to pay off accumulated debts that ran into the millions.

Many of Sizemore's later-career films had a sci-fi, horror or action bent: In 2022 alone, he starred in movies with such titles as "Impuratus," "Night of the Tommyknockers" and "Vampfather." But Sizemore still nabbed a few meaty roles — including in the "Twin Peaks" revival — and guest spots on popular shows like "Entourage" and "Hawaii Five-O."

A stuntman sued Sizemore and Paramount Pictures in 2016, saying he was injured when the allegedly intoxicated actor ran him over while filming USA's "Shooter." State records obtained by the AP showed that Sizemore was only supposed to be sitting in the unmoving car and that he "improvised at the end of the scene and drove away in his car." Sizemore was fired from "Shooter" and the stuntman's lawsuit was settled on undisclosed terms.

In addition to his film and TV credits, he was part of the voice cast for 2002's "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" video game. He also taught classes at the LA West Acting Studio, according to recent advertisements.

He is survived by his 17-year-old twin sons, Jayden and Jagger, and his brother Paul, all of whom were by his side when he died.

"I've led an interesting life, but I can't tell you what I'd give to be the guy you didn't know anything about," Sizemore wrote in his memoir.

Some California mountain residents could be snowed in a week

By JOHN ANTCZAK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Some residents stranded in Southern California mountain communities by a huge snowfall could be stuck for another week, an official said Friday.

A late-February blast of arctic air produced a rare blizzard east of Los Angeles in the San Bernardino Mountains, where thousands of people live at high elevations in forest communities or visit for year-round recreation.

Extraordinary snowfall buried homes and businesses, overwhelming the capability of snowplowing equipment geared toward ordinary storms.

By last weekend, all highways leading up into the mountains were closed and have opened intermittently since then to residents and convoys of trucks loaded with food or other supplies.

The estimate by San Bernardino County Sheriff Shannon Dicus was an improvement in the outlook for stranded residents, which previously ranged up to two weeks.

"We've said we could push it out as far as two weeks but because of the state's efforts and the equipment that's coming in behind us we're hoping to drop that down to a week," he told a press conference.

The sheriff and other officials said progress has been made, but they described severe conditions that, for example, have forced firefighters to reach emergency scenes such as fires in snowcats.

"The enormity of this event is hard to comprehend," said state Assemblyman Tom Lackey. "You know, we're thinking, 'We're in Southern California,' but yet we have had an inundation that has really, really generated a severe amount of anxiety, frustration and difficulty, especially to the victims and those who are actually trapped in their own home."

San Bernardino County is one of 13 counties where California Gov. Gavin Newsom declared states of emergency due to the impacts of severe weather, including massive snowfalls that have collapsed roofs due to too much weight.

In Mono City, a small community on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada near Yosemite National Park, some residents have been snowed in without power for a week, the Mono County Sheriff's Office posted Friday on Facebook. In the northern part of the state, mountain communities grappling with the conditions have smaller populations and are more accustomed to significant snowfall.

Residents and vacationers trapped in the San Bernardino range have taken to social media to show their plight and wonder when plows are coming.

Shelah Riggs said the street she lives on in Crestline hasn't seen a snowplow in eight days, leaving people in about 80 homes along the roadway with nowhere to go. Typically, a plow comes every day or two when it snows, she said.

"We are covered with five or six feet (1.5 or 1.8 meters); nobody can get out of their driveways at all," she said in a telephone interview.

Riggs, who lives with her 14-year-old daughter, said everyone is working to keep snow and ice off their decks to prevent collapse and making sure the gas vents on their homes are kept clear.

She said the county's response has been "horrible" and that "people are really angry."

Devine Horvath, also of Crestline, said it took her and her son 30 minutes to walk down the street to check on a neighbor — a trek that normally takes just a few minutes.

Horvath said she was lucky to make it to the local grocery store before its roof collapsed several days earlier but hadn't been able to leave her street since.

"I'm getting more upset by the day," she said.

The sheriff sought to give reassurance that help is coming even if people haven't seen any plows.

"We're going to dig you out and we are coming," Dicus said. "We are making tremendous progress. I saw this from the air yesterday. The roads are being cleared."

Officials said crews were dealing with such tremendous depths of snow that removal required front-end loaders and dump trucks rather than regular plows.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 48 of 83

California Department of Transportation official Jim Rogers said crews working 24-hour shifts have removed more than 2.6 million cubic yards (1.9 million cubic meters) of snow from state highways.

Officials described a host of difficulties in reopening smaller roads, including buried vehicles and downed power lines that make progress difficult. Residents were urged to somehow mark the locations of cars.

A reopened road may only be the width of a single vehicle with walls of ice on each side.

"We are going house to house, and we're literally using shovels to shovel out driveways to make sure that people have access to their cars," said county fire Chief Dan Munsey. "As the roads are plowed, you still have a 10-foot (3-meter) berm of snow that you need to make it over."

More snowcats were being brought in, along with a California National Guard crew that normally works with the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force on wildfires. The crew will help shovel snow.

While more heavy snow was forecast to arrive in Northern California early Saturday, Southern California was expected to remain storm-free except for possible light rain.

"The weather looks great for the next seven days, and that's great news," Munsey said.

About 80,000 people live in the San Bernardino Mountains either part or full time. The county has not estimated how many people are currently in the mountains because many residences are vacation homes or rentals.

The implications of Walgreens' decision on abortion pills

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Walgreens says it will not start selling an abortion pill in 20 states that had warned of legal consequences if it did so.

The drugstore chain's announcement Thursday signals that access to mifepristone may not expand as broadly as federal regulators intended in January, when they finalized a rule change allowing more pharmacies to provide the pill.

Here's a closer look at the issue.

ABOUT THE ABORTION PILL

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved mifepristone in 2000 to end pregnancy, when used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol. The combination is approved for use up to the 10th week of pregnancy.

Mifepristone is taken first to dilate the cervix and block a hormone needed to sustain a pregnancy. Misoprostol is taken a day or two later, causing contractions to empty the uterus.

More than half of U.S. abortions are now done with pills rather than with a procedure, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights. In rare cases, the drug combination can cause excess bleeding, requiring emergency care.

WIDENING ACCESS

For more than 20 years, the FDA limited dispensing of mifepristone to a subset of specialty offices and clinics due to safety concerns.

The agency has repeatedly eased restrictions and expanded access, increasing demand even as state laws make the pills harder to get for many women.

In late 2021, the agency eliminated an in-person requirement for getting the pill, saying a new scientific review showed no increase in safety complications if the drug is taken at home. That change also permitted the pill to be prescribed via telehealth and shipped by mail-order pharmacies.

Earlier this year, the FDA further loosened restrictions by allowing pharmacies like Walgreens to start dispensing the drug after they undergo certification. That includes meeting standards for shipping, tracking and confidentially storing prescribing information.

STATES STEP IN

Typically, the FDA's authority to regulate prescription drug access has gone unchallenged. But more than a dozen states now have laws restricting abortion broadly — and the pills specifically — following last year's Supreme Court decision overturning the federal right to abortion.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 49 of 83

Last month, attorneys general in 20 conservative-led states warned CVS and Walgreens in a letter that they could face legal consequences if they sell abortion pills by mail in their states.

In addition to state laws, attorneys general from conservative states have argued that shipments of mifepristone run afoul of a 19th century law that prohibited sending items used in abortion through the mail.

WALGREENS' REACTION

A spokesman says the company told the attorneys general that it will not dispense mifepristone in their states and it doesn't plan to ship the drug to them as well.

But Walgreens is working to become eligible through the FDA's certification process. It plans to dispense the pills where it can legally do so.

The company is not currently dispensing the pills anywhere.

OTHER DRUGSTORES

Rite Aid Corp. said it was "monitoring the latest federal, state, legal and regulatory developments" and would keep evaluating its policies. The Associated Press also sought comment from CVS Health Corp., retail giant Walmart and the grocery chain Kroger.

Some independent pharmacists would like to become certified to dispense the pills, said Andrea Pivarnas, a spokeswoman for the National Community Pharmacists Association. She added that this would be a "personal business decision," based partly on state laws. The association has no specifics on how many will do it.

OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

In November, an anti-abortion group filed a federal lawsuit in Texas seeking to revoke mifepristone's approval, claiming the FDA approved the drug 23 years ago without adequate evidence of safety.

A federal judge could rule soon. If he sides with abortion opponents, mifepristone could potentially be removed from the U.S. market.

In January, abortion rights supporters filed separate lawsuits challenging abortion pill restrictions imposed in North Carolina and West Virginia.

Legal experts foresee years of court battles over access to the pills.

Fired Memphis EMT says police impeded Tyre Nichols' care

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A former Memphis Fire Department emergency medical technician told a Tennessee board Friday that officers "impeded patient care" by refusing to remove Tyre Nichols' handcuffs, which would have allowed EMTs to check his vital signs after he was brutally beaten by police.

Robert Long, whose license was suspended for failing to give aid to Nichols and who has also been fired, appeared by livestream before the state Emergency Medical Services Board to share his version of events. He provided details about how he and another EMT, JaMichael Sandridge, responded after five Memphis police officers had punched, kicked and hit Nichols with a baton during an arrest following Nichols fleeing a traffic stop Jan. 7.

Long and Sandridge were fired by the department Jan. 30. Their licenses were suspended by the board Feb. 3, after members watched a 19-minute video taken at the beating location. Officials said the EMTs failed to render aid to Nichols, who died three days after the beating.

The board determined that Long and Sandridge did not perform basic emergency medical examinations while Nichols was handcuffed on the ground and slumped against a squad car, documents obtained by The Associated Press showed. Nichols showed "clear signs of distress, such as the inability to remain in a seated posture and laying prone on the ground multiple times," the documents showed.

Both Long and Sandridge failed to initiate a primary examination, which could have helped identify the presence of any life-threatening injuries, the documents showed. Nichols' vital signs were not checked, he did not receive high-flow oxygen or an intravenous line, and he was not placed on a heart monitor.

The two EMTs were joined at the arrest location by a third fire department employee, Lt. Michelle Whitaker, who officials said remained in the fire engine with the driver during the response to Nichols' beating.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 50 of 83

She has since been fired, but it was not immediately clear if the state board would take action towards suspending her license.

The five officers who were seen on video beating Nichols have been fired and charged with second-degree murder. They have pleaded not guilty.

Before Long testified Friday, his lawyer, Darrell O'Neal, noted that the 19-minute video taken by an elevated pole camera and seen by the board did not have sound, and it did not capture what was said during the violent arrest.

Long gave a detailed account of what officers, Nichols and he himself said.

Long said he approached Nichols and saw that he had "a bump on his head, a busted lip and a dried bloody nose on both nostrils," but that he answered "Tyre Nichols" when asked his name.

He also said Nichols then asked him for help standing up and to remove the handcuffs. Nichols repeated this request several times, Long said.

Long said he repeatedly tried to place a monitor on Nichols to check his vital signs, including blood pressure, but Nichols would roll away. Long said he interpreted this movement as Nichols rejecting care and refusing cooperation.

"He wouldn't stay still for assessment," Long said.

Long said he did not force the blood pressure cuff onto Nichols or hold him down in fear of being accused of assault.

He also said he asked Nichols if had been using drugs or alcohol, and Nichols said he had only been drinking. Long said he interpreted some of Nichols' movements, including being slumped against the car or on the ground, as the result of drinking alcohol.

At one point, officers leaned over Nichols and were "in his face, saying loudly that the patient is not going anywhere and that they are not going to uncuff him, impeding patient care," according to Long.

They continued to impede his care, Long said.

Eventually, Nichols stopped moving and became unresponsive, Long said. An ambulance arrived, and Nichols was taken to a hospital. Officials have said 27 minutes elapsed from the time the EMTs arrived on the scene to the moment the ambulance left for the hospital.

Matt Gibbs, an Tennessee Department of Health lawyer, asked Long if a field sobriety test or a blood alcohol exam had been administered. Long said he was not aware if those were done.

Long also acknowledged that Nichols never verbally refused care from the EMTs, and he spent several minutes without directly engaging with Nichols.

Long's lawyer called a former Memphis paramedic and EMT, John Holloway, as an expert to testify. Holloway praised the actions that Long took and said that if he had touched Nichols, Long may have been in danger of accusations of assaulting him. Holloway said he did not believe Long would be a danger to the public if allowed to resume working as an EMT.

Holloway also noted that Long was the lowest ranking EMT on the scene, and the other two fire department employees who had more years of experience failed to step in to help.

Holloway also said that Nichols could have been moving away from Long for a number of reasons. One board member suggested that Nichols could have been moving away from Long because Nichols was scared of being beaten again.

After four hours of testimony and questioning, the board voted to keep Long's suspension in place.

A decade under Maduro, migration marks Venezuelans' lives

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Few Venezuelans have not had their lives touched by migration over the last decade, when more than 7 million people left the country amid a political, economic and humanitarian crisis that has lasted the entirety of President Nicolás Maduro's government.

In the 10 years since Venezuelans learned on March 5, 2013, that polarizing President Hugo Chávez was dead and his chosen successor, Maduro, would take over, a drop in oil prices coupled with government

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 51 of 83

mismanagement have sunk the country into an economic tailspin, pushing many people into poverty, hunger, poor health, crime and desperation.

As people continue to migrate, mostly to elsewhere in Latin America, there's an increasing divide between "los que se quedaron" and "los que se fueron," those who stayed and those who left.

The split has political implications. Opponents of Maduro's government frequently talk about the diaspora — their preferred term for migrants — and the reasons that drove them to leave, while the president and his allies like to highlight the entrepreneurial spirit of people who remain.

There are also social consequences. People long for weekend or evening gatherings around a grill with loved ones who are now far-flung, or lament missed birthdays, graduations and funerals.

These are some their stories:

LOS QUE SE QUEDARON

José Francisco Rodríguez has been a cobbler for 46 years in the capital, Caracas, doing everything from repairing oil workers' boots to adding lifts to sneakers to covering bridal shoes with delicate fabric.

Unlike with other businesses, clients have kept going to his shop throughout the crisis as prices soar for all manner of goods.

"With the situation right now, buying a new shoe is a little more difficult for people," said Rodríguez, 71. "So, people prefer to get them repaired."

Rodríguez said he has "faith in Venezuela" and would never leave, a decision he acknowledged he can make because he owns a well-established business. He has high hopes for the country's future but admitted they depend on a rebound in oil production and the return of foreign energy companies.

One of his daughters does not share his optimism and moved to Chile with her two daughters in 2018. He misses them, but the remittances she sends home proved crucial when he got COVID-19 and racked up medical bills of at least \$3,000 — roughly 50 times the annual minimum wage.

Many of his clients don't see a future in Venezuela either. In mid-February he gave away 70 pairs of shoes that customers abandoned long ago.

"They left," Rodríguez said, "and they forgot about the shoes."

Iraida Piñero has never held her 2-year-old granddaughter.

Her only child left Venezuela six years ago and gave birth in Colombia. Unable to travel, the grandmother has settled for watching via video calls as the girl grew from a newborn into a toddler.

The absence of her daughter, granddaughter and 11-year-old grandson has led to a mix of sadness, gratitude and fear, even as she turns to prayer for strength.

Piñero, 53, earns roughly \$5 a month plus some bonuses cleaning a public hospital in Caracas. That's nowhere near enough to buy a day's worth of food for a family of four.

Remittances from her daughter, who sells Venezuelan-style empanadas, have kept her afloat. People without such help, Piñero said, struggle to afford necessities.

"We are going through a very difficult situation, too difficult," she said.

But Piñero said that rather than leave, as her daughter has suggested, she would wait for Venezuela "to be the same that it was 15 years or 20 years ago."

"My grandson wants to return ... and I want my daughter here again with me and my grandchildren," she said.

The days when oil company executives, middle-class workers and tourists constantly hailed cabs or motorcycle taxis around Caracas are long gone. But César Sandoval, who grew up in an impoverished neighborhood, entered the business four years ago and has not looked back.

Sandoval, 28, started out offering motorcycle rides and saved enough money to sell that vehicle and buy a used car. He now owns two cabs.

Every day, he is motivated to go into the streets and work by thoughts of his wife and three children.

"They are my engine," Sandoval said, standing next to his red, rusting, mid-2000s Fiat.

A number of fellow taxi drivers and close friends have left the country because, he said, "they want to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 52 of 83

succeed ... live better."

Sandoval does not blame them for that decision, but it's not for him. He cannot fathom separating from his family or enduring the hostility many Venezuelan migrants have experienced abroad.

"I wouldn't want to go to another country where they humiliate me," he said, adding, "If I was born here, I'll die here."

Like millions of others, Luzmilla Arrechedera, 53, spent countless hours in food lines when acute shortages were the norm. She staved off hunger by eating cassava, plantains and mangoes.

She's seen heartache as well: Her only child was killed in a robbery seven years ago, and two of her three grandchildren moved to Spain with their mother.

Still, Arrechedera thanks God every morning for waking up one more day and tries not to dwell on the past. "What am I going to gain by crying over his death?" she said.

The Caracas beauty salon where she works as a hair stylist has become her refuge and something of a surrogate family.

"Here we joke around, we cry," Arrechedera said. "We are all like sisters. We love each other very much."

Arrechedera hopes to visit her grandchildren one day. But her wages are just enough to pay for basic foods, bills and the occasional indulgence such as ice cream or a pair of pants.

If she were to leave Venezuela, Arrechedera said, she fears nobody would hire her because of her age. So she stays put.

"With difficulties, but I survive," she said at the salon. "Thank God we still have customers here. Not like before, but we have them."

Some of Jorge Montaña's friends have urged him to go to Colombia, saying he could make more money there than in Caracas. But others have warned against such a move, saying no one will gift him a plate of food should he need it.

The optometry office worker has followed the latter advice.

"If I'm going to face adversities, I would rather face adversities in my country," said Montaña, 51, who lives in an apartment with his mother and three siblings.

Montaña said he loves his country and asserted that Venezuelans live well in comparison with people in some other countries.

But he is still buying fewer groceries than before the crisis — mostly basics like sugar and flour, never meat — as prices continue to rise. He has lost clients and seen many businesses shut down.

A childhood friend did make the decision to leave, for Peru. With tears in his eyes, Montaña said the friend died there.

"He never came back," Montaña said.

LOS QUE SE FUERON

Lorena García spent years at a nongovernmental organization in the city of Valencia working to promote a democratic transition away from Chávez's government and then later Maduro's. That change never came, and in 2015 she moved to South Florida after winning the U.S. visa lottery.

"I wanted to have opportunities that I knew I would not have" in Venezuela, the 47-year-old said.

García, who migrated alone, said the U.S. has become her home and she no longer misses anyone from her native country. She holds a degree in mechanical engineering but now works as a real estate agent. As a legal resident, she helped her parents join her in Florida.

"I am so grateful to this country," she said in an interview at the house they share in Doral, a small city near Miami that's often referred to as "Doralzuela" for its large Venezuelan community. "I always feel included."

Had she stayed in Venezuela, García said, she would have regressed professionally and felt frustrated and hopeless. For her to even consider returning, there would have to be "drastic political change."

Runaway inflation and widespread shortages pushed mechanic Christian Salazar to leave the eastern

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 53 of 83

city of Puerto Ordaz in 2018, bound for Peru. He settled in a neighborhood in the outskirts of the capital, Lima, and found a better-paying job than the one he had back home.

But it has been tough going. Peru's minimum monthly wage is roughly \$269, and Salazar, 35, spends much of what he earns from fixing cars on rent and utilities.

"The minimum wage here in Peru ... is not for a Venezuelan to live in a dignified manner because the costs of rent and the basic basket (of goods) practically eat it all up," he said.

Salazar separated from his wife before migrating, and he also left three teenage children back home. He now has a new partner and a 3-year-old son with her, and he credits them for making life in Peru "more bearable."

Salazar talks with the teens in Venezuela every night after work but said there is no father-child bond. "I wanted to boost my children's well-being," Salazar said, his voice cracking.

Flor Peña, 39, decided to leave when her father died of a heart attack after being denied treatment by four overcrowded hospitals. She, her husband and their two young children headed to Peru in 2017.

Peña who was an industrial safety engineer in Venezuela, spent four years selling food on the streets of Lima, cleaning houses, taking care of an older man and helping other Venezuelans with immigration and remittance paperwork.

The children were harassed at school for being Venezuelan, and in 2021 the family moved to start all over again in Mexico City. She now cooks and waits tables at a small Venezuelan restaurant and has found a better, more stable existence.

"Peace of mind is priceless," Peña said. "Your children go to the park and are calm. They go to school. ... Back there (in Venezuela), you are worried that your phone will be stolen. Here things are different."

Peña misses her mother and two younger sisters who still live in Caracas, and she also has great nostalgia for Venezuela's beaches. But she won't move back until there is a change of government.

Migrating has been hard, and she draws strength from the children.

"I want my children to be where the opportunities are," Peña said.

Ali Mora did not want to leave — even when he could no longer afford food on his hospital worker salary, even when his nephews were losing weight before his eyes, even when he resorted to picking through the garbage of greengrocers and butcher shops in search of something to eat.

"I never felt like leaving my country, even if I was starving," said Mora, 32.

But after repeated prodding by his mother, he finally went in 2018 to join a sister in Ecuador, where he worked early on in construction and selling fruit in and around the capital, Quito. Mora is now married and has a son.

Like many Venezuelan families, his is spread out across the Americas. His mother is also in Ecuador, his father remains in Venezuela and his other sister is in the United States.

Mora, who is currently unemployed, tried to reach the United States last year but got only as far as the foot of the Darien Gap, a treacherous stretch of jungle between Colombia and Panama where migrants frequently die or go missing. He said he was about to attempt the journey when authorities blocked access due to a visit from a foreign official and said "no more Venezuelans were going to go through."

So he headed back to Ecuador.

"I said, 'Dear God, you closed the door for a reason,'" Mora said. "I'm going back to my son, who is my happiness."

Ángel Bruges and his wife arrived in the Colombian capital, Bogota, in 2019 and began selling Venezuelan empanadas from a cart. They have since parlayed that fledgling business into two larger carts and a brick-and-mortar shop, and last year they used some of their earnings to bring their daughter over as well.

"We have not taken a break from work," said Bruges, 50, who owned an assorted goods store in the eastern Venezuela city of Carupano.

The family had been making do back in Venezuela thanks to the store and his wife's teacher salary. But

they were unable to find chicken, beef and other foods.

They now have a permit that lets them live legally in Colombia for 10 years. But the empanada business has been struggling lately as many of their Venezuelan clients have left Colombia.

Bruges said he misses his mother, who cannot migrate because of her age and is stuck back in Venezuela experiencing the country's "deficiencies."

"There is no electricity, there is no internet, there is no gas, there is no gasoline, there is no transportation," he said. "You go to hospitals, and there are no medicines."

Doctor: Lesion removed from Biden's chest was cancerous

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A skin lesion removed from President Joe Biden's chest last month was a basal cell carcinoma — a common form of skin cancer — his doctor said Friday, adding that no further treatment was required.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the White House doctor who has served as Biden's longtime physician, said "all cancerous tissue was successfully removed" during the president's routine physical on Feb. 16. Biden, 80, was deemed by O'Connor to be "healthy, vigorous" and "fit" to handle his White House responsibilities during that physical exam, which comes as he is weeks away from launching an expected bid for reelection in 2024.

O'Connor said the site of the removal on Biden's chest has "healed nicely" and the president will continue regular skin screenings as part of his routine health plan.

Basal cells are among the most common and easily treated forms of cancer — especially when caught early. O'Connor said they don't tend to spread like other cancers, but could grow in size, which is why they are removed.

Biden had "several localized non-melanoma skin cancers" removed from his body before he started his presidency, O'Connor said in his Feb. 16 summary of the president's health, noting it was well established that Biden spent a lot of time in the sun during his youth.

First lady Jill Biden in January had two basal cell lesions removed from her right eye and chest.

She said in an Associated Press interview last week that she's now "extra careful" about sunscreen, especially when she's at the beach.

Basal cell carcinoma is a slow-growing cancer that usually is confined to the surface of skin — doctors almost always can remove it all with a shallow incision — and seldom causes serious complications or becomes life-threatening.

The Bidens have long been advocates for fighting cancer. Their adult son Beau died in 2015 from brain cancer.

Mississippi passes bill restricting electric car dealerships

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The Mississippi Senate gave final approval Thursday to a bill to restrict electric car manufacturers from opening new brick-and-mortar dealerships in the state unless they comply with the same laws traditional carmakers follow.

The legislation, introduced in the House by Republican Rep. Trey Lamar of Senatobia, now heads to Republican Gov. Tate Reeves, who has not indicated whether he will sign it. On the Senate floor Thursday, the bill sparked an intraparty debate among GOP lawmakers.

Opponents said it would betray conservative principles by setting a government policy that interferes with the automobile market and would stop electric carmakers from bringing new technology and jobs to the state. Proponents said the law would ensure all car manufacturers, regardless of their business model, play by the same rules.

Tesla sells vehicles in person at one facility in Mississippi that is classified as a store, not a dealership. The distinction allows the company to operate outside state laws governing franchise businesses. This

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 55 of 83

exception, and the prospect of other electric companies taking advantage of it, gives these manufacturers special privileges that traditional automakers don't enjoy, according to Republican Sen. Daniel Sparks of Belmont.

"We're saying if you choose to have a brick-and-mortar dealership, you have to follow the same laws that everyone else has to follow," Sparks said. "Please don't tell me Tesla's car doesn't identify as a car."

Sen. Brice Wiggins, a Republican from Pascagoula, said the "protectionist" bill came from traditional car dealers threatened by competition from electric carmakers.

Republican Sen. Joey Fillingane of Sumrall said the bill could cause Mississippi to fall behind other states in the race to attract investment from electric car companies.

"Maybe we just like being last all the time. Maybe it's a badge of honor — we're the last ones to change," Fillingane said. "If we're not careful ... we could deprive our citizens of opportunities they really ought not to be deprived of."

The Biden administration has incentivized the purchase of electric vehicles. That, on top of an exception to regulations under state franchise laws, allows electric carmakers to operate by a different set of rules, Sparks said.

The bill does not restrict the direct sale of electric cars, as people can buy them online. But if they want to buy an electric car in person, they would have to drive to the state's only Tesla store in Pearl, which would be allowed to remain open under the proposed new law. Tesla or any other electric car company could not open a new brick-and-mortar location to sell cars unless they enter a franchise agreement.

The bill passed in a bipartisan 39-13 vote.

Murdaugh judge's own legal story unfolded in South Carolina

By JONATHAN DREW and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN undefined

The judge who sentenced Alex Murdaugh on Friday to life in prison for killing his wife and son has earned attention and plaudits for his even-handed demeanor throughout the trial and for his dressing-down of the once-prominent lawyer just before he sent him to prison.

Judge Clifton Newman, a South Carolina native who attended racially segregated schools in the 1950s and 1960s, addressed Murdaugh directly during roughly 20 minutes of comments that ranged from invoking the memories of the defendant's slain son Paul and wife Maggie to lamenting what he described as attacks on the credibility of the state's justice system during the trial. He noted that Murdaugh came from a prominent family of lawyers in the area and that a portrait of his grandfather, a former prosecutor, once hung in the courthouse where he was tried — until Newman had it removed to promote a fair trial.

Among the most poignant moments came when Newman spoke to Murdaugh about his wife and son. Referring to the shooting deaths and lies Murdaugh admitted telling throughout the investigation, the judge said: "Within your own soul, you have to deal with that. And I know you have to see Paul and Maggie during the night time when you're attempting to go to sleep and I'm sure they come and visit you."

"All day, and every night," said Murdaugh, who maintained his innocence during the sentencing hearing.

"And they will continue to do so and reflect on the last time they looked you in the eyes," the judge then replied.

The judge also remarked on how the case was an "assault on the integrity of the judicial system in our state," referring to the prominent position that Murdaugh's family held as longtime prosecutors in the area — along with the defense team's efforts to impugn investigative methods throughout the trial.

"As a member of the legal community -- and a well-known member of the legal community -- you practiced law before me, and we've seen each other at various occasions throughout the years," he said.

Newman's 40-year-old son, Brian, died just weeks before the Murdaugh trial would pull Newman away from his home for more than a month. Brian Newman, a former Columbia city councilman, died of a cardiac issue, according to The State newspaper in Columbia.

On Friday, as the judge handed down Murdaugh's sentence for killing his own son, he added a small extra touch.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 56 of 83

"For the murder of Paul Murdaugh, whom you probably loved so much, I sentence you to prison for murdering him for the rest of your natural life," Newman said.

Newman was born in 1951 in South Carolina's rural Williamsburg County and grew up there attending racially segregated schools, The Post and Courier reported in a profile of the judge last year.

Newman was the first person in his family to be born in a hospital. When he was 3 years old, his mother moved to New York to take a job as a domestic worker for a Columbia University professor's family, leaving him in the care of grandparents and an aunt.

Newman graduated from high school as his class valedictorian in 1969, a year before his local school district desegregated. In high school, he played the role of a lawyer from New York City in a play based on a landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court school desegregation case, an experience that helped propel him into a career in the law.

"To come from a rural community, a farming community, and to go from that scenario to playing the role of a lawyer was quite inspiring," Newman told the American Bar Association in 2017.

After earning an undergraduate degree from Cleveland State University and graduating from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Newman began practicing law in Cleveland. He returned to South Carolina in 1982 and started a private law practice.

Newman served as a defense attorney, a civil practitioner and a prosecutor before 2000, when the state General Assembly elected him to serve as a Circuit Court judge.

"I've run the gamut, as far as handling all aspects of the law," Newman told the ABA.

Newman was assigned to the 2016 trial of Michael Slager, a white former police officer who fatally shot Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man, in the back after a traffic stop.

In 2021, the chief justice of South Carolina's Supreme Court appointed Newman to handle the criminal matters involving Murdaugh.

Amazon pauses construction on 2nd headquarters in Virginia

By HALELUYA HADERO and MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon is pausing construction of its second headquarters in Virginia following the biggest round of layoffs in the company's history and its shifting plans around remote work.

The Seattle-based company is delaying the beginning of construction of PenPlace, the second phase of its headquarters development in northern Virginia, Amazon's real estate chief John Schoettler said in a statement. He said the company has already hired more than 8,000 employees and will welcome them to the Met Park campus, the first phase of development, when it opens this June.

"We're always evaluating space plans to make sure they fit our business needs and to create a great experience for employees, and since Met Park will have space to accommodate more than 14,000 employees, we've decided to shift the groundbreaking of PenPlace (the second phase of HQ2) out a bit," Schoettler said.

He also emphasized the company remains "committed to Arlington" and the local region, which Amazon picked — along with New York City — to be the site of its new headquarters, known as HQ2, several years ago. More than 230 municipalities had initially competed to house the projects. New York won the competition by promising nearly \$3 billion in tax breaks and grants, among other benefits, but opposition from local politicians, labor leaders and progressive activists led Amazon to scrap its plans there.

In February 2021, Amazon said it would build an eye-catching, 350-foot Helix tower to anchor the second phase of its redevelopment plans in Arlington. The new office towers were expected to welcome more than 25,000 workers when complete. Amazon spokesperson Zach Goldsztejn said those plans haven't changed and the construction pause is not a result — or indicative of — the company's latest job cuts, which affected 18,000 corporate employees.

The layoffs were part of a broader cost-cutting move to trim down Amazon's growing workforce amid more sluggish sales and fears of a potential recession. Meta, Salesforce and other tech companies — many of which had gone on hiring binges in the past few years — have also been doing the same.

Amid the job cuts, Amazon has urged its employees to come back to the office. Last month, Amazon

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 57 of 83

CEO Andy Jassy said the company would require corporate employees to return to the office at least three days a week, a shift from the prior policy that allowed leaders to make the call on how their teams worked. The change, which will be effective on May 1, has ignited some pushback from employees who say they prefer to work remotely.

Goldsztejn said the company is expecting to move forward with what he called pre-construction work on the construction in Virginia later this year, including applying for permits. He said final timing for the second phase of the project is still being determined.

When Virginia won the competition to land HQ2, it did so less with direct incentives, and more with promises to invest in the regional workforce, particularly a graduate campus of Virginia Tech that is under construction just a couple of miles from Amazon's under-construction campus in Crystal City.

Still, there were significant direct incentives. The state promised \$22,000 for each new Amazon job on the condition that the average worker salary for those new jobs is \$150,000, annually. Those incentives were about \$550 million for 25,000 projected jobs.

Arlington County also promised Amazon a cut of its hotel-tax revenue on the theory that hotel occupancies would increase significantly once Amazon builds out its campus. That incentive, projected initially at about \$23 million, is dependent on how many square feet of office space Amazon occupies in the county.

Suzanne Clark, a spokeswoman for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, said state officials are not concerned about Amazon filling its commitments. The total of 8,000 workers now employed at the new headquarters is already running about 3,000 ahead of what was expected at this point, she said.

She said no incentive money has been paid out yet to Amazon. The company is scheduled to submit its first application for payment on April 1, which will be based on the job creation from 2019 through 2022. Amazon would then receive its first grant payment on or after July 1, 2026.

In a statement, Democratic U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, who represents the district, called on the company to "promptly update leaders and stakeholders about any new major changes in this project, which remains very important to the capital region."

Arlington County Board Chair Christian Dorsey said during a news briefing Friday that Amazon hasn't earned any of the performance-based incentives and it has not received any funds from the county. He said it's unclear how long the delay might be, but it's "not really disappointing" since officials there had initially projected the buildout to be completed by 2035. Amazon had previously said it planned to complete the project by 2025.

"Amazon is still very much committed — as we understand it — to certainly fulfilling all of their plans and obligations within the window that was envisioned when they struck the deal to come here," Dorsey said.

Dorsey shared the company notified him about the pause in advance of releasing the information to the public. He said Amazon didn't provide a reason for the delay, but it wasn't challenging to guess it was tied to the economic uncertainty in the county.

"They are really trying to take a pause and think about this consciously. And make decisions that not only make sense in light of current conditions but expected future conditions."

Black Vietnam vet finally awarded Medal of Honor for bravery

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 60 years after he was recommended for the nation's highest military award, retired Col. Paris Davis, one of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat, received the Medal of Honor on Friday for his bravery in the Vietnam War.

After a crowded White House ceremony, a grateful Davis emphasized the positive of the honor rather than negative of the delay, saying, "It is in the best interests of America that we do things like this."

Thanking President Joe Biden, who draped a ribbon with the medal around his neck, he said, "God bless you, God bless all, God bless America."

The belated recognition for the 83-year-old Virginia resident came after the recommendation for his medal was lost, resubmitted — and then lost again.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 58 of 83

It wasn't until 2016 — half a century after Davis risked his life to save some of his men under fire — that advocates painstakingly recreated and resubmitted the paperwork.

Biden described Davis as a “true hero” for risking his life amid heavy enemy fire to haul injured soldiers under his command to safety. When a superior ordered him to safety, according to Biden, Davis replied, “Sir, I’m just not going to leave. I still have an American out there.” He went back into the firefight to retrieve an injured medic.

“You are everything this medal means,” Biden told Davis. “You’re everything our nation is at our best. Brave and big hearted, determined and devoted, selfless and steadfast.”

Biden said Davis should have received the honor years ago, describing segregation in the U.S. when he returned home and questioning the delay in awarding him the medal.

“Somehow the paperwork was never processed,” Biden said. “Not just once. But twice.”

Davis doesn't dwell on the delayed honor and says he doesn't know why decades had to pass before it finally arrived.

“Right now I’m overwhelmed,” he told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday, the eve of the medal ceremony.

“When you’re fighting, you’re not thinking about this moment,” Davis said. “You’re just trying to get through that moment.”

“That moment” stretched over nearly 19 hours and two days in mid-June 1965.

Davis, then a captain and commander with the 5th Special Forces Group, engaged in nearly continuous combat during a pre-dawn raid on a North Vietnamese army camp in the village of Bong Son in Binh Dinh province.

He engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the North Vietnamese, called for precision artillery fire and thwarted the capture of three American soldiers — all while suffering wounds from gunshots and grenade fragments. He used his pinkie finger to fire his rifle after his hand was shattered by an enemy grenade, according to reports.

Davis repeatedly sprinted into an open rice paddy to rescue members of his team, according to the ArmyTimes. His entire team survived.

“That word ‘gallantry’ is not much used these days,” Biden said. “But I can think of no better word to describe Paris.”

Davis, from Cleveland, retired in 1985 at the rank of colonel and now lives in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside Washington. Biden called him several weeks ago to deliver the news.

He says the wait in no way lessens the honor.

“It heightens the thing, if you’ve got to wait that long,” he said. “It’s like someone promised you an ice cream cone. You know what it looks like, what it smells like. You just haven’t licked it.”

Davis’ commanding officer recommended him for the military’s top honor, but the paperwork disappeared. He eventually was awarded a Silver Star, the military’s third-highest combat medal, but members of Davis’ team have argued that his skin color was a factor in the disappearance of his Medal of Honor recommendation.

“I believe that someone purposely lost the paperwork,” Ron Deis, a junior member of Davis’ team in Bong Son, told the AP in a separate interview.

Deis, now 79, helped compile the recommendation that was submitted in 2016. He said he knew Davis had been recommended for the Medal of Honor shortly after the battle in 1965, and he spent years wondering why it hadn’t been awarded. Nine years ago he learned that a second nomination had been submitted “and that also was somehow, quote, lost.”

“But I don’t believe they were lost,” Deis said. “I believe they were intentionally discarded. They were discarded because he was Black, and that’s the only conclusion that I can come to.”

Army officials say there is no evidence of racism in Davis’ case.

“We’re here to celebrate the fact that he got the award, long time coming,” Maj. Gen. Patrick Roberson, deputy commanding general, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, told the AP. “We, the Army, you

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 59 of 83

know, we haven't been able to see anything that would say, 'Hey, this is racism.'"

"We can't know that," Roberson said.

In early 2021, Christopher Miller, then the acting defense secretary, ordered an expedited review of Davis' case. He argued in an opinion column later that year that awarding Davis the Medal of Honor would address an injustice.

"Some issues in our nation rise above partisanship," Miller wrote. "The Davis case meets that standard."

Davis' daughter, Regan Davis Hopper, a mom of two teenage sons, told the AP that she only learned of her dad's heroism in 2019. Like him, she said she tries not to dwell on her disappointment over how the situation was handled.

"I try not to think about that. I try not to let that weigh me down and make me lose the thrill and excitement of the moment," Hopper said. "I think that's most important, to just look ahead and think about how exciting it is for America to meet my dad for the first time. I'm just proud of him."

US to focus bison restoration on expanding tribal herds

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — U.S. officials will work to restore more large bison herds to Native American lands under a Friday order from Interior Secretary Deb Haaland that calls for the government to tap into Indigenous knowledge in its efforts to conserve the burly animals that are an icon of the American West.

Haaland also announced \$25 million in federal spending for bison conservation. The money, from last year's climate bill, will build new herds, transfer more bison from federal to tribal lands and forge new bison management agreements with tribes, officials said.

American bison, also known as buffalo, have bounced back from their near extinction due to commercial hunting in the 1800s. But they remain absent from most of the grasslands they once occupied, and many tribes have struggled to restore their deep historical connections to the animals.

As many as 60 million bison once roamed North America, moving in vast herds that were central to the culture and survival of numerous Native American groups.

They were driven to the brink of extinction more than a century ago when hunters, U.S. troops and tourists shot them by the thousands to feed a growing commercial market that used bison parts in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, only a few hundred bison remained.

Haaland, of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, is the first Native American to serve as a U.S. Cabinet secretary. She's championed tribal concerns on issues ranging from wildlife conservation to energy development, and put a spotlight on past mistreatment of Native Americans through a series of listening sessions about systemic abuses at government-run boarding schools.

She told The Associated Press in an interview last year that the decimation of bison by European settlers eliminated the primary food source for many tribes and opened the way for their land to be taken away.

The return of bison in some locations is considered a conservation success. But Haaland said they remain "functionally extinct" and more work is needed to return the animals to tribal lands and restore the grasslands they depend on.

"This holistic effort will ensure that this powerful sacred animal is reconnected to its natural habitat and the original stewards who know best how to care for it," Haaland said in announcing her order Friday, during a World Wildlife Day event at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C..

"When we think about Indigenous communities, we must acknowledge that they have spent generations over many centuries observing the seasons, tracking wildlife migration patterns and fully comprehending our role in the delicate balance of this earth," she added.

Across the U.S., from New York to Oklahoma to Alaska, 82 tribes now have more than 20,000 bison in 65 herds. Numbers have been growing in recent years along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of the animals.

Many of the tribes' bison came from U.S. agencies, which over the past two decades transferred thousands of the animals to thin government-controlled herds so they don't outgrow the land. The transfers

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 60 of 83

often were carried out in cooperation with the South Dakota-based InterTribal Buffalo Council. The group's director, Troy Heinert, said Haaland's order is an acknowledgement of the work tribes have already done.

"The buffalo has just as long a connection to Indigenous people as we have to it," said Heinert, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. "They are not just a number or a commodity; this is returning a relative to its rightful place."

Past administrations have proposed or advanced bison conservation plans — including under former Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump — and tribes have long been part of that process.

Haaland's order puts Native American interests at the center of the Interior Department's bison program. It also adds a tribal leader, yet to be named, to a group that's exploring establishing new herds on both tribal and federal lands.

Bison reintroductions could put the Biden administration at odds with state officials in Montana. Republican lawmakers have resisted returning the animals to federal lands and opposed some previous bison transfers to tribes.

State lawmakers voted Thursday to advance a resolution opposing the reintroduction of bison to the million-acre (400,000-hectare) Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in northern Montana — an idea that's been floated by the Biden administration and has support among Native Americans.

"Bison were part of the culture 200, 300 years ago. We aren't going back to that," said Montana state Sen. Mike Lang, who sponsored the resolution. Lang said he doesn't oppose bison on tribal lands but added that as populations grow they can cause problems for ranchers and present a public safety threat.

About half of the \$25 million announced Friday will go to the National Park Service. The remainder will be split among the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

It includes about \$1 million to establish an apprenticeship program that will provide training to tribes on managing bison, including at national parks and national wildlife refuges, officials said.

The Interior Department currently oversees 11,000 bison in herds on public lands in 12 states.

Murdaugh's fall from grace ends in life sentence for murder

By JEFFREY COLLINS and JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

WALTERBORO, S.C. (AP) — One of the last pieces of a legal dynasty that doled out justice in rural South Carolina for decades crumbled Friday as lawyer Alex Murdaugh was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison for the murder of his wife and son at their sprawling estate.

In the quiet Lowcountry that Murdaugh's family had dominated since the days of Jim Crow, a judge talked to Murdaugh in a way that few probably have — not in his days playing college football, making millions as a high-powered attorney or gaining favor because of his name — and reminded Murdaugh that he had to remove the portrait of the defendant's grandfather from its place of honor in that same courtroom to ensure a fair trial.

At sentencing, Murdaugh maintained his innocence, just as he did when he testified in his own defense during the six-week trial. But Circuit Court Judge Clifton Newman wanted to know if he saw the mangled bodies of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh as he tried to sleep or thought about how he disgraced his family's three-generation reputation for justice through lying, stealing and — eventually — murder.

"As I tell you again, I respect this court. But I am innocent. I would never under any circumstances hurt my wife Maggie and I would never under any circumstances hurt my son Paul-Paul," Murdaugh responded.

"And it might not have been you. It might have been the monster you become," Newman said.

Murdaugh faced the judge in the Colleton County courtroom on the circuit where his father, grandfather and great-grandfather tried cases as the elected prosecutor for more than 80 years. Murdaugh's family founded the area's most powerful law firm a century ago in neighboring Hampton County. For decades, that meant that practically anyone who ended up in court — whatever side of the law they found themselves on — would have a Murdaugh either watching their back or staring them down.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 61 of 83

Prosecutor Creighton Waters noted that stare each day in court.

"I looked in his eyes. He liked to stare me down as he would walk by me during this trial. And I could see the real Alex Murdaugh when he looked at me," Waters said.

Prosecutors decided not to seek the death penalty in this case, and Newman handed down the harshest possible sentence he could — consecutive life sentences without parole.

"Over the past century, your family — including you — have been prosecuting people here in this courtroom, and many have received the death penalty, probably for lesser conduct," the judge said.

Waters said none of the victims of the crime — members of Murdaugh's family and the parents and relatives of his wife — wished to speak on behalf of the prosecution before sentencing. Murdaugh's brother and surviving son sat behind him in the courtroom every day.

"After six weeks of trial, they came away more convinced he did not do this. They are steadfastly in his camp," defense attorney Jim Griffin said after the hearing.

The jury deliberated for less than three hours Thursday before finding Murdaugh guilty of killing his 22-year-old son with two shotgun blasts and his 52-year-old wife with four or five rifle shots.

Juror Craig Moyer told ABC News that when deliberations began, the jury immediately took a poll that came back with nine guilty votes. It didn't take long to convince the other three.

The juror agreed with prosecutors that the key piece of evidence was a video locked on his son's cell-phone for a year — video shot minutes before the killings at the same kennels near where the bodies would be found.

The voices of all three Murdaughs can be heard on the video, though Alex Murdaugh had insisted for 20 months that he hadn't been at the kennels that night. When he took the stand in his own defense, the first thing he did was admit he had lied to investigators about being at the kennels, saying he was paranoid of law enforcement because he was addicted to opioids and had pills in his pocket the night of the killings.

"A good liar. But not good enough," Moyer said.

And the apparent tears Murdaugh cried throughout the trial, even on the witness stand? Moyer said he didn't buy them.

"All he did was blow snot," Moyer said. "No tears. I saw his eyes. I was this close to him."

Friday's hearing again took place in a packed courtroom. The Murdaugh case has attracted true crime fans from around the world with its threads of power, danger, money and privilege.

Tracy Kinsinger came to the courthouse with a homemade sign reading "Murderer" that he made the night before.

"The truth is he brought shame upon himself, his family, the community, his profession," Kinsinger said. "It's disgraceful."

Murdaugh didn't look at the sign as he was hustled into the courthouse with his head down.

Prosecutors didn't have the weapons used to kill the Murdaughs or other direct evidence like confessions or blood spatter. But they had a mountain of circumstantial evidence, including the video putting Murdaugh at the scene of the killings five minutes before his wife and son stopped using their cellphones forever.

Through more than 75 witnesses and nearly 800 pieces of evidence, jurors heard about betrayed friends and clients, Murdaugh's failed attempt to stage his own death in an insurance fraud scheme, a fatal boat crash in which his son was implicated, the housekeeper who died in a fall in the Murdaugh home and the grisly scene of the killings.

The now-disbarred attorney admitted stealing millions of dollars from the family firm and clients, saying he needed the money to fund his drug habit. Before he was charged with murder, Murdaugh was in jail awaiting trial on about 100 other charges ranging from insurance fraud to tax evasion.

Defense attorneys said they will appeal, based largely on the judge allowing the evidence of crimes that Murdaugh has not been convicted of, which they say smeared his reputation.

"They had cast Alex as a despicable human being. And that was the reason they offered it," Griffin said.

After sentencing, Murdaugh returned to the Colleton County jail to gather his possessions and will be taken to an evaluation center in Columbia for medical, mental health and education testing. In a month

or so, he will move to a maximum security state prison like all new inmates serving life sentences.

Murdaugh's fast conviction sealed by his testimony: experts

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

Prosecutors produced no direct evidence linking South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh to the killings of his wife and son, yet a jury took less than three hours to convict him — thanks, in large part, to the defendant himself.

"It came down to just a couple of key pieces of evidence. And those were: the cellphone video ... that placed the defendant at the scene of the crime ... the defendant's denial to law enforcement agents that he had been at the kennels with his wife and son that night, and then finally, his testimony on the stand," said Jessica Roth, a Cardozo School of Law professor who followed the trial.

The quick verdict suggests that despite weeks of testimony, dozens of witnesses and hundreds of pieces of evidence, the jury ultimately didn't see it as a complicated case, Roth added.

Before being sentenced on Friday to life in prison without parole for the shooting deaths of his 22-year-old son and his 52-year-old wife, Murdaugh maintained his innocence, telling the judge he would never hurt them. Defense attorneys have vowed to appeal; they say the judge's decision to allow evidence of other crimes that Murdaugh has been accused but not convicted of tainted the case.

Observers say Murdaugh did himself no favors by taking the witness stand, where he admitted to stealing money from clients and lying to investigators about being at the kennels with his wife, Maggie, and son Paul shortly before their killings. His testimony opened him up to intense grilling by prosecutors.

Murdaugh told authorities that he was napping and did not go to the kennels before leaving the house to visit his ailing mother. But several witnesses testified that they believed they heard his voice, along with that of his wife and son, on cellphone video taken at the kennels about five minutes before the shootings.

"He was walking through a field of land mines between having to acknowledge his lies about his whereabouts the night of the murder and all of the money he stole from his clients," said Duncan Levin, a defense attorney and former New York prosecutor. "The range of his bad acts was just so large that he got destroyed on cross-examination and I don't think juries take well to being lied to their faces."

Murdaugh's claim that he initially lied because he didn't trust law enforcement was undercut by other evidence that showed he had a long, cozy relationship with police, and that he carried a law enforcement badge given to him by his father, who was once the elected solicitor.

"The defendant clearly had so many relationships with law enforcement and really tried to take advantage of that," Roth said. "So I think the claim that he did not trust law enforcement ... just didn't ring true to the jury."

South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said Friday that Murdaugh's decision to take the stand proved to be "fatal for him, ultimately."

"I think Alex Murdaugh was our biggest piece of evidence," Wilson told NBC's "Today Show."

"I believe in my mind that he believed he could talk his way out of this and at the end of the day I think it's what sealed it for him."

The jury agreed he should be convicted after just 45 minutes or so of deliberation, according to juror Craig Moyer. He told ABC's "Good Morning America" that the video in which Murdaugh's voice could be heard at the crime scene shortly before the slayings convinced him that Murdaugh was guilty. Moyer said he also didn't believe Murdaugh's testimony, and never saw him shed any real tears on the stand.

"I didn't see any true remorse or any compassion or anything," Moyer said.

Murdaugh defense attorney Dick Harpootlian told reporters Friday that it wasn't a mistake to have Murdaugh testify. Harpootlian said there was "no choice" but to put Murdaugh on the stand because he was "made out to be a monster" by prosecutors with the evidence of his financial crimes.

"If he left without taking the stand, he was toast," Harpootlian said. "Taking the stand, could he pull it off? Apparently, he didn't."

Can the dogs of Chernobyl teach us new tricks on survival?

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

More than 35 years after the world's worst nuclear accident, the dogs of Chernobyl roam among decaying, abandoned buildings in and around the closed plant – somehow still able to find food, breed and survive.

Scientists hope that studying these dogs can teach humans new tricks about how to live in the harshest, most degraded environments, too.

They published the first of what they hope will be many genetics studies on Friday in the journal *Science Advances*, focusing on 302 free-roaming dogs living in an officially designated “exclusion zone” around the disaster site. They identified populations whose differing levels of radiation exposure may have made them genetically distinct from one another and other dogs worldwide.

“We’ve had this golden opportunity” to lay the groundwork for answering a crucial question: “How do you survive in a hostile environment like this for 15 generations?” said geneticist Elaine Ostrander of the National Human Genome Research Institute, one of the study’s many authors.

Fellow author Tim Mousseau, professor of biological sciences at the University of South Carolina, said the dogs “provide an incredible tool to look at the impacts of this kind of a setting” on mammals overall.

Chernobyl’s environment is singularly brutal. On April 26, 1986, an explosion and fire at the Ukraine power plant caused radioactive fallout to spew into the atmosphere. Thirty workers were killed in the immediate aftermath while the long-term death toll from radiation poisoning is estimated to eventually number in the thousands.

Researchers say most of the dogs they are studying appear to be descendants of pets that residents were forced to leave behind when they evacuated the area.

Mousseau has been working in the Chernobyl region since the late 1990s and began collecting blood from the dogs around 2017. Some of the dogs live in the power plant, a dystopian, industrial setting. Others are about 9 miles (15 kilometers) or 28 miles (45 kilometers) away.

At first, Ostrander said, they thought the dogs might have intermingled so much over time that they’d be much the same. But through DNA, they could readily identify dogs living in areas of high, low and medium levels of radiation exposure.

“That was a huge milestone for us,” said Ostrander. “And what’s surprising is we can even identify families” – about 15 different ones.

Now researchers can begin to look for alterations in the DNA.

“We can compare them and we can say: OK, what’s different, what’s changed, what’s mutated, what’s evolved, what helps you, what hurts you at the DNA level?” Ostrander said. This will involve separating non-consequential DNA changes from purposeful ones.

Scientists said the research could have wide applications, providing insights about how animals and humans can live now and in the future in regions of the world under “continuous environmental assault” – and in the high-radiation environment of space.

Dr. Kari Ekenstedt, a veterinarian who teaches at Purdue University and was not involved in the study, said it’s a first step toward answering important questions about how constant exposure to higher levels of radiation affects large mammals. For example, she said, “Is it going to be changing their genomes at a rapid rate?”

Researchers have already started on the follow-up research, which will mean more time with the dogs at the site about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from Kyiv. Mousseau said he and his colleagues were there most recently last October and didn’t see any war-related activity. Mousseau said the team has grown close to some dogs, naming one Prancer because she excitedly prances around when she sees people.

“Even though they’re wild, they still very much enjoy human interaction,” he said, “Especially when there’s food involved.” _____

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Abortion clinics crossing state borders not always welcome

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, SARAH RANKIN and HILARY POWELL Associated Press

BRISTOL, Va. (AP) — The pastors smiled as they held the doors open, grabbing the hands of those who walked by and urging many to keep praying and to keep showing up. Some responded with a hug. A few grimaced as they squeezed past.

Shelley Koch, a longtime resident of southwest Virginia, had witnessed a similar scene many Sunday mornings after church services. On this day, however, it played out in a parking lot outside a modest government building in Bristol where officials had just advanced a proposal that threatens to tear apart the very fabric of her community.

For months, residents of the town have battled over whether clinics limited by strict anti-abortion laws in neighboring Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia should be allowed to hop over the border and operate there. The proposal on the table, submitted by anti-abortion activists, was that they shouldn't. The local pastors were on hand to spread that message.

"We're trying to figure out what we do at this point," said Koch, who supports abortion rights. "We're just on our heels all the time."

The conflict is not unique to this border community, which boasts a spot where a person can stand in Virginia and Tennessee at the same time. Similar disputes have broken out across the country following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn the landmark 1973 decision establishing a constitutional right to abortion.

As clinics have been forced to shutter in Republican-dominant states with strict abortion bans, some have relocated to cities and towns just over the border, in states with more liberal laws. The goal is to help women avoid traveling long distances. Yet that effort does not always go smoothly: The politics of border towns and cities don't always align with those in their state capitals. They can be more socially conservative, with residents who object to abortion on moral grounds.

Anti-abortion activists have tapped into that sentiment — in Virginia and elsewhere — and are proposing changes to zoning and other local ordinance laws to stop the clinics from moving in. Since Roe was overturned, such local ordinances have been identified as a tool for officials to control where patients can get an abortion, advocates and legal experts say.

In Texas, even before Roe was overturned, more than 40 towns prohibited abortion services inside their city limits. That trend, led by anti-abortion activist Mark Lee Dickson, has since successfully spread to politically conservative towns in Iowa, Louisiana, New Mexico, Nebraska and Ohio.

Under Roe, the high court had ruled that it was unconstitutional for state or local lawmakers to create any "substantial obstacle" to a patient seeking an abortion. That rule no longer exists.

While such local ordinance changes are no longer necessary in Texas, which now has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country, Dickson says he and others will continue to pursue them in other states with liberal abortion statutes.

"We're going to keep on going forward and do everything that we can to protect life," he said.

In New Mexico, which has one of the country's most liberal abortion access laws, activists in two counties and three cities in the eastern part of the state have successfully sought ordinance changes restricting the procedure. Democratic officials have since proposed legislation to ban them from interfering with abortion access.

In the college town of Carbondale, Illinois, a state where abortion remains widely accessible, anti-abortion activists have asked zoning officials to block future clinics from opening after two already operate in town. Thus far, they've been unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, some of the states that have severely restricted abortion access are trying to make it harder for residents to end their pregnancies elsewhere. Employees at the University of Idaho who refer students to a clinic just 8 miles (13 kilometers) away in the liberal-leaning state of Washington could face felony charges under a recently passed state law.

Perhaps no other place so neatly encapsulates the issue as the twin cities of Bristol, Virginia, and Bristol,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 65 of 83

Tennessee. Before Roe, an abortion clinic had operated for decades in Bristol, Tennessee. After Roe, which triggered the Volunteer State's strict abortion law, the clinic hopped over the state line into Bristol, Virginia.

That's when anti-abortion advocates began pushing back. At the request of some concerned citizens, the socially conservative, faith-based Family Foundation of Virginia helped draft an amendment to the city's zoning code that says, apart from where the existing clinic sits, land can't be used to end a "pre-born human life."

"Nobody wants their town to be known as the place where people come to take human life. That's just not a reputation that the people in Bristol want for their area," said foundation President Victoria Cobb.

The amendment has stalled before the Planning Commission as the city's attorney, the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia and others question its legality. Meanwhile, the board of supervisors in Washington County, which surrounds Bristol, passed a similar restrictive zoning ordinance on Feb. 14, and at least three counties have since adopted resolutions declaring their "pro-life stance," according to the Family Foundation.

Before Roe was overturned, such zoning restrictions would have been unconstitutional, noted ACLU attorney Geri Greenspan. Now, however, "we're sort of in uncharted legal territory," she said.

It's a struggle that residents like Koch weren't expecting.

In 2020 — when Democrats were in full control of state government — they rolled back restrictions on abortion services, envisioning the state as a safe haven for access. Virginia now has one of the South's most permissive abortion laws, which comforted Koch when Roe was overturned.

Now, however, her relief has been replaced by anxiety.

"I realized how little I knew about the workings of local government," she said. "It's been a detriment."

The Bristol Women's Health clinic is battling multiple lawsuits but would not be affected by the proposed ordinance unless it tried to expand or make other changes. While some residents oppose the facility, "they're more afraid that this industry is going to expand and that Bristol is going to just become a multistate hub of the abortion industry," said the Rev. Chris Hess, who as pastor of St. Anne Catholic Church has advocated for the zoning change.

Debra Mehaffey, who has spent more than a decade protesting outside abortion clinics, said people are coming to Bristol from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, "all over to come get abortions, you know, because they can't get them in their state."

"So it will be great to see it totally abolished," she said.

Clinic owner Diane Derzis, who has owned numerous other abortion clinics — including the one in Mississippi at the center of the Supreme Court's recent decision — downplays the pushback. She said she's grown accustomed to protests and even experienced the bombing of a separate clinic.

But Derzis is also girding herself for many more post-Roe battles in the future.

Abortion "is just under attack and it's going to be for years," she said.

First evidence for horseback riding dates back 5,000 years

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Archaeologists have found the earliest direct evidence for horseback riding — an innovation that would transform history — in 5,000-year-old human skeletons in central Europe.

"When you get on a horse and ride it fast, it's a thrill — I'm sure ancient humans felt the same way," said David Anthony, a co-author of the study and Hartwick College archaeologist. "Horseback riding was the fastest a human could go before the railroads."

Researchers analyzed more than 200 Bronze Age skeletal remains in museum collections in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic to look for signs of what co-author and University of Helsinki anthropologist Martin Trautmann calls "horse rider syndrome" — six tell-tale markers that indicate a person was likely riding an animal, including characteristic wear marks on the hip sockets, thigh bone and pelvis.

"You can read bones like biographies," said Trautmann, who has previously studied similar wear patterns

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 66 of 83

in skeletons from later periods when horseback riding is well-established in the historical record.

The researchers focused on human skeletons — which are more readily preserved than horse bones in burial sites and museums — and identified five likely riders who lived around 4,500 to 5,000 years ago and belonged to a Bronze Age people called the Yamnaya.

“There is earlier evidence for harnessing and milking of horses, but this is the earliest direct evidence so far for horseback riding,” said University of Exeter archaeologist Alan Outram, who was not involved in the research, but praised the approach.

The study was published Friday in the journal *Science Advances*.

Domesticating wild horses on the plains of Eurasia was a process, not a single event, the researchers say. Archaeologists have previously found evidence of people consuming horse milk in dental remains and indications of horses controlled by harnesses and bits dating back more than 5,000 years, but that does not necessarily indicate the horses were ridden.

The Yamnaya culture, known for its characteristic burial mounds, originated in what’s now part of Ukraine and western Russia, an area called the Pontic Caspian steppe. The horses they kept were distinct from modern horses — likely more easily startled and less tolerant of humans — although they may have been the immediate genetic ancestors of modern horses, which emerged a few centuries later, the researchers say.

The Yamnaya are most significant because of their dramatic expansion across Eurasia in only a few generations — moving westward to Hungary and eastward to Mongolia, said University of Helsinki archaeologist and co-author Volker Heyd.

“The spread of Indo European languages is linked to their movement, and they reshaped the genetic make-up of Europe,” he said.

Their relationship with horses may have partly enabled this stunning movement, the researchers suggest. “Horses expand the concept of distance — you begin to think about places previously out of reach as being reachable,” said co-author Anthony, the Hartwick College archaeologist.

That does not mean the Yamnaya people were warriors on horseback, as the horses they rode were likely too skittish for stressful battlefield situations, he said. But horses may have allowed the Yamnaya to more effectively send communications, build alliances and manage the herds of cattle that were central to their economy.

Because only a small percentage of the skeletons studied clearly showed all six markers of riding horseback, “it seems that a minority of the people at that time were riders — that does not suggest that a whole society was built on horseback riding,” said molecular archaeologist Ludovic Orlando, who is based at the Centre for Anthropobiology and Genomics of Toulouse in France and was not involved in the research.

Still, he praised the work for helping to better pinpoint the potential genesis of horseback riding.

“This is about the origins of something that impacted human history like only a few other things have,” said Orlando.

US sending bridge-launchers to Ukraine for spring fight

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

The U.S. announced a new \$400 million military aid package for Ukraine on Friday that for the first time includes armored vehicles that can launch bridges — allowing troops to cross rivers or other gaps as Russian and Ukrainian forces remain entrenched on opposite sides of the Dnieper River.

The war had largely slowed to a grinding stalemate during the winter months, with Russia and Ukraine firing at each other from across the river. Both sides are expected to launch offensives as temperatures warm.

This round of aid will be drawn from existing U.S. weapons stockpiles so it can arrive in Ukraine faster. The U.S. and allies are trying to rush additional support to Kyiv to best position it for intensified spring fighting.

The Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge is a portable, 60-foot (18-meter) folding metal bridge that is carried on top of a tank body. Providing that system now could make it easier for Ukrainian troops to cross

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 67 of 83

rivers to get to Russian forces.

Because Ukraine also continues to face shortages of ammunition in the intense firefight, this aid package, like previous ones, includes thousands of replacement rounds, such as rockets for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and 155mm Howitzer rounds. This package also includes demolition munitions and equipment for clearing obstacles to help Ukraine break through dug-in lines.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine a year ago, the U.S. has sent in more than \$32 billion in weapons and equipment.

The U.S. is also roughly tripling the number of Ukrainian forces it is training on advanced battle tactics at a base in Germany, to help them punch through entrenched Russian lines. At the Grafenwoehr training area, Ukrainian forces run through a five-week course that prepares them to conduct advanced combined arms maneuvers with Bradley fighting vehicles, M109 Paladins and Stryker armored personnel carriers. The first 600 Ukrainian troops completed the course last month and 1,600 more are in training.

The aid will also include spare parts and equipment for vehicle maintenance and repair.

The announcement comes on the heels of a brief meeting Thursday between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a gathering of top diplomats from the Group of 20 nations in New Delhi. It was the highest-level in-person talk between the two countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But there was no indication of any movement toward easing the intense tensions between the two nations.

Blinken said he told Lavrov the U.S. would continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Lavrov, who did not mention speaking with Blinken when he held a news conference after the meeting, told reporters Moscow would continue to press its action in Ukraine.

How Biden leaves wiggle room to opt against reelection bid

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden exudes confidence as the next race for the White House approaches.

During last month's State of the Union address, he lured unruly Republicans into agreeing with him that federal entitlements should be protected. He's intensified travel outside Washington, trumpeting job-creation in Wisconsin and steep federal health care spending to Florida seniors while touting a trillion-dollar public works package that he says can do everything from revitalize Baltimore's port to easing train tunnel congestion under the Hudson River.

And he used spy-thriller tactics to sweep into war-scarred Ukraine.

For most presidents, these are powerful elements to include as the centerpiece of a reelection campaign — pledging to protect people and the economy at home and democracy in the heart of Europe. But, with the famously fickle 80-year-old Biden stopping short of officially declaring his 2024 candidacy, he's leaving just enough room to back out of a race and focus instead on using such moves to cement his legacy.

"I look at Biden from the outside, as a historian, and say, 'Boy, if he stepped away now, his place in history is secure and extraordinarily positive,'" said Jeffrey Engel, director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. "That's how a normal person thinks about these things. That's not how a president thinks about these things."

Those close to Biden insist he's not legacy shopping and that he will announce a campaign, likely after the first quarter campaign fundraising period ends this month. The party has cleared a path for Biden's renomination with rivals from his left, including Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, pledging to support the president's reelection.

Bestselling self-help author Marianne Williamson is formally launching a primary challenge to Biden on Saturday that's largely being shrugged off by the party.

The Democratic National Committee has unanimously expressed "our full and complete support" for Biden's reelection. Party leaders aren't planning primary debates, arguing there's no longer enough time to even build out a debate schedule that would pit Biden against Williamson or anyone else.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 68 of 83

In an interview last week with The Associated Press, first lady Jill Biden said there was “pretty much” nothing left for the president to do but pick a time and place to announce his reelection bid.

“How many times does he have to say it for you to believe it?” she asked.

Still, there are signals that even if the prevailing assumption among most Democrats is that Biden will seek another term, the decision isn’t yet final. Even Jill Biden was more muted in subsequent interviews when assessing her husband’s political future.

“It’s Joe’s decision,” she told CNN, noting that she’s personally “all for it.”

“If he’s in, we’re there,” she added. “If he wants to do something else, we’re there too.”

After the AP interview, the president joked to ABC that he needed to call his wife “to find out” if he was running again.

His intention “has been from the beginning to run,” the president told the network. “But there’s too many other things we have to finish in the near term before I start a campaign.”

While Biden’s standing among Democratic officials is solid, actual voters seem more wary. A recent poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found just 37% of Democrats want Biden to seek a second term, down from 52% in the weeks before last year’s midterm elections.

Biden’s age has been a leading concern since the early days of his first campaign. Already the oldest president in U.S. history, he’d be 86 by the end of a second term, should he win one.

If Biden were to eschew a run, the biggest question is whether the party could quickly coalesce around someone else. Much of the initial focus would shift to Vice President Kamala Harris, who has already said that she expects to remain on a Biden ticket in 2024. But she was notably in South Carolina this week, promoting the administration’s efforts to expand broadband access.

The state is politically significant, however, after Democrats moved South Carolina’s primary to the front of their primary calendar at Biden’s behest.

Other Democrats outside Washington have worked to gingerly build national profiles without offending Biden. They include California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has positioned himself as a foil to Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, seen as a leading alternative to former President Donald Trump in the 2024 GOP presidential primary.

While Biden’s plans are under intense scrutiny, the Republican presidential field has also been slow to form. So far, there are just four official entrants — Trump, former United Nations ambassador Nikki Haley, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and Michigan businessman Perry Johnson. Others, including former Vice President Mike Pence, ex-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, may join in the coming months. Some, such as DeSantis, could wait until late summer to officially announce their campaigns.

For his part, Biden has a history of dithering. He agonized over whether to seek the presidency in 2004 and 2016 before ultimately deciding to sit out those races. Both times, he noted that he essentially spent so long deciding that he’d run out of time to be successful in a campaign, rather than really saying he didn’t want to run.

“He’s notoriously slow on campaign decisions,” said Andrew Feldman, a Democratic strategist who interned on Biden’s 2008 presidential campaign and worked as part of an advance staffer team during his vice presidency. “None of this should be a surprise.”

Feldman said Biden is “always thinking about his legacy” but also “thinking about getting results for the American people.”

“I think legacy and results and reelection are very much intertwined,” he said.

As far as legacy goes, Biden aides concede that future governing will likely never be as easy as when Democrats controlled Congress during the administration’s first two years. The president’s now continually low approval ratings may also never climb back to where they were when he first took office, they admit.

But the president’s advisers counter that there is no real Democratic alternative capable of defeating Trump or another top Republican like DeSantis. That’s not to say Biden doesn’t think about his place in history. In 2021, the president took careful notes during an Oval Office meeting with historians that stretched

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 69 of 83

more than two hours — though those discussions focused more on threats to American democracy than Biden's personal legacy.

"This is a guy who essentially grew up in politics, has been involved at high levels of politics as senator, vice president and then president for many decades," said Allan Lichtman, a distinguished professor of history at American University in Washington. "He's someone who is especially concerned with his legacy."

New crew from US, Russia and UAE arrives at space station

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A new crew arrived at the International Space Station on Friday for a six-month mission, after overcoming trouble with one of the capsule's docking hooks.

The SpaceX capsule and its four astronauts had to wait 65 feet (20 meters) from the orbiting lab, as flight controllers in California scrambled to come up with a software fix.

It's the same problem that cropped up shortly after Thursday's liftoff. Although all 12 hooks on the capsule appeared to be fine, the switch for one of them malfunctioned. SpaceX Mission Control urged patience, telling the U.S., Russian and Emirati astronauts they could stay in this holding pattern for up to two hours.

Once new software commands were relayed, the astronauts received the go-ahead to proceed. In the end, the linkup occurred an hour late as the capsule and space station soared 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the coast of Somalia.

"After a brief scenic detour, welcome to the International Space Station," SpaceX Mission Control radioed. NASA officials agreed the delay added to the anticipation.

The new arrivals include United Arab Emirates' Sultan al-Neyadi, the first astronaut from the Arab world who will spend an extended time in space. Al-Neyadi is only the second person from the UAE to rocket into orbit.

"I can't be happier than this, seeing old friends in space, gathering as a big family. This is the essence of space exploration," al-Neyadi said upon entering the station. "The UAE is taking a great step toward pushing the boundaries of exploration."

Also flying up in the capsule: NASA's Stephen Bowen, a retired Navy submariner who made three space shuttle flights, and Warren "Woody" Hoburg, a space newbie and former research scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Andrei Fedyayev, a space rookie who's retired from the Russian Air Force.

SpaceX launched the four astronauts for NASA early Thursday from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Their flight was delayed a few days by a clogged filter in an ignition fluid line.

The UAE sent its first astronaut, Hazzaa al-Mansoori, to the space station in 2019 aboard a Russian rocket. It had been decades since the first Arab launched in 1985 during NASA's shuttle era. The longest spaceflight by any of them was about a week.

A UAE space official, Hamad al-Mansoori, called the station from Dubai to wish al-Neyadi and his crew a safe and successful mission and said it represented "a huge milestone."

The space station will be home to 11 people for the next week.

The newcomers will replace two NASA astronauts, a Japanese astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut who have been on the station since October and will return in their own SpaceX capsule next week. Two other Russians and an American traveled to the station in September on a Russian Soyuz capsule that had to be replaced because of a leak, pushing their mission to a full year.

Why purported cross-border attack ups ante in Ukraine war

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia has declared that saboteurs from Ukraine crossed into its territory and attacked border villages, a raid that fueled fears of an escalation in the war as it has dragged into a second year.

A day after Thursday's purported attack, details of what happened remain scarce and conflicting theories about possible perpetrators and their goals are still swirling.

Ukrainian officials have denied involvement and a presidential aide described it as a false-flag attack

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 70 of 83

used by the Kremlin to justify the war in Ukraine.

An obscure group of Russian nationalists who described themselves as part of the Ukrainian military claimed responsibility for the attack, but their status and goals remain unclear.

WHAT DID RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS SAY?

Russian authorities reported the attack on the villages of Lyubechane and Suchany in the Bryansk region early Thursday, saying that several dozen saboteurs infiltrated from Ukraine, killed two civilians and planted explosives.

Russian President Vladimir Putin canceled a scheduled trip to an event in southern Russia because of what he described as a "terrorist attack" deliberately targeting civilians.

Hours later, the Russian authorities said the intruders were pushed back into Ukraine and targeted by artillery fire.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak described the Russian claims as "a classic deliberate provocation," saying that Russia "wants to scare its people to justify the attack on another country and the growing poverty after the year of war." But Podolyak also alleged that the attack could be the work of Russian guerrillas who had rebelled against the Kremlin.

"The partisan movement in the Russian Federation is getting stronger and more aggressive," he said.

Ukraine's military intelligence representative, Andrii Cherniak, similarly denied Ukraine's involvement while also alleging that Russia is facing an uprising among its own disgruntled people.

"This was done by the Russians, Ukraine has nothing to do with it," he told The Associated Press.

Cherniak noted that a group calling itself the Russian Volunteer Corps had claimed responsibility for the attack.

WHAT IS THE RUSSIAN VOLUNTEER CORPS?

The Russian Volunteer Corps released a video featuring its members standing outside a post office in one of the villages and urging the Russians to rebel against Putin.

The group has described itself as "a volunteer formation" of Ukraine's armed forces. Little is known about the group, the number of its members and its ties, if any, with the Ukrainian military.

Russian bloggers identified some of the men who appeared in the video filmed in the village of Lyubechane as former members of Russia's radical nationalist groups who had moved to Ukraine several years ago.

Ukrainian New voice-NV news portal quoted Ilya Bogdanov, who identified himself as a member of the Corps, confirming that his colleagues who crossed into the Bryansk region were serving in the Ukrainian army.

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said that the Corps' claim could be a Ukrainian propaganda effort intended to embarrass Russia.

"It's quite possible if our propagandists believe it would be more efficient to cast it as a heroic feat and pretend that there is an entire corps of them," he told the AP.

Zhdanov noted that despite its flashy name, the group could include just a handful of Russians who signed a contract to fight alongside the Ukrainian military.

WHAT DO EXPERTS SAY?

Security analysts say it's hard to figure out quickly who was behind the attack.

Mark Cancian, a senior adviser for the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argued that Ukraine could have launched the attack to force Russia to pull back some of its forces from the front line to tighten the border.

"If I had to bet I would say it's the real thing," Cancian said. "I can see why Ukraine might want to do this. Most of the border is not contested at the moment, so Ukraine might want to be forcing Russia to guard more of its borders, maybe pull some forces out of the Donbass."

Eleonora Tafuro, a Russia expert at the ISPI think tank in Milan, said it appears possible the attack was carried out by the Russian Volunteer Corps to foment a sense of insecurity among the local population.

"The area is very exposed to fighting," she said. "It could be a message: 'You are vulnerable. You are exposed.'"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 71 of 83

Brad Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, warned against quickly rushing to conclusions, noting that the Kremlin could be interested in rallying the public as the war drags on.

"The Kremlin's information warfare efforts are meant to deceive Russians so they will believe that Russia is under grave threat and will be willing to fight and die in an illegal war of aggression," he said.

And William Courtney, who served as ambassador to Kazakhstan and Georgia and is now a senior fellow at the RAND Corp., a non-profit research institute, argued that the purported attack could be a false-flag operation.

"It has an engineered quality to it that was carried out to make Ukraine look like a terrorist state," Courtney said.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ATTACK?

The purported attack came as an embarrassment for Putin, who had told officials to tighten protection of the long and porous border with Ukraine earlier in the week.

It has caused outrage among Russian hawks, who harshly criticized the Kremlin for failing to protect the border and mount a quick and forceful retaliation.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the rogue millionaire who owns the Wagner Group military company, mocked the authorities for idly watching the crossing of another Russian red line. And Ramzan Kadyrov, the regional leader of Chechnya, has challenged the Kremlin to up the ante by introducing martial law.

Hawkish commentators and military bloggers have derided the Kremlin's indecision, calling for strikes on Ukraine's presidential office and the deployment of hit men to target top Ukrainian officials.

It remains unclear if Putin could use the incident to double down.

In his initial statement, the Russian leader cast the purported attack as proof that Russia did the right thing by invading Ukraine, but he didn't signal an intention to change the status of the operation or ramp up strikes.

On Friday, Putin had a video call with members of his Security Council, saying in opening remarks that it would focus on tightening protection against terrorist attacks but giving no details.

Belarus court jails Nobel laureate Bialiatki for 10 years

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — A court on Friday sentenced Belarus' top human rights advocate and one of the winners of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize to 10 years in prison, the latest move in a yearslong crackdown on dissent that has engulfed the ex-Soviet nation since 2020.

The harsh punishment of Ales Bialiatki and three of his colleagues was delivered in response to massive protests over a 2020 election that gave authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko a new term in office.

Lukashenko, a longtime ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin who backed Putin's invasion of Ukraine, has ruled the ex-Soviet country with an iron fist since 1994. More than 35,000 people were arrested, and thousands were beaten by police amid the protests, the largest ever held in the country.

Belarus is an outlier in its support of the year-old Russian invasion, with other countries in the region not backing Moscow publicly.

Bialiatki and his colleagues at the human rights center he founded were convicted of financing actions violating public order and smuggling, the center reported Friday.

Valiantsin Stefanovich was given a nine-year sentence; Uladzimir Labkovicz seven years; and Dzmitry Salauyou was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison.

During the trial, which took place behind closed doors, the 60-year-old Bialiatki and his colleagues were held in a caged enclosure in the courtroom. They have spent a year and nine months behind bars since their arrest.

In the photos from the courtroom released Friday by Belarus' state news agency Belta, Bialiatki, clad in black clothes, looked wan, but calm.

All four activists have maintained their innocence, the Human Rights Center Viasna said after the verdict.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 72 of 83

Viasna is Belarusian for "spring."

In his final address to the court, Bialiatski urged the authorities to "stop the civil war in Belarus." He said it became obvious to him from the case files that "the investigators were fulfilling the task they were given: to deprive Viasna human rights advocates of freedom at any cost, destroy Viasna and stop our work."

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called the verdict "appalling."

"We must do everything to fight against this shameful injustice (and) free them," Tsikhanouskaya tweeted Friday.

Memorial, the prominent Russian human rights group that shared the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize with Bialiatski and the Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties, in an online statement denounced the verdict as "an undisguised lawless reprisal for their human rights activities as part of a campaign of terror against civil society and the entire people of Belarus."

Oleg Orlov, co-chair of Memorial, attempted to fly to Minsk to support Bialiatski on Friday, but was prevented from boarding the flight, with airline representatives telling him Belarus had barred him from entering the country. "Crimes are better committed without witnesses," Orlov remarked.

Volodymyr Yavorsky from the Center for Civil Liberties told The Associated Press that Ukrainian human rights advocates express solidarity with Bialiatski and demand his release.

"This verdict shows that the highest level of repression in Europe is in Belarus," Yavorsky said. "Ukraine is currently resisting the very totalitarian model that the Kremlin tries to impose on the entire former Soviet space."

The punishment also elicited outrage in the West.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a nongovernmental human rights organization, said that it was "shocked by the cynicism behind the sentences."

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock labeled the trial and sentencing "a farce."

"This is just as much a daily disgrace as Lukashenko's support for Putin's war," Baerbock tweeted Friday. "We call for the end of political persecution and freedom for the more than 1,400 political prisoners."

Condemnations of the verdict also came from the Council of Europe rights watchdog and the U.N. Human Rights spokesperson.

Bialiatski is the fourth person in the 121-year history of the Nobel Prizes to receive the award while in prison or detention.

Betting on social media as a news destination for the young

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If young people are spending so much time on social media, it stands to reason that's a good place to reach them with news.

Operators of the News Movement are betting their business on that hunch. The company, which has been operating for more than a year, hopes to succeed despite journalism being littered with years of unsuccessful attempts to entice people in their 20s to become news consumers.

The brainchild of former Dow Jones executives, the News Movement is using a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

"You really have to stay humble and stay open to different trends and ideas," said Ramin Beheshti, president and a founder of the organization with former Dow Jones CEO Will Lewis. "We've built a newsroom that reflects the audience that we're trying to go after."

Among the newsrooms the company is producing TikTok videos for is The Associated Press. The AP has provided office space for the company and Lewis is vice chairman of its board of directors.

Some of the content would startle a news traditionalist.

Recognizing his friends appreciated calming videos, one staff member created an "explainer" on the midterm elections for Snapchat that used video of a horse being groomed, pizza being made and flowers growing while an offscreen voice discusses politics.

In "Get Ready with Me," two women prepare for work while talking about some things in the news.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 73 of 83

There are more typical offerings: video of the earthquake in Turkey, for example, and reports on President Biden's proposals on abortion and social media. Explainer stories take a step back to tell people why something is news.

Some stories aren't really news at all, but stem from personal experience. One New York-based journalist who wondered why police didn't immediately jump onto subway tracks to save someone who fell looked into it to find they were working to stop trains.

Curious about why stories about odd things done by Florida residents are a staple of news coverage, a staff member made a TikTok video showing that it's partly because police there often release photos and details about incidents faster than other states.

There's also relatable content that provides a service, of a sort: asking young people on the street some of the excuses they've used to break a date.

"News isn't always what you think it is," said Jessica Coen, U.S. executive editor, who's had leadership roles at Mashable, Morning Brew and The Cut.

The News Movement is not trying to be an aggregator, and cover every headline, Coen said. "We're trying to cover issues where we can provide context and clarity," she said.

Story formats differ to reflect where they are placed. Most TikTok videos are about a minute, while a meaty YouTube piece about women's safety and how London police react to assault cases ran for nearly 14 minutes.

Some 60% of people in Gen Z, or young adults up to their mid-20s, say they get news through social media, according to a study by Oliver Wyman and the News Movement. Other studies show people in Gen Z have a lower opinion of traditional news outlets than their elders.

Given this, the News Movement believes that efforts by news organizations to entice young people to their own sites or apps are tough sells.

"News shouldn't feel like work," Beheshti said. "It should be part of your daily consumption."

One person who sampled some of the News Movement's TikTok stories offered a mixed review, saying they often seemed to emphasize flash over substance. They need to "read the room" better, said Gabriel Glynn-Habron, a 21-year-old college student from Asheville, N.C. who is studying journalism.

"I do appreciate the effort," he said. "It's part of what the news media should do more — just show the effort."

Often, those who try to appeal to young people are unsuccessful because they really don't understand who they're trying to reach, said Linda Ellerbee, whose "Nick News" programs for the Nickelodeon network in the 1990s offered a template for success. It's a mistake to think Gen Z is apathetic; the generation led the way in protesting George Floyd's death at the hands of police, she said.

"Most attempts to try to deliver news to young people fail because they underestimate the intelligence of their audience," Ellerbee said. "They talk down to them. They assume that because they're young, they're dumb."

One place where Ellerbee and the News Movement agree is in how many people are frustrated by traditional news because they feel like they're getting only a piece of a story, or dipping in to a movie somewhere in the middle. That argues for more explainers.

The company's research found that while young news consumers fact-check information more readily than older peers, they're also more susceptible to believing misinformation.

Since news is shaky as a business, the News Movement has made diversification a part of its model from the start. It will work with traditional news organizations and help them build social media teams.

The News Movement advises brands on how to reach young consumers and has bought the Recount, which makes video content about American politics for social media and continues to operate as a separate unit.

"We can't have one way of making money," Beheshti said.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 74 of 83

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Yes, you are legally required to pay your taxes

CLAIM: There are no laws requiring people to pay their taxes.

THE FACTS: Title 26 of the U.S. Code requires individuals to pay income taxes. Faulty legal arguments claiming there's no such law have been around for decades but have not been successful in court. With April's federal income tax deadline approaching, social media users are sharing a short video compiling interviews from a number of purported experts, including a tax lawyer, a tax advisor and a former IRS agent — all of whom claim they discovered through their own research that Americans aren't obligated to pay income taxes because it isn't spelled out in law. But federal officials and tax experts dismiss the arguments as frivolous and say the law is clear. Raphael Tulino, a spokesperson for the IRS, directed the AP to a website it maintains to address many of the common claims made by those opposed to following tax laws. "The requirement to pay taxes is not voluntary," the IRS' response on the website reads. "Section 1 of the Internal Revenue Code clearly imposes a tax on the taxable income of individuals, estates, and trusts, as determined by the tables set forth in that section." The IRS also notes that the obligation to pay income taxes is described in section 6151, which requires taxpayers to submit payment with their tax returns. Jonathan Siegel, a professor at George Washington University's law school agreed with the agency's assessment. "No, there isn't even a grain of truth to the theories in the video, nor does it contain any new or surprising arguments," he wrote in an email, directing the AP to his personal website breaking down income tax myths. Federal tax laws are contained in the Internal Revenue Code, also known as Title 26 of the United States Code, Siegel explains on his website. The U.S. Code is the compilation of all the laws passed by Congress. Garrett Watson, a senior policy analyst at the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan tax policy research group in Washington, said tax protesters continue to misinterpret the IRS' use of the phrase "voluntary compliance" as meaning paying taxes and filing tax returns isn't legally required. But the term refers to the notion that individuals are responsible for determining and paying the correct amount of tax and filling out the necessary forms, rather than the government determining the tax for them. Watson also noted that legal arguments against paying taxes have been around for decades but have seen little success in courts. In fact, one of the people featured in a widely circulating version of the social media video is Sherry Jackson, a former IRS employee and tax preparer who was convicted of willfully and intentionally failing to file tax returns.

— Associated Press writer Philip Marcelo in New York contributed this report.

US has provided money, not just equipment, to Ukraine

CLAIM: The U.S. is not providing cash to Ukraine; it only supports the country through donated military equipment.

THE FACTS: While the U.S. is indeed providing weapons and equipment to Ukraine, it has also provided billions in financial assistance to the country following Russia's invasion. Former Congressman Adam Kinzinger, a Republican from Illinois, made the inaccurate suggestion recently while taking aim at Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has been critical of U.S. aid to Ukraine. "People like MTG in re: #Ukraine. The aid is not pallets of cash. It's in the form of military equipment, assigned a value, that is donated," Kinzinger wrote in a tweet. "That equipment is usually older and would be replaced in the next few years anyway, at a cost. I'm sure she doesn't understand this." But while the U.S. has indeed sent Bradley vehicles, ammunition, weapons and other equipment to Ukraine during its war with Russia, the support doesn't stop there. "We're not providing only military assistance," Tom Graham, a distinguished fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations with expertise on U.S. foreign policy and Ukraine, told the AP. "We are obviously providing financial assistance — budgetary support — and there's humanitarian assistance as well." Between January 2022 and January 2023, the U.S. committed more than \$26 billion to Ukraine in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 75 of 83

financial assistance, according to data compiled by the Ukraine Support Tracker at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, a German think tank. That's about a third of the roughly \$77 billion in total aid noted by Kiel, including humanitarian and military assistance, pledged by the U.S. government. The numbers represent money promised, not entirely distributed. Another tally from the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget places the total amount of aid approved by Congress in 2022 for supporting the Ukrainian government and allies at about \$113 billion. That includes about \$27 billion in economic support funds, \$7.9 billion for international disaster assistance and \$6.6 billion to support and relocate refugees. The U.S. Agency for International Development has in releases and a report to Congress outlined how budgetary support to the Ukrainian government has been used. Some of the funding has been spent, for example, on social assistance payments and salaries for health care workers, first responders and educators. It also helps cover pensions and support Ukrainians displaced by the war. Still, the largest bucket of overall U.S. aid committed to Ukraine — more than \$46 billion, according to Kiel's tracker — is military support. Members of Congress have questioned how closely the U.S. is tracking its aid to Ukraine to ensure that it is not subject to fraud or ending up in the wrong hands. The Pentagon's inspector general told lawmakers at a Tuesday hearing that his office has found no evidence of such corruption or wrongdoing, but cautioned that investigations are only in their early stages. An AP inquiry to Kinzinger through his group, Country First, was not returned.

— Associated Press writer Angelo Fichera in Philadelphia contributed this report.

WHO 'pandemic treaty' draft doesn't sign over US sovereignty

CLAIM: A legally-binding World Health Organization "pandemic treaty" will give the organization the authority to control U.S. policies during a pandemic, including those on vaccines, lockdowns, school closures and more.

THE FACTS: The voluntary treaty, which is in draft form and still far from ratification, does not overrule any nation's ability to pass individual pandemic-related policies. As the WHO met Monday to discuss the first draft of the treaty, social media users misrepresented the scope of the document to suggest signing onto it would cede U.S. rights to the international body. "Biden is about to give the China-controlled W.H.O. power to control the United States. This will cover lockdowns, supply chains, surveillance, and 'false news,'" claimed one Instagram post referring to the treaty draft. But this interpretation of what the treaty would do is incorrect, multiple experts agree. "These claims are utterly false," said Lawrence Gostin, a Georgetown University law professor and director of the university's WHO Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law. He's been involved in the treaty's draft process. "The United States retains sovereignty to set its own domestic public health policies," he added. The "zero draft" is designed to protect the world from future pandemics, according to the WHO. The text lays out a vision for building greater equity and effectiveness in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response across the globe through international cooperation. It encourages parties to develop a mechanism to ensure equitable allocation of pandemic-related products such as vaccines and tests while committing to quick and transparent reporting of clinical research and trial results, sharing of information on emerging health threats and recognition of WHO as the coordination authority on international health work. However, it does not overrule any nation's individual health or domestic policies, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services confirmed in a statement to the AP. "It is false to claim that the World Health Organization has now, or will have by virtue of these activities, any authority to direct U.S. health policy or national health emergency response actions," the agency wrote. "The WHO has no such enforcement mechanisms, and its non-binding recommendations to member states are just that: non-binding." In fact, a section of the draft labeled "Sovereignty" clearly says that states have "the sovereign right to determine and manage their approach to public health," "pursuant to their own policies and legislation." Nowhere in the 30-page document are the words lockdown, closures, contact tracing or online speech mentioned, nor are mentions of specific citizen surveillance systems. Further, while the treaty, if ratified, would be considered a legally-binding document, the WHO has no enforcement power, said Dr. David Freedman, professor emeritus of infectious diseases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 76 of 83

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in New York contributed this report.

Manufacturers need FDA's approval to alter COVID-19 vaccines

CLAIM: Up to 49% of the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines can be changed without the approval of the Federal Drug Administration because they are still manufactured under emergency use authorization.

THE FACTS: As part of the emergency use authorization process for vaccines, the FDA stipulates in letters to manufacturers that no changes can be made to the description of the product or manufacturing process without notifying and gaining approval from the FDA. The erroneous claims spread online following an early February episode of an online program hosted by political commentator Rochelle "Silk" Richardson, Dr. Sherri Tenpenny, who has been critical of vaccines, stated that emergency use authorizations let drug manufacturers change up to half of the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines without approval. Neither Richardson nor Tenpenny responded to emails from the AP. An emergency use authorization, or EUA, allows for the use of unapproved medical products, or unapproved uses of approved medical products, during public health crises. The first two doses of Pfizer and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines are no longer under EUAs for certain age groups, having been approved by the FDA. EUAs still apply to COVID-19 vaccines produced by Johnson & Johnson and Novavax. But even if a vaccine is available only under an EUA, manufacturers must receive FDA approval before making changes to the product. "The information circulating on social media that asserts manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccines can change up to 49% of the ingredients in their products without FDA approval is completely false," FDA spokesperson Abby Capobianco wrote in an email to the AP. "No changes can be made to COVID-19 vaccines used under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) without prior evaluation and authorization from FDA." As stipulated in the U.S. Code's Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, EUAs come with certain conditions. Vaccine manufacturers are issued a letter of authorization upon receiving an EUA that details the process for making changes to their product. In this case of COVID-19 vaccines, it states: "No changes will be implemented to the description of the product, manufacturing process, facilities, or equipment without notification to and concurrence by the FDA." Letters containing this language that were issued to Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax for their COVID-19 vaccines are publicly available on the FDA's website. Aaron Lottes, an associate professor of engineering practice at Purdue University who researches regulatory science, confirmed that these requirements mean that the COVID-19 vaccines, even those available under an EUA, cannot be adjusted at will.

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report.

Need a Lenten fish fry? There's an interactive map for that

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

WEXFORD, Pa. (AP) — By the time the doors open at 4:30 p.m., a boisterous line of 50 hungry people is looping around the gymnasium foyer at Blessed Francis Seelos Academy. Their objective: to occupy tables on the basketball court and, for the parish's first time since the pandemic descended in 2020, sit down for an old-fashioned Lenten fish fry.

Many patrons are members of the flock — St. Aidan Catholic Parish north of Pittsburgh — and greet each other as longtime friends. But these days, newcomers figure in the mix, too. And some arrive in a way that unites two rich seams of western Pennsylvania culture — tradition and innovation.

The fish fry, a long-established Friday staple during Lent, is roaring back from COVID with an assist from something decidedly newfangled: an interactive map built by local volunteer coders that points the way to scores of churches, fire halls and other places that offer battered and breaded seafood for the taking. In the process, the new Pittsburgh is helping point the way to the old.

"I like to think that this project helps people get excited about these very old cultural and culinary traditions," says Hollen Barmer, a Tennessee transplant who came to Pittsburgh two decades ago and started the map in 2012 for her fish-fry-loving self.

"Fish fries," Barmer likes to say, "are an adventure."

TWO PARTS OF PITTSBURGH

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 77 of 83

At this moment in its history, Pittsburgh is working to blend its fabled industrial yesterdays with a 21st-century economy based increasingly on services and innovation — something the map project reflects.

"Allowing people to interact with something traditional through technology, it adds an element to it that appeals to a different group of people," says Ellie Newman, a member and the former leader of the non-profit Code for Pittsburgh, which works with Barmer to operate the map.

During Lent, thousands of western Pennsylvanians — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — stream into Friday afternoon fish fries. Some pick up for takeout. Some chow down right there — fish and shrimp, fries and cole slaw and mac and cheese, sometimes pierogies or a local noodle-and-cabbage delicacy called haluski.

Western Pennsylvania loves the past, but the fish fry itself is steered by some very modern forces.

Long a tradition in American cities with Catholic communities, particularly around the Great Lakes, fish fries surged in popularity after the Second Vatican Council essentially told the faithful in 1966 that the practice of not eating meat on Fridays was optional — except during Lent, the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. That made February to April a concentrated period of fish consumption.

Then came the steel industry's foundering in the 1970s and 1980s. That upended the region, stole elements of civic pride and whipped up a fervor for traditions that shouted, loudly, "Pittsburgh!"

"There was a sense of destabilization — of 'Who are we?' And people tended to center around things that symbolized the community," says Leslie Przybylek, senior curator at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh.

Food touchstones like fish fries, pierogies and the "cookie table" — a western Pennsylvania wedding staple — became signifiers of identity. At the same time, technological advances in frozen food and the growth of fast food were making fish more accessible. The longtime presence of powerhouse regional fish distributor Robert Wholey & Co. also honed local tastes.

"People in Pennsylvania are used to good fish," says Bill Yanicko, a funeral director in suburban West Deer Township who runs the community fish fry at Our Lady of the Lakes Parish. "They really don't want to see a cookie-cutter triangle fish."

Overlay all that with a robust interactive map (and pent-up pandemic energy) and you have a potent mix that helps people in western Pennsylvania overcome the geographic hesitations of the region's hills and valleys, and go out searching for fish.

"Putting it in a digital frame and encouraging people to engage with it, it adds a level of vocabulary to it that makes a difference," says Przybylek, who favors the fry at the Swissvale Fire Department, just outside the city. "Different generations engage in stories in different ways. It literally takes a food tradition and puts it into a platform that speaks to them on a different level."

MAPPING DELICIOUSNESS

Today, while churches remain a mainstay of Lenten fish fries, fire departments give them a run for their money — of which there is lots at play. Both entities use fish fries as volunteer-staffed fundraisers to offset budget challenges, and each works hard to stand out. "It takes a little army to make this happen," says Keith Young, a retired businessman who helps with the St. Aidan fry.

Code for Pittsburgh, a group designed to create places where "civics and technology meet," is all-volunteer as well. Its varied projects include a food access map of Pittsburgh and a cartographic catalog that helps track vehicle-pedestrian accidents.

The volunteer coding sessions held to build the fish-fry map are — how to say it? — fish-forward. Swedish Fish candies are set out. Bowls of Goldfish crackers are distributed. Radiohead's "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi" plays.

"It's kind of the perfect marriage of things — a team of super-nerdy people who know all about maps and know all about coding, and fish fries, which are just so Pittsburgh," Newman says. "I don't know of any other city that has this kind of obsession. ... As soon as people in the group heard about it, they were instantly hooked on it."

Pittsburgh's growing reputation as an innovation hub — with companies from Google to Uber establishing beachheads here — is sometimes cast as recent. But innovation lies at the heart of the region's history. The steel industry that built it into an industrial powerhouse was a cutting-edge transformation of its day, and advances ranging from early movies to the polio vaccine have roots here.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 78 of 83

David Schorr, an IT analyst from the Pittsburgh suburb of West Mifflin, is known locally as “The Codfather” for his very public affinity to — and experience with — fish fries. He knows where to go for everything — including the places to secure, as he puts it, “handmade pierogies personally pinched by church ladies.” The interactive map, he says, opens myriad possibilities of fish-fry forays.

“It makes it a treasure hunt: ‘Oh — let’s go to that neighborhood,’” Schorr says. “They go, ‘Oh, look, this one’s on my way home from work.’ Or ‘I have to go visit Aunt Edna and we’ll be driving right by it.’ Or, ‘Oh, they have sauerkraut soup.’ Or, ‘I don’t like pollock. This one has cod. I’m going there.’”

The map, Barmer and Newman say, is designed to do precisely that — turn the western Pennsylvania fish-fry culture into an adventure stamped onto the landscape that fosters community engagement and understanding for natives and newcomers alike.

“As things become more globalized and cities tend to look more and more the same, there’s something appealing about coming to a place like Pittsburgh that still has things like this that have very deep roots in the community,” Newman says. “Things may change around you every year, but you know that every year you can go to your same church basement or fire hall and get that fish sandwich.”

In dry West, farmers balk at idling land to save water

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tom Brundy, an alfalfa grower in California’s Imperial Valley, thinks farmers reliant on the shrinking Colorado River can do more to save water and use it more efficiently. That’s why he’s installed water sensors and monitors to prevent waste on nearly two-thirds of his 3,000 acres.

But one practice that’s off-limits for Brundy is fallowing — leaving fields unplanted to spare the water that would otherwise irrigate crops. It would save plenty of water, Brundy said, but threatens both farmers and rural communities economically.

“It’s not very productive because you just don’t farm,” Brundy said.

Many Western farmers feel the same, even as a growing sense is emerging that some fallowing will have to be part of the solution to the increasingly desperate drought in the West, where the Colorado River serves 40 million people.

“Given the volume of water that is used by agriculture in the Colorado River system, you can’t stabilize the system without reductions in agriculture,” said Tom Buschatzke, director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources. “That’s just math.”

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is looking at paying farmers to idle some fields, many in the vast Imperial Valley in California and Yuma County in Arizona that grow much of the nation’s winter vegetables and rely on the river. Funding would come from \$4 billion set aside for Western drought aid in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Federal officials and major irrigators have been negotiating for months. Neither side has disclosed details of the negotiations or said how much money is being sought or offered.

U.S. Sen. John Hickenlooper, a Colorado Democrat, said fallowing has to be on the table. The challenge is figuring out fair payments when farmers work land of varying quality and plant crops of varying value, he said.

“Water in certain parts of the Colorado River basin is worth more than water in other parts. And somehow the Bureau of Reclamation has got to address that in a way that is fair, or at least perceived to be,” Hickenlooper said in an interview.

Agriculture uses between 70% and 80% of the Colorado River’s water, and ideas for reducing that have long been contentious. Farmers and the irrigators who serve them say their water use is justified since nearly the entire country eats the produce grown in the region, as well as meat from cattle fed on the grasses grown locally.

Water officials from cities and other states with less demand from farms say agriculture’s large take from the river allows wasteful farming practices to continue even as water grows scarcer. They note that Western water law, which gives preference to more senior users, allows farmers with those rights to grow

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 79 of 83

thirsty crops in converted desert even as key reservoirs fed by the Colorado dip to all-time lows.

Tina Shields is water manager for the Imperial Irrigation District, and advises farmers to first save water through efficiencies like drip irrigation, choosing less water-intensive crops and using water sensors to cut waste. But she acknowledged that fallowing will have to be part of the equation as states heed a call by the federal government to cut their use by 15% to 30%.

"As much as we don't like fallowing," Shields said, joking that the practice is known as the "F-word down here," she said some amount will be needed to conserve the additional 250,000 acre-feet of water the district has said it would save — or roughly 8% of its allotment from the Colorado River. (An acre-foot of water is enough to submerge one acre of land with a foot of water and roughly how much two to three U.S. households use per year.)

In the Imperial Valley, leaving fields idle to save water isn't a new idea.

For 15 years, Imperial Irrigation District ran fallowing programs as part of a historic water transfer deal it cut with San Diego in 2003. The programs expired in 2017. Nearly 300,000 acres of farmland were fallowed, conserving 1.8 million acre-feet of water and costing \$161 million in payments to farmers, the district said.

The Colorado River is in worse shape now, but in Imperial Valley, memories of that program linger. And farmers want far more than they were paid back then.

Larry Cox, who has grown produce and grasses in the Imperial Valley for decades, said he idled a few hundred of his 4,000 acres back then. He used the payments to buy sprinkler pipes and other equipment to make his irrigation systems more efficient. But he also let go between 5% and 10% of his workforce of irrigators, farm hands and tractor drivers.

Today, he worries about the effect of fallowing on rural communities. Besides the potential economic losses to farmers, the businesses that supply them with tires, fertilizer, gas and other needs are affected.

"It damages our community as a whole," he said.

Many farmers also fear that once land is taken out of production, it won't be farmed again. Part of the fear comes from how water rights work in the West, but also because fallowing can degrade soil quality and make it difficult to return the land to production later.

Paul Brierley, executive director of the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture at the University of Arizona, said disrupting farm operations has downstream effects.

"Farming is just like any other business," Brierley said. "They've got capital invested, they've got employees, they've got markets for their products. You can't just farm part of the time and not the rest."

A failed proposal from Yuma County farmers last year showed how difficult it may be for federal officials and the farmers they've targeted to reach a deal. In that case, the farmers proposed the government pay them around \$1,500 per acre-foot of water not used for four years, but the deal went nowhere.

A measure of how much Reclamation is willing to pay came in a separate offer made to farmers in Lower Basin states — Arizona, California and Nevada — for \$400 per acre-foot.

Buschatzke said farmers in Arizona felt even the \$1,500 offer was lower than they deserved based on what they make on the produce — let alone how important it is to consumers, he said.

"It is certainly a business, but they also see it as doing a lot of good for the entire nation with what they grow out there in Yuma," Buschatzke said.

Since farmers in Imperial Valley hold senior rights to Colorado River water, mandating water cuts there is almost impossible without inviting litigation.

"We can't make our growers participate," Shields said. "We have to provide them with a business decision."

At New Mexico St, a meltdown that runs beyond basketball

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

LAS CRUCES, N.M. (AP) — Of all the troubling video made public over a year of crisis at New Mexico State — from the brawl involving basketball players to the fatal shooting of a 19-year-old, allegedly by one of those players, to the police interviews with the coach afterward — one 42-minute log of footage might best explain how the school is in the mess it is today.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 80 of 83

In that video, captured on police body cam, an officer is interviewing the university's \$500,000-a-year chancellor, Dan Arvizu, and his wife, Sheryl Arvizu. The officer had been called to the couple's house to resolve a dispute that came out of Sheryl's suspicion her husband was having an affair with a staff member at New Mexico State.

Dan Arvizu denied the affair. Sheryl Arvizu ended up being booked into jail on a battery charge that was later dismissed. Officials at the school's Office of Institutional Equity looked into the allegations for possible conflict-of-interest issues, though there was no report filed.

During these fraught days at New Mexico State, where the once-treasured men's basketball program has been shelved for the season after that fatal shooting and a gruesome allegation of locker-room hazing, the Arvizu police video is a reminder of who is ultimately responsible at a university that has, in many eyes, become unhinged in areas well beyond basketball. The Associated Press spoke to more than a dozen people affiliated with the university, many of whom expressed deep concerns with leadership at the school. Some said they did not want their names used because they feared retribution.

"People are embarrassed," said Jamie Bronstein, a history professor who also serves as vice chair of NMSU's faculty senate. "People feel terrible for the students."

In a letter sent to "Our NMSU Community" after the AP published this story, Arvizu acknowledged that his family had been through "a deeply personal situation."

"Importantly, there is no truth to the allegations made that evening," the letter said. "It was a low point for me, and since that time, my wife and I have worked to rebuild our relationship. I am confident this matter has not impacted my ability to lead our university."

Questions some people are asking on this 14,000-student campus, where some of the adobe-colored dorms and classroom buildings are a short walk from livestock barns, have as much to do with school leadership as they do with the basketball program.

There have been seven different presidents, interim presidents and chancellors over the past 15 years at the second-biggest university in New Mexico. In addition to its isolation — set near the jagged mountains of southern New Mexico, NMSU is some 400 miles from the nearest major media market in Phoenix — the school is unique in that its student body is 63% Hispanic and more than a quarter of the students are the first members of their family to attend college.

"What makes NMSU such a special place is the huge opportunity to change students' and their families' lives by increasing our students' social mobility," business professor Jim Hoffman said. "This is why excellent leadership, thoughtful decision making and wise use of (limited) resources are so important."

No matter the disadvantages, New Mexico State has always been able to make a name for itself every March thanks to a men's basketball program that traditionally thrives on the strength of players and coaches who don't always take the traditional route to Division I. But this year, the program disintegrated.

The unraveling can be traced to an NMSU football game last Oct. 15 in which a handful of the school's basketball players got into a brawl with students from rival New Mexico. Video of the melee shows junior forward Mike Peake among those throwing punches.

No police report was filed that night, and five weeks after the fight, the players headed to Albuquerque for one of the season's most anticipated games, against the Lobos. It was there that Peake broke curfew and went to the dormitory complex of one of the students involved in the fight at the football stadium.

Video from the apartment parking lot shows Peake being attacked with a baseball bat before exchanging gunfire with the student, Brandon Travis. Both men fall. Peake was taken to the hospital with leg wounds that required surgery. Travis later died from his gunshot wounds. Peake, who was acting in self-defense, has not been charged with a crime. Police video shows Peake in a hospital bed after the shooting asking to get his gun back because "that's my only weapon." Guns are not permitted on New Mexico State's campus or on school-related road trips.

The morning after the shootings, players and coaches were loaded onto a bus to head back to Las Cruces, only to be stopped on Interstate 25 by police, who were still piecing together details from the night before.

The Aggies continued to play for nearly three more months. On Feb. 12, Arvizu canceled the season

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 81 of 83

after allegations surfaced about three players ganging up on a teammate in what a police report said included a possible incident of criminal sexual contact. Two days later, Arvizu fired the coach, Greg Heiar. The player who made the allegations said similar hazing incidents had been occurring since summer. Arvizu said he was never made aware of the hazing. School spokesman Justin Bannister said school policy calls for employees to report misconduct to the Title IX office and that the university is "looking at additional support systems" for the future.

At a news conference after those moves, the chancellor said he was sure the "despicable acts" and potentially illegal behavior were confined strictly to the basketball team.

"There will be consequences," Arvizu said.

Both the shooting and hazing incidents are being sorted out by internal and third-party investigations. Some observers are skeptical they will ever get the full story.

"I feel that we've all been left in the dark," said one longtime Aggies fan, Amy Rohr.

The chancellor's notion that the problems have been walled off in the basketball program is hardly a consensus around campus.

Current and former employees the AP interviewed described scenarios in which top-level administrators refused to hold themselves or others accountable, both inside and outside the athletic department. One said the "guardrails" designed to protect students and faculty — from everything from retaliation for whistleblowing to sexual improprieties — had all but disappeared.

"Because there's so much churn in our upper administration, we never get to the point of hammering out who is actually accountable for upholding policies," Bronstein said.

In one instance, a lawsuit last year filed by a Jane Doe alleges a longtime professor with ties to the athletic department "harassed and groomed female students for years, coercing them into sexual relations and bragging about the same" while school officials looked the other way. The plaintiff alleges she was sexually assaulted by the professor.

Another case alleges that two professors who blew the whistle about hiring practices they claimed flouted human-resource policies had their complaints intercepted by an administrator involved in the hiring, who then pushed for disciplinary cases to be opened against those professors. One has been demoted from his deanship.

Bronstein and others told of the Office of Institutional Equity, which handles Title IX and other discrimination complaints and should have been on the front lines of the hazing allegations, as being marginalized, with administrators ignoring some recommendations produced by the office and putting others off.

In his letter, Arvizu said the school has added staff to the OIE, and that whistleblowers are protected under state law.

"And, under NMSU's Administrative Rules and Procedures, retaliation is explicitly prohibited," Arvizu wrote.

Some of the dissatisfaction among faculty was resolved last year, when President John Floros stepped down and Provost Carol Parker was fired in the wake of a resolution of no confidence submitted by the faculty senate.

Among the complaints in that resolution were allegations of misappropriation of funds, unethical hiring and promotion practices and a long list of consequences of the "broader impacts of systemic failure of leadership."

Parker is currently suing the university. Floros was able to keep his \$450,000-a-year salary. The approximately \$950,000 in annual salary for Floros and Arvizu was nearly triple what former New Mexico Gov. Garry Carruthers made in his dual role as chancellor and president for five years ending in 2018.

Arvizu's five-year contract runs out in June. In December, regents made the decision not to renew it, leaving NMSU to face the basketball crisis with no president, a provost position in flux and a lame-duck chancellor.

The athletic director's job seems secure: When Arvizu dismantled basketball for the season, he went out of his way to back Mario Moccia, who is in his 10th year as AD.

One under-the-radar move the administrators made came in 2019 when they ended a policy that stated

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 82 of 83

student-athletes would be dismissed if found guilty of (or pleaded no contest to) a felony. That allowed one player to remain on the team at the time the rules were changed. It also furthered New Mexico State's reputation as a place where athletes and coaches get second chances — perhaps without accountability.

At his news conference, Arvizu defended the rules changes that led to the new policy, while Moccia defended his hiring record, conceding that "nobody bats a thousand." The AD insisted the vetting process for Heiar was solid.

It was the first head-coaching job at a Division I school for the 47-year-old Heiar. Among those he had worked for over two decades as an assistant included Larry Eustachy, Will Wade, Gregg Marshall and Chris Jans. All have endured embarrassing episodes that cost them their jobs. Jans, who left New Mexico State for Mississippi State after last season, came to Las Cruces shortly after he was fired from Bowling Green when a video surfaced of him slapping an unidentified woman on the butt at a bar.

One of Heiar's assistant coaches, Edmond Pryor, lasted less than three months after being arrested on allegations of forgery. Another of Moccia's hires is women's basketball coach Jody Adams, who was accused of being abusive toward players when she coached Wichita State.

For decades, though, New Mexico State has not been shy about taking risks to advance its sports programs. One of the program's glory eras came in the 1990s when coach Neil McCarthy embroiled a team filled with junior-college transfers in an academic scandal that ended up costing him his job.

Even after he was fired, basketball kept putting this school on the map come March. The Aggies have been to March Madness 11 times since McCarthy left after the 1997 season, always as a double-digit seed with a reputation for giving the big boys trouble. Though the Aggies never moved away from taking players with riskier academic records, the school has not been charged with a major NCAA infraction since 2001.

Regardless, there won't be any postseason this year, and it's anybody's guess as to who, or what, will be left from the team that was 9-15 when the hazing allegations arose and the season was called off. Two players quit shortly after the hazing allegations. Moccia said there would be basketball next season, though the status of the players remaining was up in the air.

"The entire program has caught on fire, and the fire has burned down everything, and all that's left are the roots," said Jim Paul, the former NMSU AD who fired McCarthy.

Christopher Hamilton, a freshman who was walking across campus the day Heiar's firing came down, said the whole situation was "just disappointing, and it's sad that it's your school."

He said he hoped to go to basketball games again someday. But on a recent Saturday, when the Aggies had been scheduled to play a home game at the Pan-Am Center, all anyone could see on the hardwood was the cartoon drawing of the school's mascot at halfcourt: the mustachioed, gun-toting cowboy known as "Pistol Pete."

Today in History: MARCH 4, Franklin Roosevelt takes office

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 4, the 63rd day of 2023. There are 302 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as America's 32nd president.

On this date:

In 1789, the Constitution of the United States went into effect as the first Federal Congress met in New York. (The lawmakers then adjourned for lack of a quorum.)

In 1863, the Idaho Territory was created.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term of office; with the end of the Civil War in sight, Lincoln declared: "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

In 1917, Republican Jeannette Rankin of Montana took her seat as the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, the same day President Woodrow Wilson took his oath of office for a second term (it being a Sunday, a private ceremony was held inside the U.S. Capitol; a second, public swearing-in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 4, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 239 ~ 83 of 83

took place the next day).

In 1966, John Lennon of The Beatles was quoted in the London Evening Standard as saying, "We're more popular than Jesus now," a comment that caused an angry backlash in the United States.

In 1981, a jury in Salt Lake City convicted Joseph Paul Franklin, an avowed racist and serial killer, of violating the civil rights of two Black men, Ted Fields and David Martin, who'd been shot to death. (Franklin received two life sentences for this crime; he was executed in 2013 for the 1977 murder of a Jewish man, Gerald Gordon.)

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation on the Iran-Contra affair, acknowledging that his overtures to Iran had "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

In 1994, in New York, four extremists were convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than a thousand. Actor-comedian John Candy died in Durango, Mexico, at age 43.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment at work can be illegal even when the offender and victim are of the same gender.

In 2015, the Justice Department cleared Darren Wilson, a white former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, but also issued a scathing report calling for sweeping changes in city law enforcement practices.

In 2018, former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a bench in the southwestern English city of Salisbury; both survived what British authorities said was a murder attempt using a nerve agent.

In 2020, federal health officials investigated a suburban Seattle nursing home at the center of a coronavirus outbreak.

Ten years ago: Cardinals from around the world gathered inside the Vatican for their first round of meetings before the conclave to elect the next pope, following the retirement of Benedict XVI. Kenya's presidential election drew millions of eager voters, but the balloting was marred by deadly violence. (Uhuru Kenyatta beat seven other presidential candidates with 50.07 percent of the vote.) Five-time Grand Slam singles champion Martina Hingis headed the 2013 class for the International Tennis Hall of Fame; also named were Cliff Drysdale, Charlie Pasarell, and Ion Tiriac.

Five years ago: "The Shape of Water" won four Oscars including best picture; the top prize was announced by Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway a year after they were caught up in the erroneous announcement that "La La Land" and not "Moonlight" had won for best picture. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia would "never" extradite any of the 13 Russians who'd been indicted by the United States for election-meddling.

One year ago: Russian troops seized the biggest nuclear power plant in Europe after a middle-of-the-night attack that set it on fire and briefly raised worldwide fears of a catastrophe in the most chilling turn in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine to that point. A jury cleared an Amtrak engineer of all charges stemming from a derailment that left eight people dead and hundreds injured in Philadelphia in 2015.

Today's birthdays: Actor Paula Prentiss is 85. Movie director Adrian Lyne is 82. Singer Shakin' Stevens is 75. Author James Ellroy is 75. Former Energy Secretary Rick Perry is 73. Singer Chris Rea is 72. Actor/rock singer-musician Ronn Moss is 71. Actor Kay Lenz is 70. Musician Emilio Estefan is 70. Movie director Scott Hicks is 70. Actor Catherine O'Hara is 69. Actor Mykelti (MY'-kul-tee) Williamson is 66. Actor Patricia Heaton is 65. Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., is 65. Actor Steven Weber is 62. Rock musician Jason Newsted is 60. Actor Stacy Edwards is 58. Rapper Grand Puba is 57. Rock singer Evan Dando (Lemonheads) is 56. Actor Patsy Kensit is 55. Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., is 55. Gay rights activist Chaz Bono is 54. Actor Andrea Bendewald is 53. Actor Nick Stabile (stah-BEEL') is 53. Country singer Jason Sellers is 52. Jazz musician Jason Marsalis is 46. Actor Jessica Heap is 40. Actor Scott Michael Foster is 38. TV personality Whitney Port is 38. Actor Audrey Esparza is 37. Actor Margo Harshman is 37. Actor Josh Bowman is 35. Actor Andrea Bowen is 33. Actor Jenna Boyd is 30.