

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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.

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



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.

### Tuesday, March 7

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, glazed carrots, apricots, cookie.

School Breakfast: Egg and cheese wrap.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Boys Basketball SoDak16 - Groton vs. Sioux Valley at Watertown Civic Center, 7 p.m.

ACT Practice Test at GHS, 8:30 a.m. (Grades 11 and 12 (optional))

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Lay leader night via zoom, 7 p.m.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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**X SERIES** | *Cub Cadet*

## PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE



### **3X** 30" HD

Gear up for the worst of winter weather with the 3X 30" HD powered by a 420cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- 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

Clear it all with the strength of the 3X 26" Trac featuring a powerful 357cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Track Drive ideal for slopes, inclines and gravel driveways
- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty\*\*

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**\$2,099\***



### **2X** 30" MAX

Tak on winter with the commercial-grade durability of the 357cc Cub Cadet 2X 30" MAX snow blower

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- 14" augers and impeller
- Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
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- Heated hand grips
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- High-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty

MSRP  
**\$1,899\***

▪ Indicates step-up feature

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<sup>1</sup> Restrictions apply. See dealer or [cubcadet.com/en\\_US/financing](http://cubcadet.com/en_US/financing) for details.

<sup>2</sup> When compared to the same engine without IntelliPower™ technology. Improvements vary depending on engine models and specific operating conditions.

\* Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer.

Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

\*\* See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.

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OFFERS AVAILABLE!



# GDILIVE.COM

**SoDak16 at the Watertown Civic Center**  
**Groton Area vs. Sioux Valley**  
**Tuesday, March 7th, 2023, 7 p.m.**

**Game 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



**\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM).**

**GDI Subscribers can watch for free**

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## Class A Boys SoDak 16 Pairings

### #1 - Harrisburg High School

 <b>1 Dakota Valley</b>	22-0	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>16 Miller</b>	13-9	

### #2 - Wall High School

 <b>2 St. Thomas M...</b>	19-2	3/7 6:00 PM MT
 <b>15 McLaughlin</b>	12-8	

### #3 - Madison High School Gym

 <b>3 Sioux Falls Christian</b>	18-4	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>14 Hanson</b>	15-7	

### #4 - Watertown Civic Arena

 <b>4 Sioux Valley</b>	20-2	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>13 Groton Area</b>	16-5	

### #5 - Huron Arena

 <b>5 Hamlin</b>	18-3	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>12 Madison</b>	14-8	

### #6 - Chamberlain Armory

 <b>6 Winner</b>	21-1	3/7 6:00 PM CT
 <b>11 Hot Springs</b>	18-4	

### #7 - T.F. Riggs High School

 <b>7 Mount Vernon/Plankinton</b>	17-5	3/7 6:30 PM CT
 <b>10 Pine Ridge</b>	18-3	

### #8 - Madison High School Gym

 <b>8 Elk Point-Jeffer...</b>	16-5	3/7 5:30 PM CT
 <b>9 Waubay/Summit</b>	19-3	



Seed Point Averages (calculated Feb. 24) #1 Dakota Valley 47.450 - #2 St. Thomas More 46.200 - #3 Sioux Falls Christian 45.750 - #4 Sioux Valley 45.300 - #5 Hamlin 45.263 - #6 Winner 45.050 - #7 Mount Vernon/Plankinton 43.950 - #8 Elk Point-Jefferson 43.895, #9 Waubay/Summit 43.700 - #10 Pine Ridge 43.684 - #11 Hot Springs 43.150 - #12 Madison 42.600 - #13 Groton Area 42.368 - #14 Hanson 41.650 - #15 McLaughlin 40.944 - #16 Miller 40.700

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## Class B Boys SoDak 16 Pairings



### #1 - Corn Palace

 <b>1 Lower Brule</b>	19-3	3/7 6:00 PM CT
 <b>16 Irene-Wakonda</b>	11-11	

### #2 - Webster Area High School

 <b>2 Aberdeen Chris...</b>	20-2	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>15 Ipswich</b>	15-6	



### #3 - Huron Arena

 <b>3 De Smet</b>	19-3	3/7 5:30 PM CT
 <b>14 Crazy Horse</b>	17-4	

### #4 - Timber Lake School New Gym

 <b>4 Faith</b>	21-1	3/7 6:00 PM MT
 <b>13 Northwestern</b>	17-5	

### #5 - Stanley County High School

 <b>5 White River</b>	18-4	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>12 Howard</b>	16-6	

### #6 - McCook Central School District

 <b>6 Viborg-Hurley</b>	19-3	3/7 7:00 PM CT
 <b>11 Wessington Spr...</b>	16-6	

### #7 - Corn Palace

 <b>7 Ethan</b>	19-3	3/7 7:30 PM CT
 <b>10 Gregory</b>	16-6	

### #8 - Stanley County High School

 <b>8 Castlewood</b>	17-5	3/7 5:30 PM CT
 <b>9 Harding County</b>	18-4	

#1 Lower Brule 46.300 - #2 Aberdeen Christian 45.950 - #3 De Smet 45.650 - #4 Faith 45.350 - #5 White River 44.950 - #6 Viborg-Hurley 44.450 - #7 Ethan 44.450 - #8 Castlewood 44.400, #9 Harding County 43.600 - #10 Gregory 43.400 - #11 Wessington Springs 43.300 - #12 Howard 43.000 - #13 Northwestern 42.900 - #14 Crazy Horse 42.105 - #15 Ipswich 42.000 - #16 Irene-Wakonda 40.750 Seed Point Averages (calculated Feb. 24)

\* Viborg-Hurley wins tiebreaker over Ethan for #6 seed based on number of victories over common opponents (7 wins vs. 6 wins)

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## State AA Basketball Tournaments

### Girls

### Boys

#### #1 - Sanford Pentagon

 1	Sioux Falls Washington	18-3	3/9 11:00 AM
 8	Watertown	12-9	CT

#### #2 - Sanford Pentagon

 4	Sioux Falls Jefferson	17-4	3/9 1:45 PM
 12	Mitchell	9-12	CT

#### #3 - Sanford Pentagon

 2	Pierre T.F. Riggs	18-3	3/9 5:00 PM
 7	Rapid City Stev...	14-7	CT

#### #4 - Sanford Pentagon

 3	O'Gorman	17-4	3/9 7:45 PM
 6	Harrisburg	16-5	CT

#### #1 - Summit Arena at The Monument

 1	Sioux Falls Jefferson	19-2	3/16 12:00 PM
 9	Harrisburg	14-7	MT

#### #2 - Summit Arena at The Monument

 4	Yankton	16-5	3/16 1:45 PM
 5	Sioux Falls Washington	15-6	MT

#### #3 - Summit Arena at The Monument

 2	Sioux Falls Linc...	18-3	3/16 6:00 PM
 7	Sioux Falls Roosevelt	13-8	MT

#### #4 - Summit Arena at The Monument

 3	Mitchell	17-4	3/16 7:45 PM
 6	Pierre T.F. Riggs	14-7	MT

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## State A Girls Tournament

### #1 - Watertown Civic Arena

 1 Hamlin	22-0	3/9 12:00 PM
 8 Flandreau	19-4	CT

### #2 - Watertown Civic Arena

 4 Red Cloud	20-2	3/9 1:45 PM
 5 Lakota Tech	19-4	CT

### #3 - Watertown Civic Arena

 2 Wagner	22-1	3/9 6:00 PM
 7 Rapid City Christian	19-4	CT

### #4 - Watertown Civic Arena

 3 Sioux Falls Christian	21-2	3/9 7:45 PM
 6 Sisseton	20-2	CT

## State B Girls Tournament

### #1 - Huron Arena

 1 Wolsey-Wessing...	21-2	3/9 12:00 PM
 8 Jones County	18-4	CT



### #2 - Huron Arena

 4 Sully Buttes	20-3	3/9 1:45 PM
 5 Wall	18-5	CT

### #3 - Huron Arena

 2 Ethan	20-2	3/9 6:00 PM
 7 Castlewood	16-7	CT

### #4 - Huron Arena

 3 Viborg-Hurley	20-3	3/9 7:45 PM
 6 Howard	19-4	CT



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Republican leaders flip the script this session, go on offensive against insurgents

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 4, 2023 7:00 AM

The traditional narrative about the split in the South Dakota Republican Party is outsider driven — people on the edges of the party working to gain influence by becoming delegates to the state party convention, running in primary elections, and engaging in online activism.

But during this year's legislative session, it's the insiders, not the outsiders, who've seized the initiative. Republicans viewed as more moderate or mainstream have maneuvered to keep insurgent Republicans out of leadership positions, to remove some of their power over statewide candidate nominations, and to have one of them censured.

The top-ranking state senator, President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, has been a leader in those efforts. He views the skirmishes as part of a larger fight over the future of the party. He wants the party to solve problems for South Dakotans, he said, while he alleged some in his party are only interested in whatever pundits are shouting about in partisan media.

"Sean Hannity has never made sure that a train ran on time or a pothole got filled, but they look to these folks like they're policy people," Schoenbeck said, referencing a popular Fox News host.

Some of the people Schoenbeck described as "these folks" are associated, publicly or privately, with the South Dakota Freedom Caucus. The caucus formed in June with a goal of pushing the Republican Party in a direction that members of the new caucus describe as more conservative.

The chairman of the Freedom Caucus is Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg. He said there's nothing wrong with drawing motivation from conservative media.

"That's one of the reasons I ran. I was a 'keyboard warrior,'" Aylward said. "I said, 'I'm gonna try to do something' instead of just putting stuff on Facebook."

#### On the offensive

The opening day of the current legislative session, in January, brought the first clue that this session would be a tough one for the Freedom Caucus and its allies.

Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, was the prior session's speaker pro tempore, which meant that if six decades of tradition held, he would be elected this session's speaker of the House by his fellow state representatives. But Hansen — whose name was later included on a leaked list of purported Freedom Caucus members — was passed over for the job.

Then, on Feb. 1, the Schoenbeck-led Senate censured Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller, who was one of the legislators Schoenbeck named during a public rant last year about "wackadoodles." The censure was for harassing statements Frye-Mueller allegedly made to a Legislative Research Council staffer, in which Frye-Mueller allegedly disparaged the safety of vaccines and offered lewd advice about breastfeeding.

One month later, Sen. Tom Pischke, R-Dell Rapids, responded by asking the state's attorney of Hughes County, which includes Pierre, to investigate his fellow senators' actions against Frye-Mueller. Pischke, who cast the only vote against Frye-Mueller's censure, claimed the senators violated a law against preventing or intimidating a legislator from attending or voting on Senate business.

The state's attorney, Jessica LaMie, quickly responded with a letter saying she will not take any action on the request, because she lacks legal standing to interfere in the inner-workings of the Legislature.



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Meanwhile, a bill Schoenbeck co-sponsors would have moved the nominating process for several statewide candidates (including attorney general, secretary of state and others) from the state party convention to primary elections, and removed lieutenant governor nominations from the convention in favor of letting gubernatorial candidates choose their own running mate. The legislation has since been amended, amid Republican infighting, to only change the lieutenant governor nominating process.

The legislation is widely viewed as a backlash against party insurgents who've used their positions as convention delegates to nominate candidates such as Monae Johnson, the new secretary of state who has refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the 2020 election. She had enough support from convention delegates last summer to oust incumbent Republican Steve Barnett.

At that same convention, delegates who supported Gov. Kristi Noem's defeated primary challenger, Steve Haugaard, nearly rallied enough support to nominate him as Noem's running mate instead of Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden.

## Points of contention

Some of the divide in the Republican Party is based on rhetoric and temperament. Schoenbeck said Republicans driven by partisan media rants and social media outrage have a tough time fitting in.

"I think it's fair to say they irritate normal Republicans because they're just so vitriolic," he said.

Other Republicans say that beyond differences in style, there's little that separates different groups of Republicans on issues.

Pat Powers writes the South Dakota War College blog from a Republican perspective, and he sometimes criticizes the rhetoric and actions of some of the same Republicans who've ended up in Schoenbeck's crosshairs. Powers rejects the argument from some Republicans that they're the "true conservatives" while others are RINOs – Republicans in name only.

"I've been involved with the Republican Party for over 35 years now, and at one time, people who held my point of view were considered the ultra-conservatives," Powers said. "And now, as we've gotten older, there are people who think we're the moderates."

Powers said "people are in the Republican Party by virtue of registering Republican," and that means there will always be disagreements. But at the end of the day, they "disagree on very little."

Still, there are substantive differences – for example, a bill that passed this session that freed up \$200 million for workforce housing infrastructure in the state.

Some Republicans argued the spending is justified because the state is short of workers and affordable housing. Others, including some Freedom Caucus members, argued the money is a liberal, big-government handout to the private housing market.

Rep. Aylward, the chairman of the Freedom Caucus, cast one of the votes against the bill. He said some Republican leaders have strayed from traditional conservative ideals.

"What they're actually advocating for is early 20th-century Democrat proposals, and we're trying to fight that," Aylward said. "We're actually trying to get down to the base-level principles."

Aylward said the animosity within the party hurts his caucus' bills. All legislators' opinions of one another feed into their votes, he said, adding, "I don't think anybody can deny that."

Four of 18 bills sponsored by the Freedom Caucus' leaders this session have passed. Schoenbeck said the Freedom Caucus and their allies' bills rarely succeed because they are often "not well thought-out" pieces of legislation, and when the bill is a good idea, they haven't carefully considered the consequences of the language in it.

## The fight goes on

The losses suffered by the Freedom Caucus and their allies aren't likely to make them back down. Instead, some view their defeats as evidence of plots against them by Republicans in leadership positions.

And there are, in fact, organized efforts by Republicans on both sides of the divide to push other Republicans out of office. Freedom Caucus lobbyist Jordan Mason's Shining Light PAC has sent political postcards attacking Republicans. Schoenbeck and Gov. Noem have also been active in opposing the campaigns of some Republican legislators.

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But that's politics, according to Pat Powers.

"Sometimes, when you're fed a steady diet of what's on the internet, you automatically think there's a conspiracy," Powers said. "But candidate recruitment is something that's happened as long as I've been involved in the Republican Party."

Some of the bitterest fights are happening at the lowest level of the party.

Despite U.S. Sen. John Thune winning 75% of the vote in Charles Mix County in 2022, the Charles Mix County Republican Party Central Committee censured Thune and his fellow Republican Sen. Mike Rounds on Jan. 7.

The censure resolution said it was intended "to send a real message" to the two senators about their votes to pass a recent appropriations bill that the censure resolution described as "way out of compliance with the state party platform."

Actions like that are evidence that the Freedom Caucus and its allies are in line with the feelings of some Republicans. There's enough frustration with top-ranking Republicans to provide a base of support for Freedom Caucus members and their allies who want to win elected offices and change the party, according to Aylward.

"That's why folks like that continue to get voted in," he said. "Because come campaign time, they're saying all the right stuff."

*Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.*

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.*

ACTS 17: 29 *16*

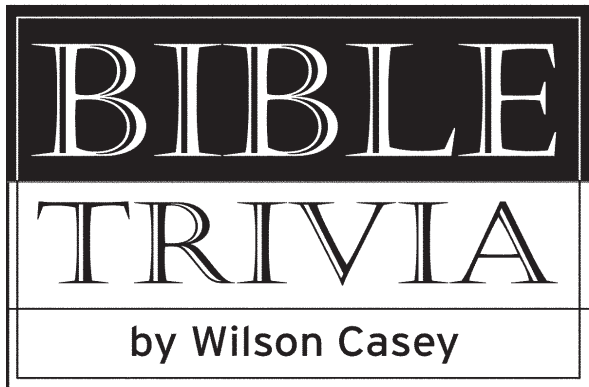


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*Tourists should avoid the North American land mass until the primates' leader no longer feels he has anything to prove to Marjorie Taylor Greene.*



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1. Is the book of Athens (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In 2 Kings, which prophet's word caused Syrian soldiers to be struck blind? *Gad, Jubal, Solomon, Elisha*

3. Where were Saul and Jonathan's bodies nailed to a wall? *Troas, Nob, Beth-shan, Sychar*

4. On fleeing from Jezebel, which prophet hid in a cave? *Elijah, Nathan, Daniel, Amos*

5. Which converts burned their books of magic? *Philistines, Ephesians, Hittites, Canaanites*

6. In which book is the phrase, "Holier than thou"? *1 Kings, Ezra, Amos, Isaiah*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Elisha, 3) Beth-shan, 4) Elijah, 5) Ephesians, 6) Isaiah 65:5

*"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.*

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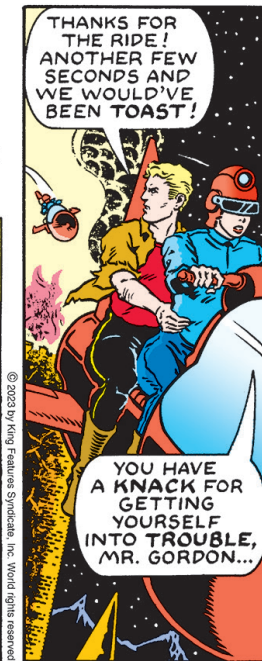
HEEDLESS OF THE CRUMBLING TOWER'S IMMINENT DESTRUCTION...

... BULLOK AND SAPPHIRE BATTLE ON WITH INHUMAN SAVAGERY!

## FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE 3-5

AS THE TOWER IS ENGULFED IN FLAMES, FLASH AND THORNE ARE AIRLIFTED TO SAFETY.



THANKS FOR THE RIDE! ANOTHER FEW SECONDS AND WE WOULD'VE BEEN TOAST!

YOU HAVE A KNACK FOR GETTING YOURSELF INTO TROUBLE... MR. GORDON...



... SEEMS LIKE I CAN'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT FOR FIVE MINUTES!

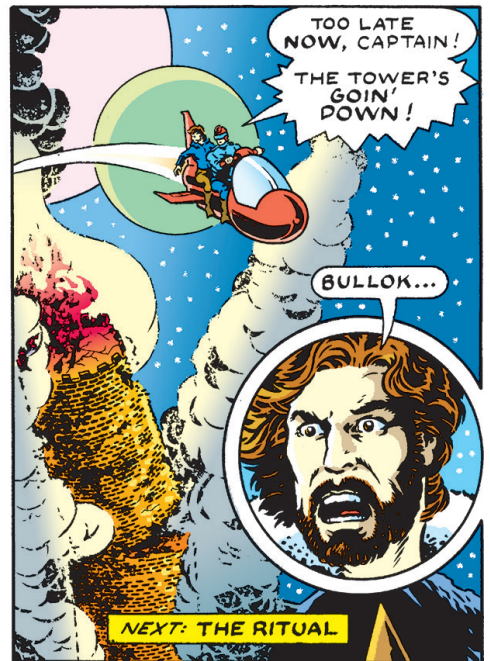
DALE!



MEANWHILE...

I'M CAPTAIN THORNE! WE HAVE TO GO BACK!

ONE OF MY MEN IS STILL DOWN THERE!



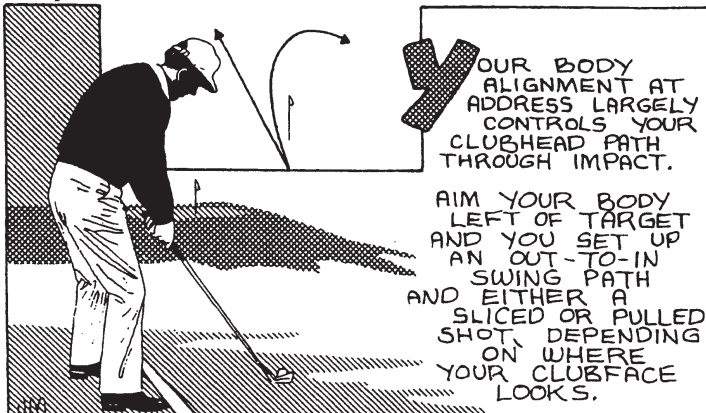
TOO LATE NOW, CAPTAIN!

THE TOWER'S GOIN' DOWN!

BULLOK...

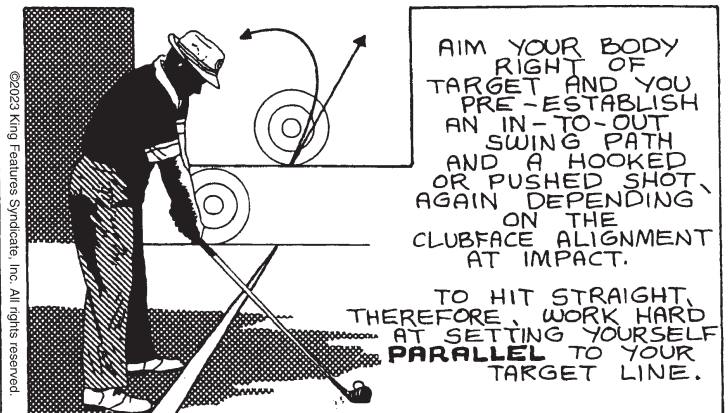
NEXT: THE RITUAL

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



**Y**OUR BODY ALIGNMENT AT ADDRESS LARGELY CONTROLS YOUR CLUBHEAD PATH THROUGH IMPACT.

AIM YOUR BODY LEFT OF TARGET AND YOU SET UP AN OUT-TO-IN SWING PATH AND EITHER A SLICED OR PULLED SHOT, DEPENDING ON WHERE YOUR CLUBFACE LOOKS.



AIM YOUR BODY RIGHT OF TARGET AND YOU PRE-ESTABLISH AN IN-TO-OUT SWING PATH AND A HOOKED OR PUSHED SHOT, AGAIN DEPENDING ON THE CLUBFACE ALIGNMENT AT IMPACT.

TO HIT STRAIGHT, THEREFORE, WORK HARD AT SETTING YOURSELF PARALLEL TO YOUR TARGET LINE.

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## Recreational Tianeptine Has Potential for Abuse

**DEAR DR. ROACH: I've been hearing about tianeptine being sold at gas stations. Is it really dangerous? — S.F.**

**ANSWER:** Like so many substances, tianeptine can be a useful drug when prescribed and taken correctly (it's used in several countries for depression), but it is indeed dangerous when used recreationally. Its use has been banned in several (unfortunately not all) states across the U.S. It is sold (yes, especially at gas stations) as a dietary supplement. Because it acts on the same receptor as morphine, when used at high doses far beyond the medically approved dose, it has potential for abuse and even overdose, with a handful of deaths ascribed to its use.

I recommend in the strongest possible terms against its recreational use and hope it is completely banned soon.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH: I have severe pain in my right shoulder. I have seen two orthopedists and received X-rays, MRI scans and a cortisone injection, which didn't work. Both surgeons recommended a shoulder replacement. I am taking three adult aspirins each morning (I am allergic to NSAIDs), which makes the pain go away. Is this safe? I am 83 and otherwise healthy. — J.B.**

**ANSWER:** Aspirin is a type of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug and has the toxicities common to all

increased risk for bleeding and potential damage to the stomach and kidneys. But it has additional toxicities beyond NSAIDs like ibuprofen, especially at higher levels. I am very cautious about prescribing aspirin and generally prefer other anti-inflammatory medicines.

However, people have long taken aspirin — sometimes at much higher doses — usually without problems. The fact that you are taking it only once a day reduces the toxicity, but I have to say I am surprised the benefit is lasting all day.

The risk of toxicity is higher at older ages. At 83, you are at a significantly higher risk (seven times the risk) than younger people. Most of the data on exactly what your risk is comes from people taking low-dose aspirin (81 mg, not the 975 mg you are taking), so I can't give you an evidence-based answer. But, for men in their 80s taking low-dose aspirin, about 1.5% will have a serious bleeding event per year. Your risk will be significantly higher due to the much-larger dose you are taking. However, one has to consider both the benefits of the aspirin treatment (the pain being gone is the best possible outcome) and the toxicity of other possible treatments, such as surgery (which is very significant).

There are many classes of NSAIDs, with very different chemical properties, and it is likely there is another type of NSAID you could safely take, with a lower risk than the dose of aspirin you are currently on. On the other hand, you can't get any better effectiveness, at least in terms of pain, and the absolute risk is still fairly small, so I'm not sure I recommend you change. I am always very cautious about recommending surgery to someone in their 80s when there is an effective medication available to treat the issue.

*Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*

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"Babylon" (R) -- Available to stream now is Academy-Award-winning director Damien Chazelle's latest cinematic stunner. Starring Margot Robbie and Brad Pitt, "Babylon" takes viewers back to Hollywood during the time of the late 1920s, as the transition from making silent films to sound films begins. Through the lives of vibrant and flawed characters, we see the fantastical circumstances it can take to get the perfect shot for a film, as well as all the debauchery that happens behind the scenes in a town like Hollywood.

Chazelle does an excellent job of capturing the pure passion and utter chaos behind filmmaking, and the film itself feels like one long, outrageous night out that you'll never forget. (Paramount+)



**Riley Keough, left, and Sam Claflin star in "Daisy Jones & the Six."**

Courtesy of Prime Video

"Daisy Jones & the Six" (TV-16+) -- Based on the novel written by Taylor Jenkins Reid, this new miniseries taking place in the 1970s and follows young musician Daisy Jones (played by Riley Keough) right as she gets paired up with a blues-rock band called The Six. The chemistry Daisy experiences with the band and its lead singer Billy (Sam Claflin) is so palpable that it propels them into stardom quickly. But as their musical chemistry begins to bleed into their personal lives, the band experiences obstacles that inevitably lead to its downfall. The first three episodes are out now, with the subsequent seven episodes releasing weekly throughout the month of March. (Prime Video)

"Rain Dogs" (NR) -- Single mother Costello and her daughter, Iris, get evicted from their home, leaving Costello at a loss about where to go. In what is surely divine intervention, Costello's wealthy friend, Selby, has just been released from prison, and he offers her a way out. Well used to his handouts, Costello decides to move into Selby's home in the countryside with Iris, and the three oddballs begin to form their own sort of family. But as the days go on, Costello comes to the realization that Selby isn't the best influence for them and that it's ultimately up to her to step up and provide for her daughter. The first episode of this British drama-comedy series is out now, with more episodes coming every Monday thereafter. (HBO Max)

"UnPrisoned" (TV-MA) -- Kerry Washington has a new series hitting Hulu on March 10. Washington stars as Paige, a licensed marriage and family therapist with a teen son named Finn. Paige's father, Edwin, is getting out of prison after 17 years behind bars, which forces Paige to accept him crashing at her home while he gets back on his feet. At first, the relationship between Paige, Edwin and Finn isn't the strongest, but a doubtful Paige starts to welcome the bonuses of having Edwin around to shake things up. A sweet and simple family comedy series at 30 minutes per episode, "UnPrisoned" is a far cry from Washington's previous dramatic shows "Scandal" and "Little Fires Everywhere." (Hulu)

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1. Name the group that released "Sugar Baby Love."
2. What is the song "Abraham, Martin and John" about?
3. Which singer-songwriter released "If You Could Read My Mind"?
4. Which Simon & Garfunkel song figured heavily in the film "The Graduate"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "Totally unprepared are you to face a world of men, Timid and shy and scared are you of things beyond your ken."

## Answers

1. The Rubettes, in 1974. Over the years, the members have been involved in various legal disputes over the ownership of the group's name. It wasn't resolved until 2022.
2. The song, recorded by Dion in 1968, is about the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy.
3. Gordon Lightfoot, in 1970. Lightfoot sued the songwriter of "The Greatest Love of All" for lifting 24 bars of the melody. He canceled the suit (because he's a nice guy), but ended up with a public apology.
4. "Mrs. Robinson," in 1967. It was originally titled "Mrs. Roosevelt."
5. "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," from "The Sound of Music." The musical (1959) and film (1965) of the same name tell the story of the von Trapp family fleeing the Nazis in Austria.

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## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>Wagner</sup>



"Do we make a wee widget?"

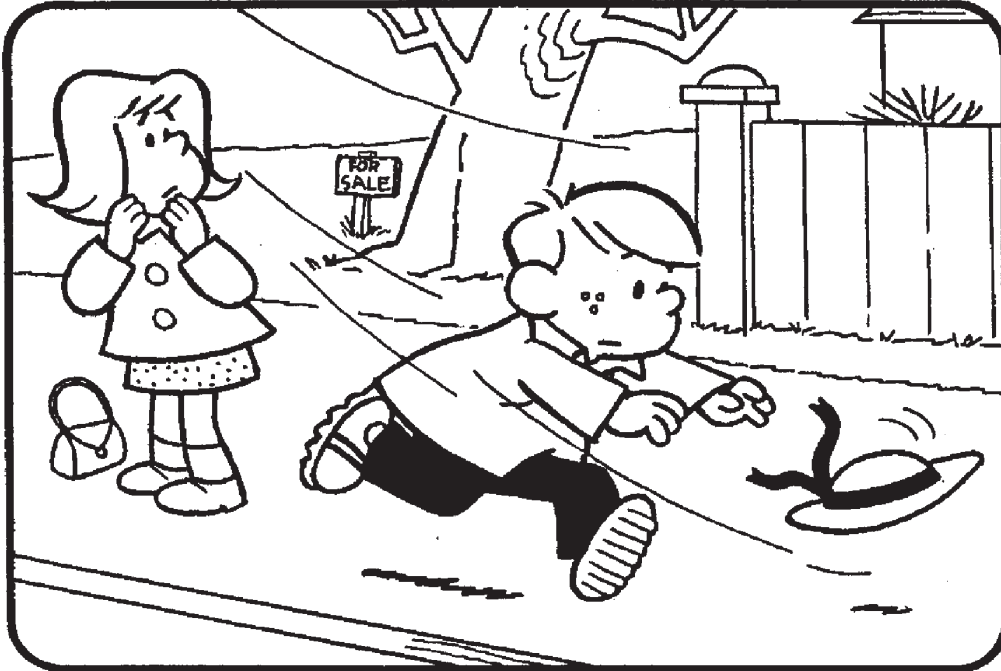
## Just Like Cats & Dogs <sup>by Dave T. Phipps</sup>



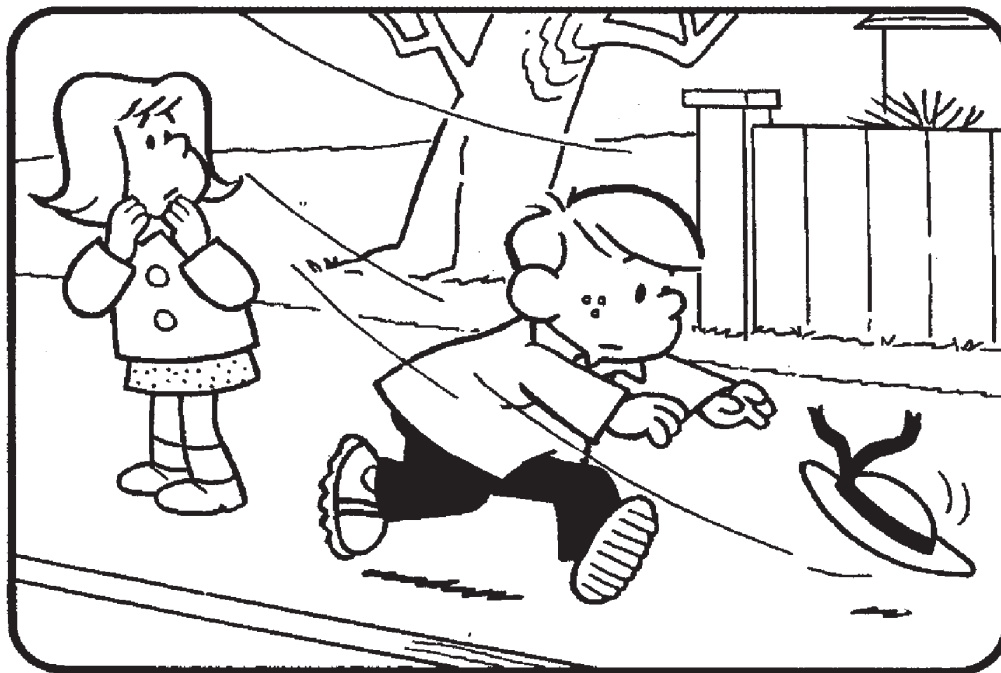


## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Jacket is different. 2. Pocketbook is missing. 3. Sign is missing. 4. Leg is moved. 5. Post is different. 6. Hat is moved.

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\* Among the many reuses for plastic newspaper bags: Put soiled diapers in before putting in a trash can. Use to pick up after your pet on a walk. Fill with grocery store plastic bags for storage. Keep a few to store wet swimsuits in after a trip to the beach or pool.

\* Before removing a splinter, ice the area. Less fussing and a wooden splinter might absorb some liquid, causing it to swell enough to pop out a bit more.

\* Recycling paper is good, but reusing before recycling is even better. Ask your child's classroom teacher if he or she has a "both sides" policy for lined papers. Also, copy paper that's printed on only one side can be quartered for quick scratch paper.

\* Trying to spot roof damage but not quite sure you're up for climbing a ladder? Before you get up on the roof, get out your binoculars. You'd be surprised how much you can see from the ground, and you can do a cursory examination and then decide if anything needs a closer look.

\* Cut kitchen sponges into smaller pieces. They clean as well as a larger sponge, and you can dispose of the smaller pieces when they get yucky. -- O.C. in Michigan

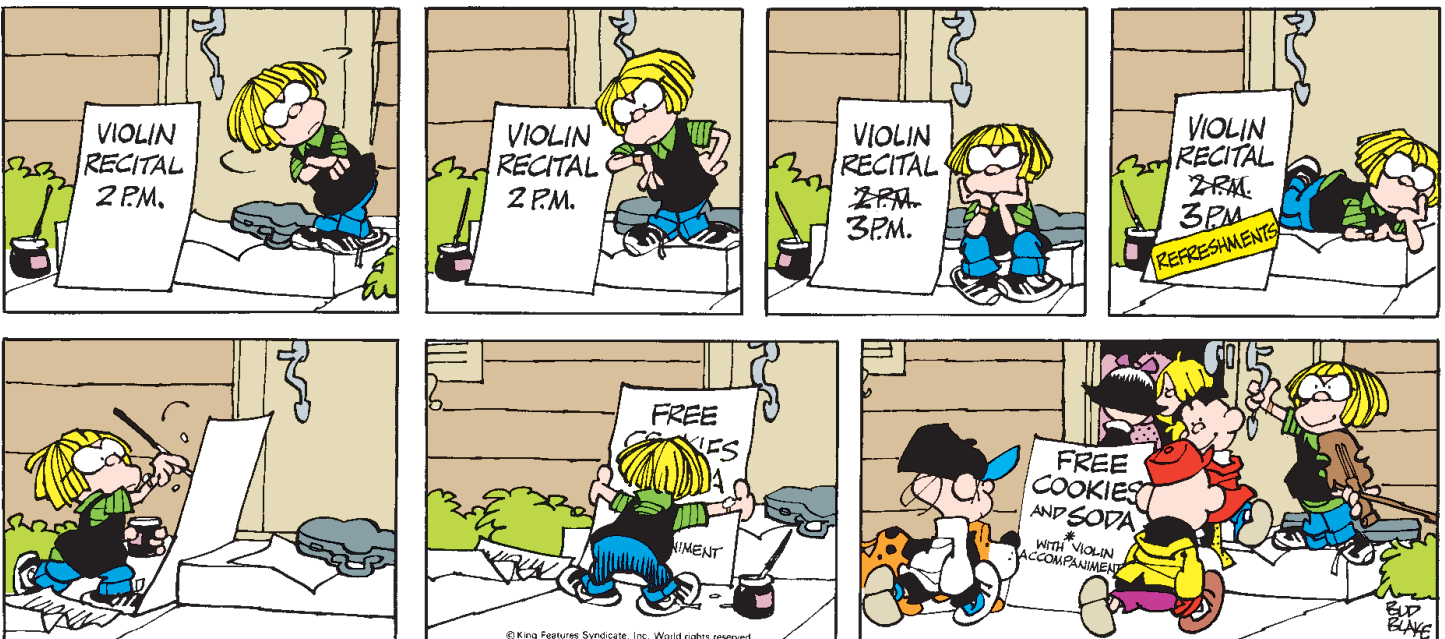
\* Need sliced mushrooms for your salad or recipe? They are hard to cut, but you might have a perfect tool for doing the job already in your kitchen. If you have an egg slicer, get it out. It works very well for mushrooms, and it's easier to use than trying to cut those slices yourself. -- J.R. in Utah

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Two-wheeler
- 5 Bumped into
- 8 Pack (down)
- 12 Ireland
- 13 Peyton's brother
- 14 "The Time Machine" people
- 15 Octopus arm
- 17 Lunch hour
- 18 Request
- 19 IV measures
- 20 Must-haves
- 21 Chai, e.g.
- 22 Vagrant
- 23 More recent
- 26 Goddess of wisdom
- 30 Tehran's country

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33				34				35				
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 31 Sly one
- 32 Tidy
- 33 Workshop cutter
- 35 Rock
- 36 Very long time
- 37 Possesses
- 38 Brainy
- 41 Small barrel
- 42 "The Wedding Planner" actress, to fans
- 45 New York's — Field
- 46 Bicycle type
- 48 N. Mex. neighbor
- 49 — Lingus

- 50 Pitt of "Moneyball"
- 51 Carry
- 52 Layer
- 53 Round Table titles
- 10 Disposition
- 11 Bowling targets
- 16 Computer brand
- 20 Convent manager
- 29 Packed away
- 31 Summer cooler
- 34 Drunkard
- 35 Droops
- 37 Ford or Hudson

### DOWN

- 1 Test version
- 2 Enrages
- 3 Neck problem
- 4 Tolkien creature
- 5 Pilgrimage site
- 6 Building wings
- 7 Dead heat
- 8 Some urban homes
- 9 Medicinal
- 21 Prepare meat for cooking
- 22 Beiderbecke of jazz
- 23 Pen tip
- 24 Mound stat
- 25 Pallid
- 26 Trim the grass
- 27 Old Oldsmobile
- 28 Moving day rental
- 38 Ella's style
- 39 Surrealist Joan
- 40 Bickering
- 41 Fall (over)
- 42 Ryan of "Boston Public"
- 43 Tragic king
- 44 Probability
- 46 Light touch
- 47 "Frontline" airer

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## — King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

B	I	K	E		M	E	T		T	A	M	P
E	R	I	N		E	L	I		E	L	O	I
T	E	N	T	A	C	L	E		N	O	O	N
A	S	K		C	C	S		N	E	E	D	S
			T	E	A		B	U	M			
N	E	W	E	R		M	I	N	E	R	V	A
I	R	A	N		F	O	X		N	E	A	T
B	A	N	D	S	A	W		S	T	O	N	E
			E	O	N		H	A	S			
S	M	A	R	T		K	E	G		J	L	O
C	I	T	I		T	E	N	S	P	E	E	D
A	R	I	Z		A	E	R		B	R	A	D
T	O	T	E		P	L	Y		S	I	R	S

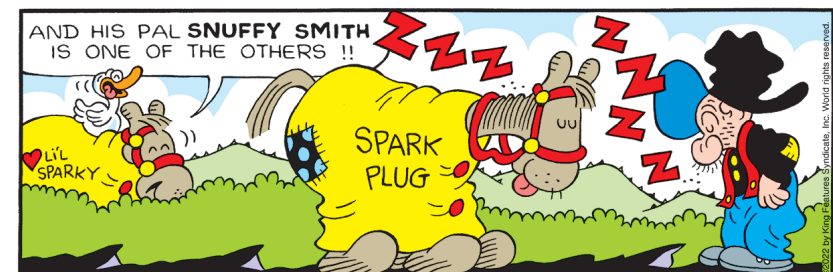
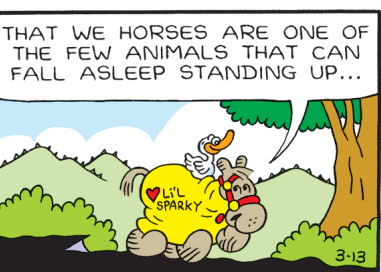
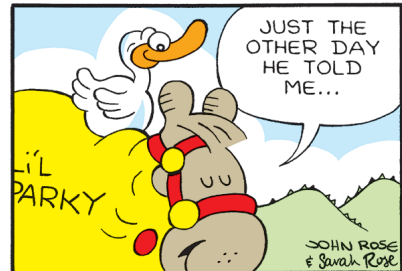
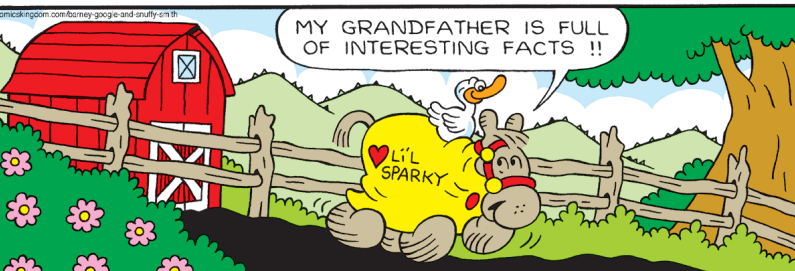
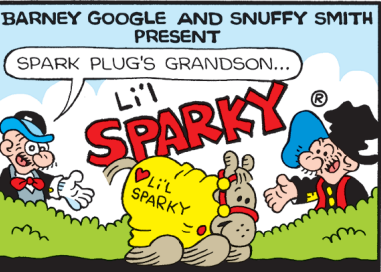
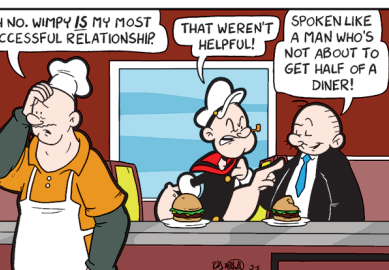
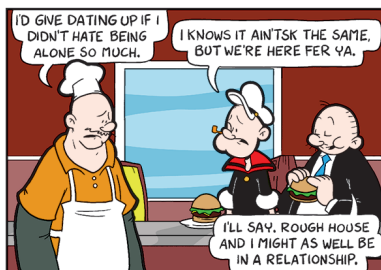
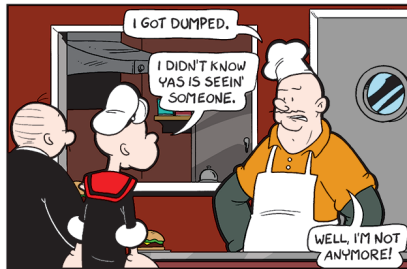
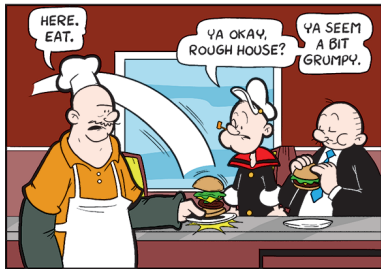
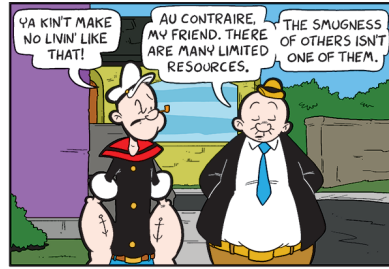
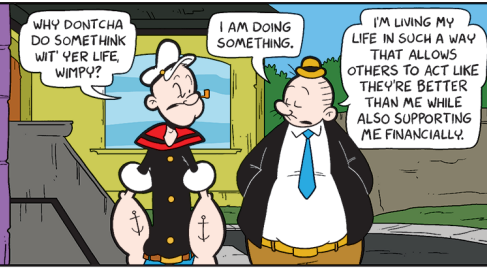
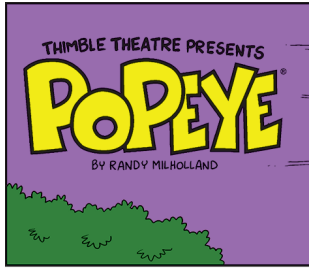
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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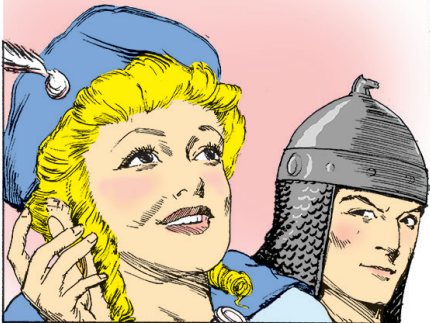


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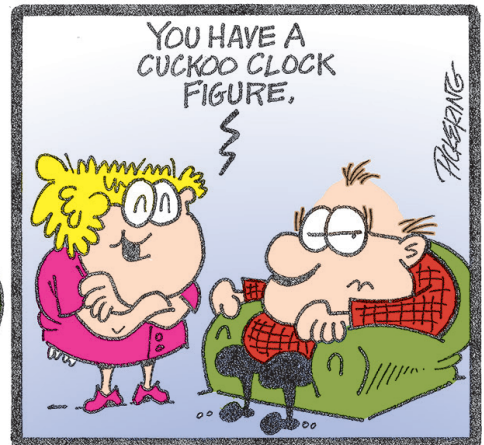
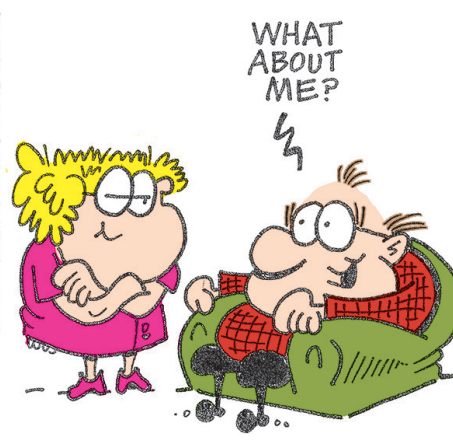
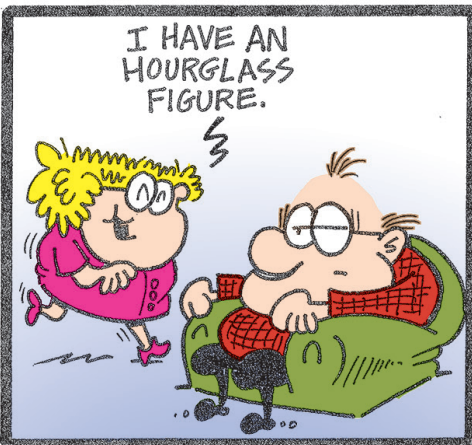


"I CALL HIM ST. GEORGE BECAUSE HE SLEW MY DRAGON," ALETA REPLIES. "IT'S AN AFFECTIONATE TERM, MUCH AS I THINK OF YOU AS MY HERCULES, MY MARK ANTONY..."



## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Funeral Planning: Don't Be Rushed

One life event we don't want to think about having to do for a loved one is planning a funeral. But sometimes we must, and it can be stressful and loaded with the potential to be scammed in some way.

A small amount of help is coming. The Federal Trade Commission wants online funeral pricing. And it makes sense. When you need to organize a funeral, emotions are running high. You won't be at your best when it comes to thinking about pricing and services.

Back in 1984, the FTC created the Funeral Rule, but it only requires funeral homes to show lists of the prices of caskets and any outer burial containers, such as a grave liner. And it was only required that a potential customer be given those prices in person, certainly not by phone. To make it worse, funeral homes only had to show pictures or the item itself after the prices were disclosed.

By then, of course, you were at the funeral home, unhappy and sad and stressed. The last thing you wanted to do is treat it like a car purchase and shop around. So you signed the paperwork on the spot, possibly paid too much and maybe didn't get the items and services you wanted.

There are a few ways to ensure that your vulnerability at that time isn't exploited.

Before you leave the house to organize a funeral, go online to check local funeral home websites. They might be among the very few to actually post pricing and services.

Take someone with you.

Get the price list (in writing) of what the funeral home offers.

Before you sign any paperwork, contact the Funeral Consumers Alliance ([funerals.org](http://funerals.org)) and get their advice. There's a group in every state. On their website, click on "Consumers" and scroll down to "Don't Know Where To Begin? Start Here."

Remember: Take your time.

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1. For what college team did 1994 first-overall NBA Draft pick Glenn "Big Dog" Robinson play?

2. He played tight end for the Denver Broncos (1986) and Green Bay Packers (1987-88). His brother played linebacker for the Kansas City Chiefs (1986-91) and Seattle Seahawks (1993). Who are they?

3. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote a letter to Major League Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis encouraging him to play the season during World War II. The letter is known by what name?

4. In 1965, what Basketball Hall of Famer was traded from the San Francisco Warriors to the Philadelphia 76ers for Connie Dierking, Lee Shaffer, Paul Neumann and cash?

5. What national team won the first two World Baseball Classic tournaments held in 2006 and 2009?

6. Name the Minnesota North Stars player who died two days after suffering head injuries in a 1968 NHL game.

7. What tennis star from the Czech Republic won her only Grand Slam singles title by defeating Nathalie Tauziat at Wimbledon in 1998?



by Ryan A. Berenz

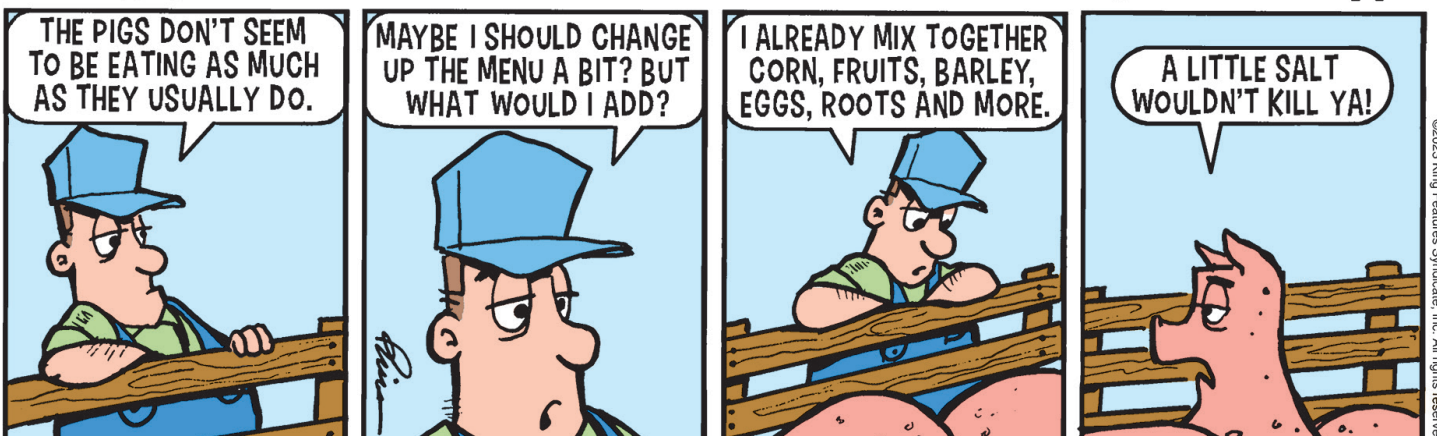
## Answers

1. The Purdue Boilermakers.
2. Joey and Dino Hackett.
3. The Green Light Letter.
4. Wilt Chamberlain.
5. Japan.
6. Bill Masterton.
7. Jana Novotna.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps







## Pet Sitting Can Be More Than a Side Job

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I was recently laid off from my job as a programmer, and have been thinking about taking a new career direction. I'm tired of being stuck in an office all day. And I love being around pets. But is it really possible to make a good living working as a dog walker or a pet sitter? -- Barry J., Cambridge, Massachusetts

DEAR BARRY: I know more than a few people who are full-time pet sitters and dog walkers. Most have their own business, while a few are employees of pet care companies. As you can imagine, the pay rates

vary widely from person to person. ZipRecruiter reports that the average hourly wage, nationally, for pet sitters is about \$19.23.

I think it's great that you're considering a career change. But I recommend testing out the world of pet sitting first. Consider working part time for a pet-sitting company. Even better, if you know someone who does dog walking, ask to accompany them for one day to see what their job entails. Find out what the pitfalls of this business may be, and what makes it fun to do. Finally, offer to pet sit for a friend who's going out of town for a day or two to get direct experience and really see if it's something that you'd like to do full time.

Next, visit the Small Business Administration's website ([www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)) and check out its Learning Center section, which has several micro-courses that teach how to start up and run a small business. Being able to combine core business skills with a love for and dedication to pets is a great platform to start on. Best of luck.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* Believe it or not, cows can be potty trained -- and, it is said, with less trouble than toddlers. It's called MooLoo training, and involves not a toilet, but a special pen with artificial grass. But why bother? The practice helps the environment by reducing air and water pollution and even planet warming.

\* The J.W. Westcott II is a boat that delivers mail to ships at sea. Operating out of Detroit, it's the only floating zip code in America.

\* In 1931, German engineer Richter Rakettenrad built a bike with 12 rockets mounted to its back wheel and

reached a speed of 90 kph before his invention exploded and threw him off. While that was, sadly, the end of the rocket bike, Rakettenrad himself suffered only a few scrapes.

\* Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold.

\* For over a year in the mid-2000s, members of the group Untergunther broke into the French Pantheon to repair a clock that had been broken for four decades. They later received court time for the effort but were somewhat vindicated when member Jean-Baptiste Viot, a clock restorer, was hired to repair it in 2018 after further neglect.

\* Researchers have found that approximately 97% of people are keeping a secret at any given time, with the average person keeping around 13.

\* In 2008, a former high school star athlete escaped a crime scene by using Craigslist to hire a dozen identically dressed (and unwitting) civilians to stand at the exact place and time of the arrival of the armored car that he planned to rob.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a new way to stand." -- Oprah Winfrey

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**The Garden Bug**

### Shamrocks

The Irish word *seamróg* means "little clover" or "young clover." According to legend, St. Patrick used the three leaves of a *seamróg* to explain the Holy Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were each represented by one of its leaves. Some plants considered shamrocks include the wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), suckling clover (*T. dubium*) and black medic (*Medicago lupulina*). Clover flowers are attractive to bees, its roots host nitrogen-fixing bacteria that enrich the soil, and the plants are high-quality forage for many animals. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: [www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com), [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)



by Freddy Groves

## Reports From the VA Office of Inspector General

Who would have thought it ... stealing diabetic test strips for profit? Apparently there's money to be made from those medical supplies. And one Michigan woman, in charge of procurement at a Department of Veterans Affairs pharmacy, made a lot of it, stealing in excess of 7,500 boxes of the strips over the years.

She wasn't alone in the scheme. She'd sell them to a co-thief who'd make her own sales down the line

to a third party in Pennsylvania.

The first in line in the theft chain has already confessed and faces 20 years in the slammer, not to mention a very hefty fine. The second in line also confessed. The two of them, however, are pointing fingers at Number Three, who they say is the actual mastermind of the thefts.

Diabetic test strips? Who knew?

Then there is the New Jersey former Marine who claimed PTSD from having to handle human remains after natural disasters in two foreign countries. Before his scheme fell apart, he'd netted in excess of \$118,000 in disability benefits. His big mistake, besides telling lies, was that he sent threatening messages to a member of the Office of Inspector General staff, plus anyone else who would be working on the case. He'll be sentenced this summer, but he's looking at 10 years in prison and heavy fines just for the lying part, and five years for the threats as well as big fines.

In Oklahoma, a man phoned a VA facility threatening to kill people ... and then he showed up. His beef, apparently, was not getting a quicker appointment date to be seen at the clinic. He wanted his meds, and he gave them 30 minutes to prescribe them or he'd be there to murder people. Not only did he have a loaded .357 firearm (and a handful of zip ties), but he took the items into a federal facility. He later claimed not to remember making the call.

To read more reports from the OIG, go to [www.va.gov/oig](http://www.va.gov/oig) and scroll down.

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## Wishing Well®

3	6	7	2	7	8	3	5	8	2	5	4	3
H	C	B	S	U	A	A	A	H	T	T	Y	V
4	5	7	2	4	3	7	4	5	7	8	5	2
O	T	I	E	U	E	L	A	E	D	A	N	A
7	4	7	4	2	3	6	4	3	6	3	4	6
B	I	R	D	D	A	O	E	P	L	U	L	L
5	3	7	5	8	5	2	7	5	4	8	7	6
D	R	I	T	P	O	Y	D	O	D	P	G	E
2	4	5	2	8	4	6	7	3	6	7	5	8
P	E	T	R	Y	R	G	E	P	E	S	H	M
4	5	3	5	2	8	4	2	3	6	2	5	8
L	E	O	R	O	A	Y	G	S	B	R	S	R
6	3	8	2	8	6	8	6	2	6	2	8	8
O	E	R	E	I	U	A	N	S	D	S	G	E

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. FOOD & DRINK: Which U.S. city is known for its square pizzas with crunchy corners?
2. TELEVISION: Which character became a fugitive in the final season of "The Office"?
3. GEOGRAPHY: Which of the Great Lakes lies entirely within the United States?
4. LITERATURE: Which famous novelist wrote his last book in crayon due to poor eyesight?
5. GAMES: What are the two most valuable letters in Scrabble?
6. MOVIES: Which movie series features a character named Ellen Ripley?
7. LANGUAGE: What is a "schwa"?
8. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which nation is credited for being the top beer-drinking country in the world?
9. ANATOMY: What is a common name for the axilla?
10. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What do you call an ant's home?

### Answers

1. Detroit.
2. Creed Bratton.
3. Lake Michigan.
4. James Joyce.
5. Q and Z (10 points each).
6. "Alien."
7. Unstressed vowel represented by an upside-down "e."
8. Czech Republic.
9. Armpit.
10. A nest or formicary.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## Hard Work

"I'm hoping everyone in the nation gets on the bandwagon and follows us." Those were the words of Ken Amundson, the president of Midwestern Mechanical in Sioux Falls. Ken's company has had to cut through a lot of red tape just to hire new employees and do their jobs. South Dakotans are the hardest workers I know, but that doesn't mean that they should have to work through excessive government restrictions and regulations to earn their livings.

I want to make it easier for South Dakotans to do their jobs, so I signed a new law to recognize out-of-state licenses for nearly every profession in South Dakota. This legislation cuts red tape, making it easier for folks like Ken to hire workers to do their jobs.

We are welcoming thousands of new South Dakotans to our state. They're seeing that this really is the best state to pursue the American Dream. But even with our rapidly growing population, we still have a workforce shortage. Companies are struggling to get jobs filled, and workers are struggling to keep up with skyrocketing inflation. This bill is for them.

By streamlining the licensing and certification process for workers moving to our state, we will be ready to welcome them. We can help them kickstart their new lives here in South Dakota. People moving their lives, businesses, and families here want the chance to be part of our record-breaking economy. This legislation lets them do just that.

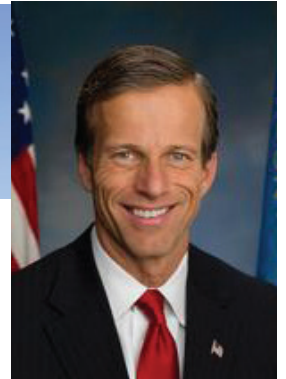
One of the best examples of hard workers building their American Dreams is right here in South Dakota: the Siouxland metro (which includes North Sioux City and the Dakota Dunes). They were just recognized as the top economic development community in the United States for populations under 200,000 people by Site Selection Magazine!

This award is but the latest proof that South Dakota's economy is strong. But we're not settling. Success often comes with unique challenges, or, as I like to call them, growing pains. And we are turning those challenges into opportunities, just like we always do in South Dakota.

People like Ken never fail to inspire me. People who pull themselves up by the bootstraps every single morning and go to work no matter the circumstances. It's people like that who have made South Dakota the greatest state in the nation. Our state motto is "Under God, the People Rule." Well, the people of South Dakota have proven time and time again that they will always put in the work for our state. I'm just happy to have the opportunity to give back to them and make their lives a little bit easier.

President Ronald Reagan said, "those nations and states which have secured man's highest aspirations for freedom, opportunity, and justice have always been those willing to trust their people, confident that their skills and their talents are equal to any challenge." There's no better example of that than South Dakota. I will continue to keep government out of the way so that this state can keep growing, keep thriving, and that our people can keep exercising their Freedom to work hard.

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## **Biden's Student Loan Bailout: Costly, Shortsighted, and Wrong**

President Biden and Democrats' reckless spending knows no bounds. In August, President Biden announced his nearly trillion-dollar student loan bailout. His plan has two parts: canceling up to \$10,000 in federal student debt (\$20,000 for Pell Grant recipients) and revamping the Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) program. These proposals do nothing to address the root cause of soaring college costs, but the price tag threatens to drive up inflation for all Americans and could lead to higher college costs.

The president claims mass debt forgiveness is warranted to make borrowers whole after the pandemic. The reality is that Americans with college degrees have fared well recently, experiencing employment and wage growth, and borrowers with federal student loans haven't had to pay a nickel in three years. Now the president wants American taxpayers to foot the bill for a misguided bailout that simply transfers student debt from those who voluntarily took on the debt to the backs of taxpayers, including those who didn't go to college, already paid off student loans, or scrimped and saved to put themselves or their kids through school. On top of that, he envisions transforming the IDR program from a program designed to help borrowers pay back their loans based on their income into another form of loan forgiveness with the average borrower paying back only 50 percent of their total loan.

No one disputes that a college education is valuable and a good investment for many Americans. But it's an investment and it should be treated as one. While some Americans may choose to invest in a college degree, others may choose to seek another professional credential or learn a trade. These Americans shouldn't be forced to pay for the decisions of others who choose higher education, take out student loans, and agree to pay those loans back.

Recognizing that college is costly and many young professionals have loans to pay back, there are things we can do to help pay off loans without putting taxpayers on the hook. My bipartisan Employer Participation in Repayment Act became law in 2020 and has been extended through 2025. It allows employers to make tax-free payments toward their employees' student loans. It's a win-win: Employees get help paying off their loans and employers have another option to attract and retain talented workers. It's no silver bullet, but it helps ease the burden of student debt without transferring it to taxpayers.

President Biden's student loan bailout is costly, unfair, and shortsighted. The president is putting taxpayers on the hook for a nearly trillion-dollar giveaway to college-educated Americans who are often better off than many of the Americans who would shoulder the burden of their debts under the president's plan. There are actions we can take to ease the burden of college costs without needlessly spending taxpayer dollars. This is another disastrous economic plan from the Biden administration and American taxpayers will pay its true cost.

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CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## The Ever-Present Threat of the CCP

Too many Americans view the Chinese Communist Party as a threat over there, when in reality it is a threat here.

This week, the Select Committee on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) held our first hearing on the CCP's threat to America. Witnesses with a vast background of knowledge on China were invited to share their thoughts and concerns with the current political landscape and China's techno-totalitarian regime imposed on its own people.

My line of questioning focused on the CCP's interest in American agriculture but was rooted in drawing light to the CCP's bigger strategy of growing its ownership of food production and processing across the globe. In recent years, the CCP has increased its holdings of farmland outside of China by one thousand percent. Their influence in the global economy is growing quickly enough that countries in Africa view the CCP as a global leader instead of America.

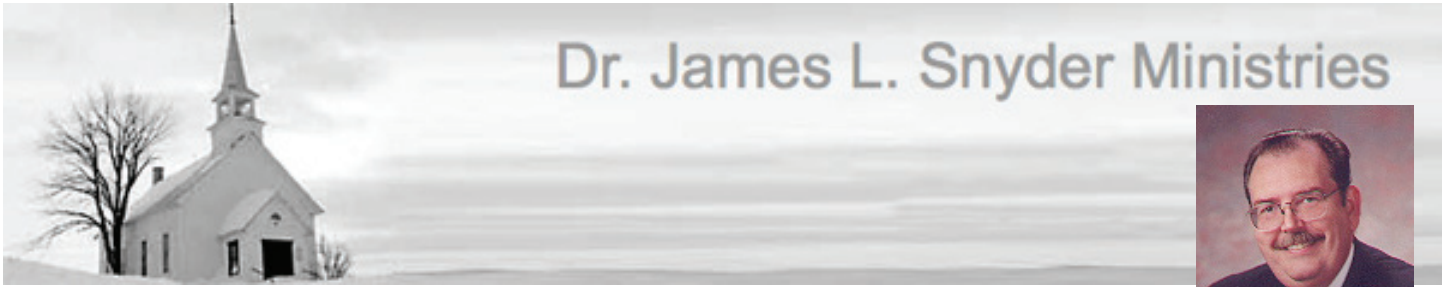
The CCP is looking to expand their power however and wherever necessary. It is clear buying farmland and ag processing facilities is one of those ways, but this is only one part of their grand strategy. One of the witnesses, Mr. Pottinger who served as the U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor under President Trump, confirmed that.

Pottinger stated "Beijing is exporting all the tools that you would need to run a totalitarian system." I participated in the Select Committee on the CCP's press conference honoring the Hong Kong 47 who spoke out for free speech and free press in China. These individuals were charged by the CCP two years ago and many still sit in prison today. The Chinese people are the ones struggling the most under the CCP's regime. They know the severity of the CCP better than anyone else. Both the press conference and the hearing featured witnesses that have lived in China and have experienced the oppression at the hand of their government.

The first hearing displayed a strong bipartisan interest in opposing the CCP's influence over America and globally. I'm glad we have a strong united front in protecting our country from the very real and present threat posed by the CCP.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



## Who's Been Fiddling with My Mind?

When it comes to music, I am an amateur in many regards. I signed up for a violin class in first grade and took lessons. After about a month, the teacher met with my parents and begged them to pull me from that class.

He said, "Out of deep respect for music, this boy should not play the violin."

I can't think of anybody in my immediate family that plays any instrument or has any skill in music. I thought I would be the first one, but I wasn't.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is a different story. Many people on her side of the family are involved in music, and her father was a great piano player and could play the piano with no music set before him.

Also, his daughter plays the piano, organ, flute, and harp. As long as I've been a pastor, she has played the piano in all our church services. She is very gifted along that line, and I'm so happy.

I confess that I am not musically inclined, and I am unanimous in that opinion.

It's not that I don't like music; I cannot replicate it with these vocal cords that God gave me. So I guess His plan was for me not to sing.

Music is very relaxing for me, and even though I cannot sing, I can listen to music with great appreciation.

The one thing that bugs me is early in the morning, whether it's television or radio, I hear a song and can't get it out of my head. All day, that music buzzes in my head, and I can't get it to stop.

We took a trip not long ago, and The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage drove her Sissy Van, while I sat in the passenger side. For some reason a song got in my head, I can't remember which one, but I heard it over and over again.

I heard it so many times that I began to sing that song under my breath, which was not a very good thing to do.

I have a way of humming and singing a song simultaneously, coming out naturally.

As I got to singing, suddenly, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage pulled over, stopped her van, looked at me, and said, "Are you having some kind of spasm?" She looked very serious as she said it.

I looked at her seriously, having no idea what she was talking about.

"You're not sick, are you?"

I began to understand her alarm, and I cautiously said, "I'm okay; I was just singing."



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"Oh my," she said, "it sounded like you were on your last road trip to death."

I don't know where that came from.

She then encouraged me not to hum or sing along the way.

I didn't realize I was singing out loud. I thought it was just in my head. But being the kind of husband I am, I kept my mouth shut for the rest of the trip.

The only place I sing is in the shower because there's nobody there, and nobody can hear me, and I can do my thing.

The other day as I was showering, I did not realize The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was within hearing distance. I try to take a shower when she's not home and cannot hear me. There's a reason for that.

As so I got into my shower a song began to rumble in my head, and within a few seconds, I started singing. Boy, was I singing and enjoying every note.

Suddenly, I heard a rapid knock on the bathroom door and my wife saying, "Are you okay? You didn't fall in the shower, did you? Do you need any help?"

At first, I couldn't figure out what was happening when it dawned on me that I was singing and she was hearing.

Oh "No, my dear," I said quite loudly, "I was just singing."

I heard a profound sigh on the other side of the bathroom door, and heard her say, "Don't scare me like that again."

I do try to control my singing and keep it from crossing my lips.

Music does have a way of controlling me. Some music makes me sad, and some makes me glad. The problem is music that's in my head controls me in some way.

I go into a store, and they're playing music, and come out of that store with the music playing in my head, and I'm humming along the way. Driving home in my truck alone, I sing as loudly as possible, knowing nobody can hear me. But, of course, sometimes I forget to stop and walk into the house singing, and you can only guess the kind of trouble it presents to me.

If only I could remember to keep my thoughts especially those musical thoughts in my head and far away from my tongue I would have a happier life.

Thinking about this all little I was reminded of what King Solomon said in Proverbs 29:11, "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

That wise old man knew what he was talking about. I know there's a time to speak but there's also a time to keep quiet. For me it's a challenge to differentiate between the two. The quieter I am the less difficulties I encounter.

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Is it really bad for the planet to upgrade my phone every two years?

– A.J., Darien, CT

Smartphones have certainly become ubiquitous, with some 85 percent of Americans and 67 percent of adults worldwide possessing one. Manufacturers sell almost 1.5 billion of them per year. And every year these manufacturers come out with upgraded models to lure customers into trading in their old models to get the latest technology at their fingertips. According to the Consumer Electronic Association the average lifespan of a smartphone is 4.7 years, but the average American user replaces their smartphone within three years. This can be, in part, attributed to planned obsolescence by manufacturers. As new smartphones are manufactured, new software updates accompany them; these updates can lead to older phones becoming unusable if they do not have the capacity to accommodate the new software.

Regarding pollution created by the industry, 95 percent of emissions come from the production phase. A culture that requires constant replacements results in ongoing growth of manufacturing emissions. In addition, continuously replacing phones creates e-waste in the form of the phones themselves. In 2019, 50 million tons of waste came from smartphones which constitute about 10 percent of e-waste globally.

One way to combat e-waste is to recycle. However, according to the World Economic Forum, only about 20 percent of global e-waste is recycled. The Basel Action Network used radio tracking to verify where shipments of e-waste were sent. They found that nearly 40 percent of e-waste from the United States was exported illegally to developing nations where it was unsafely processed or even burned in the open air.

There are steps manufacturers can take to alleviate the environmental burden, one being to introduce “repairable” phones. Currently manufacturers hamper smartphone repair with very high repair prices and restricting third parties from having access to the needed parts. Europe is leading the charge on embracing a circular economy surrounding smartphones that encourages repairs, refurbishments and upgrades instead of replacement. Various European countries have instituted programs to address the problem. France maintains a publicly accessible phone repairability index to help consumers there make smart choices about their smartphone purchases. Meanwhile, Sweden and Austria both offer financial incentives for device repairs to encourage fixing instead of junking old smartphones and other electronics.

Whether or not such programs exist in your neck of the woods, you can be part of the solution by simply waiting longer to upgrade your phone, which will help reduce the demand on production while lowering your environmental footprint. While it may not seem like much at first glance, keeping your phone for an extra year can reduce your lifetime device usage by 25 percent. When it is finally time to get a new phone, an eco-conscious consumer can turn to companies like Fairphone and SHIFT that offer easily changeable parts and support software upgrades throughout the phone’s lifespan.



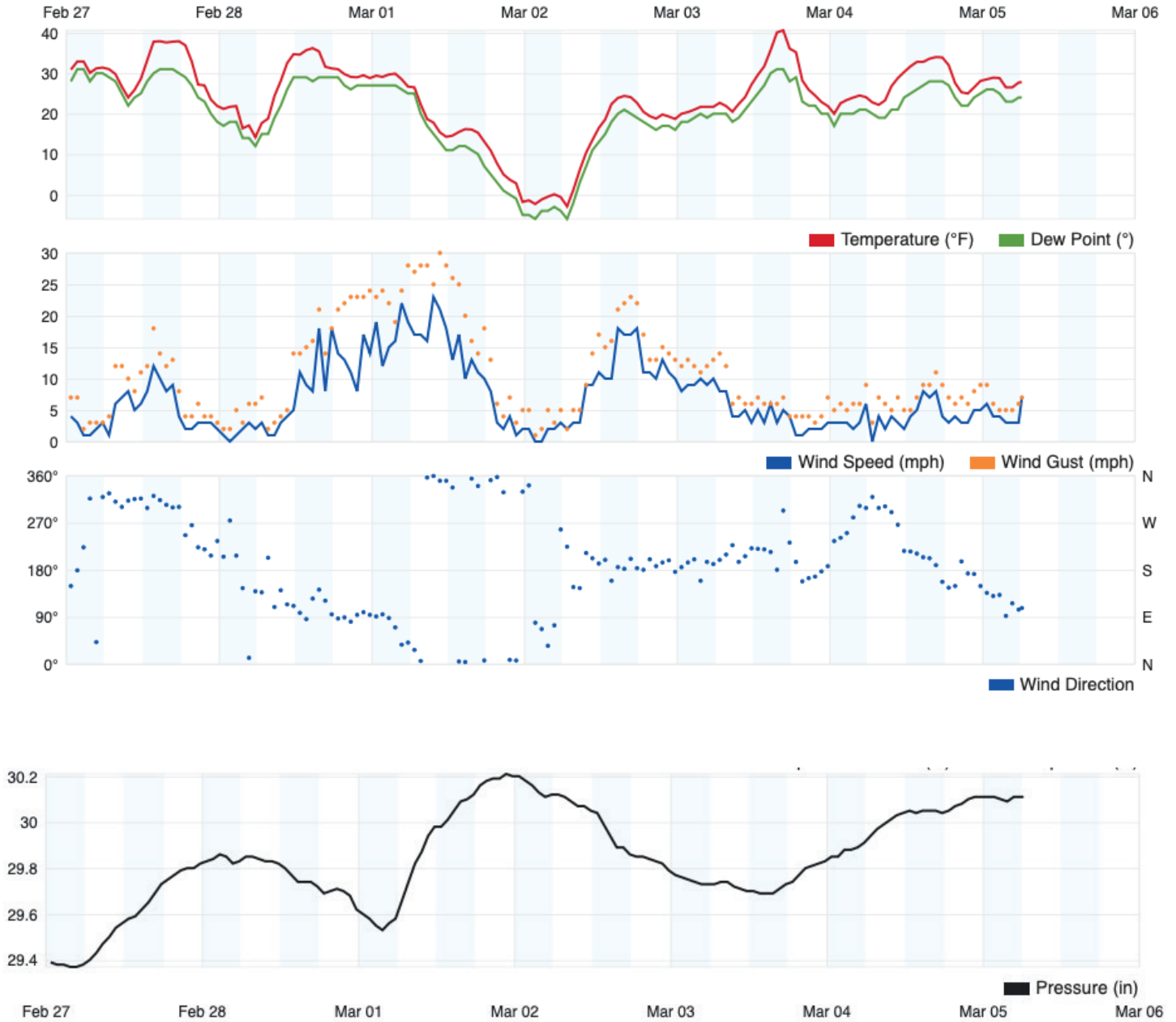
**Keeping a smartphone for more than two years could yield dividends for the environment.** Credit:

Pexels.com

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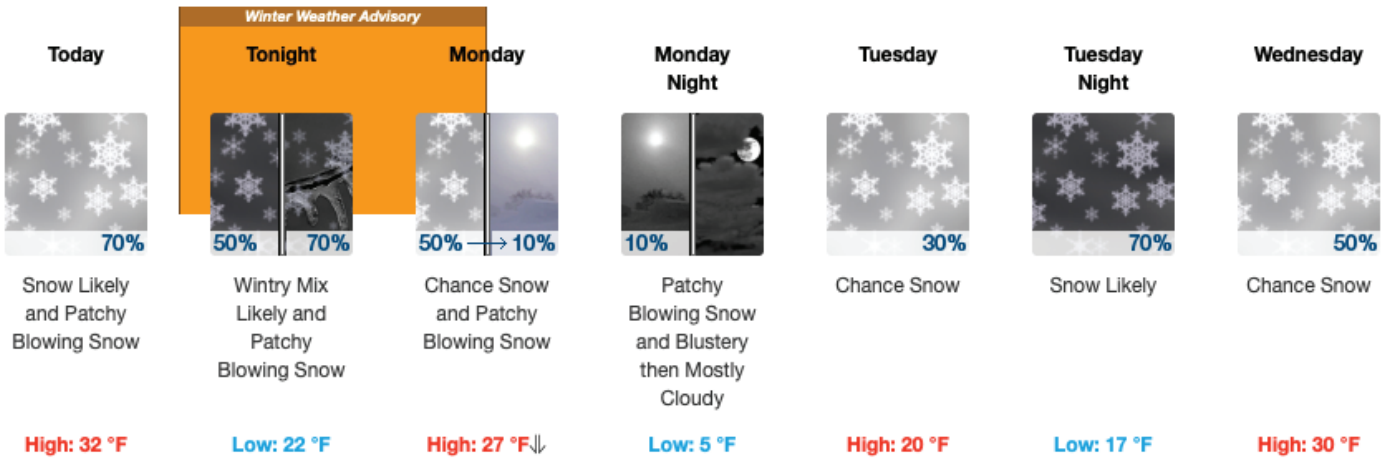
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## Past Week's Groton Weather Graphs



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## Winter Weather Event Today - Mon

March 5, 2023  
4:30 AM

Another Round of Accumulating Snow

### Key Messages

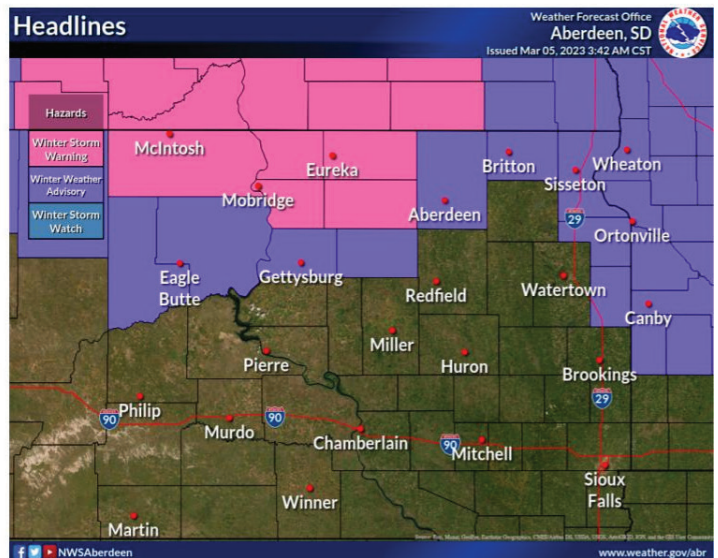
- First wave of light to moderate snow continues to push northeast across South Dakota with the second round of snow expected early Monday.
- Right now, accumulating snow looks most likely along the ND/SD border extending further north into ND.
- There is still low confidence in the exact track and thus the location of heaviest snowfall.

### NEW Important Updates

- A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for northeast South Dakota, in place of the Winter Storm Watch
- A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for Dewey, Potter, and Faulk Counties along with counties in west central MN
- North central counties remain under a Winter Storm Warning

### Next Scheduled Briefing

- Sunday afternoon



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

light to moderate snow continues to push northeast across the state with the second round of snow expected late tonight into Monday

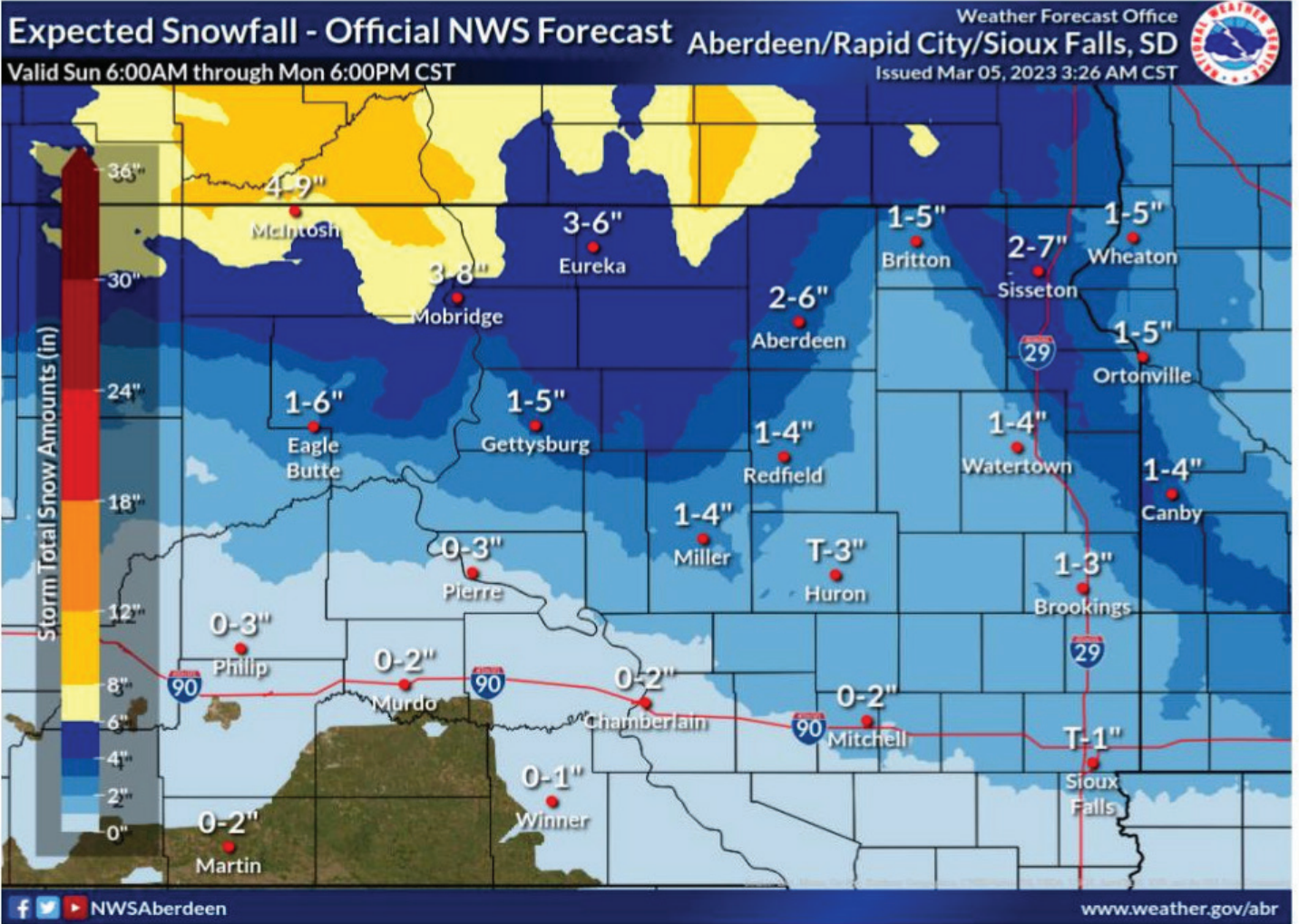
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## Snow Ranges Through Monday Evening

March 5, 2023  
4:30 AM



NWSAberdeen

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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

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## Precipitation Type & Timing

March 5, 2023  
4:30 AM

### Weather Forecast

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

\*Created: 3 am CST Sun 3/5/2023. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability > 50%.

- Rain +
- Fz Rain +
- Snow +
- Fog +



### 2-Day 6-hour Snow Forecast

	Sun					Mon			
	6AM	12PM	6PM	12AM	6AM	12PM	6PM	12AM	6AM
Aberdeen	<1"	<1"	<1"	1-2"	<1"				
Watertown	<1"	1-2"	T	<1"	<1"	T			
Britton	T	1-2"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"				
Milbank		1-2"	<1"	1-2"	<1"	<1"			
Redfield	<1"	T	T	1-2"	<1"				
Pierre	T		T	<1"					
Eagle Butte	<1"		<1"	<1"				<1"	
Kennebec	T			T					
Gettysburg	<1"		T	<1"	<1"				
Sisseton	T	1-2"	1-2"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"			
Mobridge	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"				
Wheaton		<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"			

Sun 6AM   Sun 12PM   Sun 6PM   Mon 12AM   Mon 6AM   Mon 12PM   Mon 6PM   Tue 12AM   Tue 6AM  
Last updated: 03/05/23 at 02:11 AM CST   0.0 0.5 1.0 2.0 4.0 6.0 8.0 12.0   6-hour Snow (inches) T = <=0.2"

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## Winter Weather Advisory

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE**

**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

**249 AM CST Sun Mar 5 2023**

Traverse-Brown-Marshall-Roberts-

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

249 AM CST Sun Mar 5 2023

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 6 PM THIS EVENING TO NOON CST MONDAY...

\* WHAT...Snow. Total snow accumulations of 1 to 4 inches and ice accumulations of a light glaze. Winds gusting as high as 40 mph late tonight into Monday morning.

\* WHERE...In Minnesota, Traverse County. In South Dakota, Brown, Marshall and Roberts Counties.

\* WHEN...From 6 PM this evening to noon CST Monday.

\* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning commute.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

In Minnesota, the latest road conditions can be obtained at [511mn.org](http://511mn.org), or by calling 5 1 1. In South Dakota, the latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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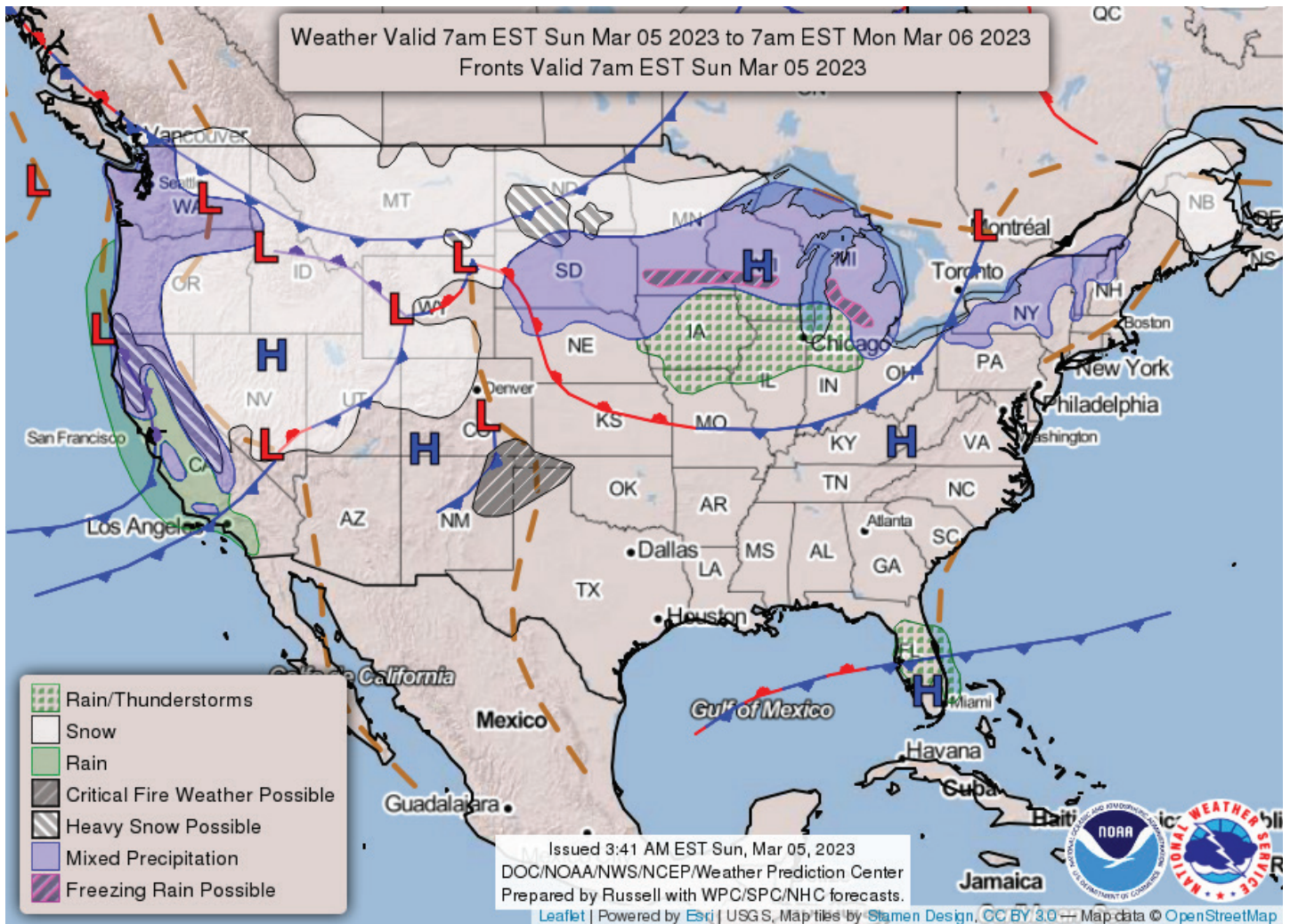
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 34 °F at 4:39 PM**  
**Low Temp: 19 °F at 12:27 AM**  
**Wind: 11 mph at 5:30 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 11 hours, 24 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 74 in 2000  
Record Low: -22 in 1919  
Average High: 36  
Average Low: 14  
Average Precip in March.: 0.12  
Precip to date in March.: 0.20  
Average Precip to date: 1.29  
Precip Year to Date: 1.78  
Sunset Tonight: 6:25:57 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:59:56 AM





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## Today in Weather History

March 5, 1966: The historic blizzard of 1966, which started on March 2, ended in the Dakotas. North Dakota saw severe livestock losses, with an estimated 18,500 cattle, 7,500 sheep, and 600 hogs killed. On a farm in eastern North Dakota, 7,000 turkeys perished. The total damage to livestock was estimated at nearly \$4 million. In South Dakota, an estimated 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1,800 hogs were killed by this storm. Most of the deaths occurred in the state's central and northern parts.

1894: The low temperature of 36 degrees in San Diego, California, on this day was their lowest on record for March.

4-6, 1959: In Iowa, the record-breaking snowstorm on March 4-6 began with light snow in western Iowa on the morning of the 4th, then spread across the state and intensified with heavy snow falling from the night of the 4th through the 5th and into the early morning on the 6th in eastern Iowa. The snowfall and its subsequent effects were less severe in western Iowa and grew progressively worse, moving eastward. In central Iowa, snowfall amounts were generally 6 to 10 inches. In contrast, in eastern Iowa, a swath of about 12 to 20 inches of snow fell roughly from Appanoose County through Tama County and north-east to Allamakee County. Reported storm total snowfall amounts included 12.9 inches at Waterloo, 14.5 inches at Decorah, 16.0 inches at Oelwein, 17.0 inches at Oskaloosa, 17.6 inches at Dubuque, 19.8 inches at Marshalltown, where 17.8 inches fell in just 24 hours, and 22.0 inches at Fayette where 21.0 inches fell in 24 hours. Winds strengthened steadily during the storm, with speeds reaching 30 to 50 mph at times and causing extensive blowing and drifting of snow. Drifts 6 to 10 feet deep were common, and in north-eastern Iowa, a few locations reported drifts 15 to 20 feet deep.

1959: Near blizzard conditions occurred over northern and central Oklahoma. Up to seven inches of snow fell and winds up to 50 mph created snow drifts 4 to 8 feet deep. In Edmond, a bus slid off the road into a ditch and overturned, injuring 16 people. The image below is from Storm Data.

1960 - Eastern Massachusetts greatest March snowstorm of record began to abate. The storm produced record 24 hour snowfall totals of 27.2 inches at Blue Hill Observatory, 17.7 inches at Worcester, and 16.6 inches at Boston. Winds gusted to 70 mph. (3rd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A tremendous storm raged along the Atlantic coast. The great Atlantic storm caused more than 200 million dollars property damage from Florida to New England. Winds along the Middle Atlantic Coast reached 70 mph raising forty foot waves, and as much as 33 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of Virginia. The Virginia shoreline was rearranged by historic tidal flooding caused by the combination of the long stretch of strong onshore winds and the Spring Tides. (David Ludlum)

1966: A plane crashes near Mount Fuji in Japan after severe turbulence. Aviation-safety.net said the probable cause was, "The aircraft suddenly encountered abnormally severe turbulence over Gotemba City, which imposed a gust load considerably over the design limit." All 124 people on board were killed in the crash. 1972: Palm Springs, California, recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1989: A F2 tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County, Georgia. A stronger F3 tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than \$5 million in damage around Grantville, Georgia.

1998: A thunderstorm dropped dime to golfball size hail along its track from McLain to Leakesville, Mississippi. The most severe damage was around the city of Leakesville. Hail depth was six to twelve inches throughout the city. The elementary school in Leakesville reported hail drifts to the bottom of the school's windows.

1990 - Thunderstorms over eastern Colorado, developing ahead of a major storm system, produced up to three inches of small hail around Colorado Springs in the late morning and early afternoon. Strong thunderstorms swept through southeastern sections of the Denver area during the evening hours. These strong thunderstorms also produced up to three inches of small hail, along with wind gusts to 50 mph, and as much as 2.4 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2007: The morning temperature dropped to 51 degrees below zero at Key Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### LET GO AND LET GOD

An elderly man was taken for his very first plane ride. When it was over and he was safely on the ground, his wife asked him, "Well, Sam, how did you like that?"

"Pretty good," came the reply. "Only problem was that I couldn't let all of my weight down on the seat and relax."

Sometimes we Christians have difficulty laying down or letting go of the burdens we carry. While we may have many excuses, there is no real reason why we cannot let go of our fears and failures, problems and pressures, worries and woes, and trust the Lord.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

The burdens Jesus came to relieve us of are not only physical burdens, but spiritual and emotional and mental burdens as well.

There are times when we fear that our sins may not have been forgiven because we believe that they are too horrible for God's grace and mercy. But He promised us that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Perhaps we become fearful that we are not doing enough for God or have missed His will for our lives. Again, the verse echoes in our ears, "If you become humble...pray...seek... turn I will forgive." God's willingness and ability are as good as His Word. The problem belongs to us - not Him. Remember the verse: "Lord, help my unbelief!" He can...and will!

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to take You at Your Word, and to cast all our cares on You. It's not that You can't do it. It's that we can't believe how great You are! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28



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

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## 2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
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:  
03.04.23

2 5 24 32 52 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$39,130,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.04.23

4 7 15 17 30 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 40 Mins  
27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.04.23

1 2 9 19 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$79,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.04.23

17 18 24 36 56 25

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.04.23

10 16 18 40 66 16

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Arians. South Dakota St. beat Omaha 63-55 in Summit tourney**

By The Associated Press undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Alex Arians had 18 points in South Dakota State's 63-55 victory over Omaha on Saturday night in the quarterfinals of the Summit League Tournament.

Arians was 4-of-14 shooting, including 2 for 6 from distance, and went 8 for 8 from the foul line for the Jackrabbits (19-12). Zeke Mayo scored 14 points and added nine rebounds. Matthew Mims shot 3 for 11, including 3 for 8 from beyond the arc to finish with nine points. The Jackrabbits picked up their eighth straight win.

Jaeden Marshall led the Mavericks (9-23) in scoring, finishing with 19 points. Frankie Fidler added 11 points and 12 rebounds for Omaha. In addition, Dylan Brougham had nine points.

An 11-0 run in the first half gave South Dakota State a six-point lead. The teams entered the break with South Dakota State ahead 40-39, while Arians led his club in scoring with nine points. South Dakota State turned a one-point second-half lead into a nine-point advantage with a 10-2 run to make it a 58-49 lead with 2:56 left in the half. Arians scored nine second-half points in the game.

### **ORU beats North Dakota in Summit League quarterfinal**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Carlos Jurgens had 21 points in Oral Roberts' 96-80 win over North Dakota on Saturday night in a Summit League Tournament quarterfinal.

Jurgens also contributed five rebounds for the Golden Eagles (28-4). Connor Vanover added 19 points while going 9 of 11 from the field, and he also had six rebounds. Kareem Thompson recorded 15 points and was 5-of-10 shooting and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line. It was the 14th victory in a row for the Golden Eagles.

B.J. Omot finished with 15 points for the Fightin' Hawks (13-20). Tsothe Tsartsidze added 11 points and six rebounds for North Dakota. Treysen Eaglestaff also had 11 points.

Jurgens led his team in scoring with 14 points in the first half to help put them up 56-31 at the break. Oral Roberts pulled away with a 10-0 run in the second half to extend a 16-point lead to 26 points. They were outscored by North Dakota in the second half by a nine-point margin, but still wound up on top, as Jurgens led the way with a team-high seven second-half points.

### **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.

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.

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## Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class AA SoDak 16=

Harrisburg 54, Brandon Valley 52

Mitchell 62, Watertown 44

Pierre T F Riggs High School 64, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 49

Sioux Falls Jefferson 71, Rapid City Stevens 46

Sioux Falls Lincoln 76, Rapid City Central 49

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54, Sturgis Brown 40

Sioux Falls Washington 71, Huron 43

Yankton 68, Aberdeen Central 52

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

## Pot vote has Oklahoma hungry to rake in green from Texas

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Tens of thousands of Texans from the bustling Dallas-Fort Worth area routinely drive across the Red River to gamble in glitzy, Las Vegas-style tribal casinos or to relax at cabins or swim and ski in lakes that dot southern Oklahoma.

Soon, they could come north for another draw: recreational marijuana.

Oklahoma voters will decide Tuesday whether to approve a ballot measure that legalizes consuming the plant for adults 21 and older. The conservative state already has one of the nation's most robust medical marijuana programs, and industry proponents hope an influx of Texas consumers will be a boon for a market that's become saturated.

"There are thousands and thousands of Texans who are increasingly coming to Oklahoma as a tourist destination," said Ryan Kiesel, a former state lawmaker and one of the organizers of State Question 820. "I want to be able to sell legal, regulated and taxed marijuana to those Texans over the age of 21, and take their tax dollars and invest them in Oklahoma schools and Oklahoma health care."

The population of the booming Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex alone — closing in on 8 million people — is nearly double that of the entire state of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma is expected to see an increase of \$1.8 billion in recreational sales that would generate about \$434 million in excise tax revenue alone from 2024 to 2028 if the measure passes, according to an economic impact study sponsored by the cannabis industry. By far the largest number of out-of-state consumers would be from Texas, followed by Arkansas and Kansas, the report shows.

Oklahoma already has one of the most liberal medical marijuana programs in the country, with roughly 10% of the state's adult population having a medical license. Unlike most other states, Oklahoma has no list of qualifying medical conditions, allows patients to get a recommendation from a doctor online, and gives licenses that are valid for two years.

Supporters of SQ 820 initially tried to get the question on the November ballot, but a delay in verifying the signatures led to Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt calling for a special election just for that proposal.

People in the industry say Oklahoma's low barrier to entry led to thousands of licensed growers, processors and dispensary operators competing for a limited number of patients. While inflation is causing the cost of many products to go up, marijuana prices at dispensaries have plummeted, and many operators are going out of business. A website for cannabis-related sales shows thousands of Oklahoma grow operations and dispensaries up for sale.

"They allowed for a free-market cannabis industry, and that's what everyone wanted, but now we need more customers," said Chip Baker, a grower who also runs a marijuana garden supply shop in Oklahoma

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City. "There needs to be an influx of people here to buy this product. It's just simple math."

Kevin Pattah, a Michigan native who came to Oklahoma to get into the cannabis business, now operates six Mango Cannabis retail locations across the state. He said the price of 1-gram cartridges of marijuana concentrate that retailed for \$60-\$70 in 2019 is now going for \$20. Prices for marijuana flower and other products also have plunged.

"There's so much product on the market, and there's only so much demand. It hurts everyone," said Pattah, whose dispensary features a prominent digital screen with a countdown to Tuesday's vote. "We've felt the heat as well.

"Our average ticket was \$130 at one point. Now they're spending an average of \$60. So, it's less than half now."

Pattah said the expansion of legalized sales in Michigan in 2018 was a huge boon to medical operators in that state, particularly those who ran dispensaries near its border with Ohio and Indiana.

While many in Oklahoma's cannabis industry are eager for recreational sales, opponents include a group of clergy, law enforcement and prosecutors led by former Republican Gov. Frank Keating, an ex-FBI agent. Current Gov. Kevin Stitt and nearly all the Republicans in the Oklahoma Senate also have announced their opposition.

Opponents cite an increase in the amount of Oklahoma marijuana being exported out of state and sold on the black market, as well as criminal activity associated with some marijuana grows, including the execution-style slayings of four Chinese nationals at an illegal marijuana farm in rural Oklahoma.

"SQ 820 throws a match into the middle of what already is a powder keg in rural Oklahoma," said Logan County Sheriff Damon Devereaux, president of the Oklahoma Sheriffs' Association.

Not everyone in law enforcement is overly concerned about legalized marijuana. Sheriff Ray Sappington in Cooke County, Texas, which borders Oklahoma and includes a major north-south interstate, I-35, said that while his deputies may end up arresting more people for bringing marijuana into Texas from Oklahoma, it's not his top priority.

"Our issues are not marijuana, to be honest with you," said Sappington, who said most people caught with less than 2 ounces of cannabis are issued a citation and released. "Fentanyl is so deadly, and we're facing that all across the nation. That's the battle. It's not marijuana."

Still, marijuana legalization is a non-starter in the Texas Capitol and is poised to stay that way as Republican Gov. Greg Abbott settles into a new four-year term. That has left marijuana supporters in Texas looking elsewhere — including with ballot measures in some cities. In November, five Texas cities approved referendums to decriminalize marijuana possession. One was Denton, less than an hour's drive from the Oklahoma border.

If approved, Oklahoma would be the 22nd state to legalize cannabis and likely the most conservative, following defeats of similar proposals in Arkansas, North Dakota and South Dakota last year. Under Oklahoma's plan, anyone over the age of 21 would be able to purchase and possess up to 1 ounce of marijuana, plus concentrates and marijuana-infused products. People could also legally grow up to 12 marijuana plants. Recreational sales would be subjected to a 15% excise tax on top of the standard sales tax. The excise tax would be used to help fund local municipalities, the court system, public schools, substance abuse treatment and the state's general revenue fund.

The proposal also outlines a judicial process for people to seek expungement or dismissal of prior marijuana-related convictions.

## Army boss' mission: Persuade schools to welcome recruiters

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Army recruiters struggling to meet enlistment goals say one of their biggest hurdles is getting into high schools, where they can meet students one on one. But they received a recent boost from a recruiting advocate whom school leaders couldn't turn away: the secretary of the Army.

During three days of back-to-back meetings across Chicago last month, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth



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spoke with students, school leaders, college heads, recruiters and an array of young people involved in ROTC or junior ROTC programs. Again and again, she asked, what can the Army do to better reach young people and sell itself as a good career choice.

In blunt sessions, recruiting leaders told her they need more and better access to high school students. But they also said the atmosphere can at times be unfriendly — or worse — with school leaders, many of whom are skeptical that the Army offers a good career option for their students. “I’m going to use the word hostile,” one recruiter told her. “There’s no other word to use.”

It’s not unusual for the Army’s top civilian to travel the country, pitching the Army message and checking in on recruiting progress. But the Chicago trip came on the heels of the Army’s worst recruiting year in recent history, when it fell 25% short of its 60,000 enlistment goal. It’s up to Wormuth and other Army leaders to find creative new ways to attract recruits and ensure that the service has the troops it needs to help defend the nation.

All the military services are struggling to compete for young people in a tight job market where private companies are often willing to provide better pay and benefits. Two years of the coronavirus pandemic shut down recruiters’ access to public events and schools where they could find prospects. And, according to estimates, just 23% of young people can meet the military’s fitness, educational and moral requirements, with many disqualified for reasons ranging from medical issues to criminal records and tattoos.

Army leaders say their surveys show that young people don’t see the Army as a prime career choice, often because they don’t want to die or get injured, deal with the stress of military life or put their lives on hold.

What Wormuth heard in her Chicago sessions was a litany of challenges, from the issue of school access and competition with colleges to confusing Army websites, limited social media and a general lack of public knowledge about the jobs and opportunities that military service can provide.

In a meeting with Pedro Martinez, the chief executive for Chicago’s public schools, Wormuth noted the recruiters’ frustrations and she pressed for answers on how to fix things.

Martinez agreed that when recruiters try to work with individual schools, and a new recruiter comes in or a counselor leaves, “there’s not always a warm handoff.” He suggested working with the central district office instead.

Swiveling to Lt. Col. Shane Doolan, the recruiting battalion commander for Chicago, Wormuth asked if the team deals well with the central office.

“No, we really don’t have a relationship. And that’s what we’re working on here,” Doolan replied, adding that two years of COVID-19 restrictions hampered those efforts. He also said recruiters found a lack of understanding about the Army.

Doolan and other recruiters told Wormuth that they face resistance from teachers’ unions and school board members who don’t see the value in offering students the military as a career option. In some cases, school officials view the military through a post-Vietnam era lens.

Martinez and other school officials acknowledged there is a knowledge gap, but added that for security reasons, principals and counselors are cautious about who gets access to their schools and students.

They also warned that a recruiter who is good at speaking to students may not be as prepared to deal with school leaders. Recruiters, they said, must be able to explain the benefits of military service to those who are gatekeepers to the students.

High school access isn’t the only hurdle.

Speaking with college leaders, Wormuth stressed that the Army should not be viewed as their competitor for young people.

“The Army is facing a recruiting challenge. That’s what brought me here,” Wormuth told a large group of college presidents and leaders at the University of Illinois Chicago. But, she added, “it doesn’t have to be a choice for kids between the Army and college. Some kids benefit from a little time doing something else.”

In some cases, she said, soldiers return to college after serving, or while continuing to serve, and are better prepared to be good students.

Students offered their own views.

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In small sessions with members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and the junior ROTC, students laid bare the gaps the Army must bridge to attract others in their generation. They said young people don't know the benefits offered by Army service, which include a wide array of career choices or free college tuition. They said students have little exposure to service members and that for every positive mention of the military or the Army online, there are five negative ones.

Gathered around tables and in their uniforms, they spoke glowingly about their ROTC experiences: the camaraderie, the support, the leadership skills they get and the confidence they build.

But all too often, they said, their friends question their choices, and, as one said, "assume I'm going to war." Some noted that at times their parents are reluctant and had concerns about their safety.

In a crowded auditorium at Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, Wormuth came face to face with those perceptions. Young students peppered her with questions about sexual assaults in the Army, homeless veterans, and the use of the military during racial unrest after the police killing of George Floyd.

Flying home after three days jammed with such sessions, Wormuth said the questions from the Whitney Young students, along with similar issues raised in other meetings, reinforce the need for the military to solve some of its more difficult problems.

"They asked about sexual harassment. They asked about, are they going to be safe? They asked about barracks, in addition to wanting to know what the benefits are," Wormuth said. "That, to me, underscores the importance of us finding ways to solve those problems. Those are real issues and the market research we've done speaks to that."

She said that she and Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff, realize it will take time to fix the recruiting shortfall.

"I don't think we're going to build back our recruiting numbers to the level that Gen. McConville and I would feel comfortable with in one year," she said.

Maj. Gen. Johnny Davis, head of Army Recruiting Command, said some new incentive programs are already working and enlistment numbers for recent months are higher than last year.

Army leaders are pinning their hopes on a new advertising campaign that will launch this week and bring back a tried and true Army slogan from the 1980s: "Be all you that can be."

In the Whitney Young auditorium, Wormuth said the slogan speaks to the variety of careers the Army offers.

"If coding is your thing, we have a place for you in the Army," she told the students. "If jumping out of planes or helicopters is your thing, or if you'd rather fly them, you can become an aviator or go airborne in the United States Army. If you want to speak different languages and travel the world, you could become a linguist or a foreign country expert in the army."

And, she added, if hip hop is their passion, they can become an Army rapper, since two vocalists just joined the Army band of rappers.

"People remember people who take risks and try to do something in service of something bigger than themselves," she told the classes. "People remember those who choose to be all that they could be."

## Deadly shipwreck: How it happened, and unanswered questions

By RENATA BRITO and PAOLO SANTALUCIA Associated Press

STECATO DI CUTRO, Italy (AP) — "Italy here we come!" cheered the young men, in Urdu and Pashto, as they filmed themselves standing on a boat sailing in bright blue waters.

They were among around 180 migrants — Afghans, Pakistanis, Syrians, Iranians, Palestinians, Somalis and others — who left Turkey hoping for a better, or simply safer, life in Europe.

Days later, dozens of them were dead. So far, 70 bodies have been recovered from the Feb. 26 shipwreck near the small beach town of Steccato di Cutro, but only 80 survivors have been found, indicating that the death toll was higher. On Sunday, firefighter divers spotted a further body in the Ionian Sea and were working to bring it ashore, state TV said.

The tragedy has highlighted the lesser-known migration route from Turkey to Italy. It also brought into

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focus hardening Italian and European migration policies, which have since 2015 shifted away from search and rescue, prioritizing instead border surveillance. Questions are also being asked of the Italian government about why the coast guard wasn't deployed until it was too late.

Based on court documents, testimony from survivors and relatives and statements by authorities, the AP has reconstructed what is known of the events that led to the shipwreck and the questions left unanswered.

## THE FATEFUL JOURNEY

In the early hours of Wednesday, Feb. 22, the migrants — including dozens of families with small children — boarded a leisure boat on a beach near Izmir following a truck journey from Istanbul and a forest crossing by foot.

They set out from the shore. But just three hours into their voyage, the vessel suffered an engine failure. Still in high seas, an old wooden gulet — a traditional Turkish style of boat — arrived as a replacement.

The smugglers and their assistants told the migrants to hide below deck as they continued on their journey west. Without life vests or seats, they crammed on the floor, going out for air, or to relieve themselves, only briefly. Survivors said the second boat also had engine problems, stopping several times along the way.

Three days later, on Saturday, Feb. 25, at 10:26 p.m. a European Union Border and Coast Guard plane patrolling the Ionian sea spotted a boat heading toward the Italian coast. The agency, known as Frontex, said the vessel "showed no signs of distress" and was navigating at 6 knots, with "good" buoyancy.

Frontex sent an email to Italian authorities at 11:03 p.m. reporting one person on the upper deck and possibly more people below, detected by thermal cameras. No lifejackets could be seen. The email also mentioned that a satellite phone call had been made from the boat to Turkey.

In response to the Frontex sighting, the case was classified as an "activity of the maritime police". Italy's Guardia di Finanza, or financial police, which also has a border and customs role, dispatched two patrols to "intercept the vessel."

As the Turkish boat approached Italy's Calabrian coast on Saturday evening, some of the migrants on the boat were allowed to message family, to inform them of their imminent arrival and release the 8,000-euro fee that had been agreed upon with the smugglers.

The men navigating the boat told the anxious passengers they needed to wait a few more hours for disembarkation, to avoid getting caught, according to survivors' testimony to investigators.

At 3:48 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 26, the financial police vessels returned to base, without having reached the boat due to bad weather. The police contacted the coast guard to ask if they had any vessels out at sea "in case there was a critical situation" according to communication obtained by the Italian ANSA agency and confirmed by AP. The coast guard replied they did not. "OK, it was just to inform you," a police officer said before hanging up.

Just minutes later, at around 4 a.m., local fishermen on Italy's southern coast spotted lights in the darkness. People were waving their cell phone flashlights desperately from atop a boat stuck on a sand bank.

The suspected smugglers grabbed black tubes, possibly life jackets, and jumped into the water to save themselves, according to survivors. Waves continued smashing into the vessel until it suddenly ripped apart. The sound was similar to that of an explosion, survivors said. People fell into the frigid water, trying to grab onto anything they could. Many could not swim.

Italian police arrived on the scene at 4:30 a.m., the same time that the coast guard says it received the first emergency calls related to the boat. It took the coast guard another hour to get there. By then, bodies were already being pulled out of the water with people screaming for help while others attempted to resuscitate the victims.

## THE YOUNG VICTIMS

There were dozens of young children on board the boat. Almost none survived. The body of a 3-year-old was recovered Saturday.

Among those who lived was a Syrian father and his eldest child, but his wife and three other children did not. The body of his youngest, age 5, was still missing four days later.

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One Afghan man drove down from Germany, searching for his 15-year-old nephew who had contacted family saying he was in Italy. But the boy also died before setting foot on land.

The uncle asked that his name, and that of his nephew not be published as he had yet to inform the boy's father.

The baby-faced teenager had shared a video with his family during his sea voyage, with apparently good weather.

His mother had died two years ago, and with the return of the Taliban to power, the family fled to Iran. The boy later continued to Turkey from where he tried multiple times to cross into the EU.

"Europe is the only place where at least you can be respected as a human being," he said. "Everyone knows that it is 100% dangerous, but they gamble with their lives because they know if they make it they might be able to live."

## THE AFTERMATH

Prosecutors have launched two investigations — one into the suspected smugglers and another looking at whether there were delays by Italian authorities in responding to the migrant boat.

A Turkish man and two Pakistani men, among the 80 survivors, have been detained, suspected of being smugglers or their accomplices. A fourth suspect, a Turkish national, is on the run.

Particular attention has been focused on why the coast guard was never sent to check on the boat.

A day after the shipwreck, Frontex told AP it had spotted a "heavily overcrowded" boat and reported it to Italian authorities. In a second statement, though, Frontex clarified that only one person had been visible on deck but that its thermal cameras — "and other signs" — indicated there could be more people below.

In an interview with AP, retired coast guard admiral Vittorio Alessandro said the coast guard's boats are made to withstand rough seas and that they should have gone out. "If not to rescue, at least to check whether the boat needed any assistance."

Alessandro added that the photos released by Frontex showed the water level was high, suggesting the boat was heavy.

The coast guard said Frontex alerted Italian authorities in charge of "law enforcement," copying the Italian Coast Guard "for their awareness" only. Frontex said it is up to national authorities to classify events as search and rescue.

"The issue is simple in its tragic nature: No emergency communication from Frontex reached our authorities. We were not warned that this boat was in danger of sinking," Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said on Saturday.

"I wonder if there is anyone in this nation who honestly believes that the government deliberately let over 60 people die, including some children," she added.

Alessandro, however, lamented how over the years the coast guard's activities — which previously occurred even far out in international waters — have been progressively curtailed by successive governments.

"Rescue operations at sea should not be replaced by police operations. Rescue must prevail," he said.

In an interview with AP, Eugenio Ambrosi, chief of staff at the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration, stressed the need for a more proactive search and rescue strategy, on a European level.

"We can look and debate whether the (boat) was spotted, not spotted, whether the authorities were called and didn't respond," he said. "But we wouldn't be asking this question if there was a mechanism of search and rescue in the Mediterranean."

## Restoring rights for felons a rare bipartisan voting change

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — TJ King had candidates and causes to support, but couldn't vote in Nebraska's last election.

An outreach specialist with the Nebraska AIDS Project, King came off probation in August after serving time for drug and theft convictions. In many states, he could have voted in the November general elec-

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tion, but Nebraska requires a two-year wait after the completion of a felony sentence before someone can register.

King's first chance to vote will be in the 2024 presidential election season -- unless a legislative proposal introduced in January that would remove the two-year requirement passes and becomes law. That likely would change the timeline for the restoration of voting rights for King and thousands of other Nebraskans.

Voting, King said in an interview, gives "a little bit of your strength back and a little bit of your voice back. Being able to vote, being able to have a say in what happens in your society, in your state, is extremely important."

Restoring the voting rights of former felons drew national attention after Florida lawmakers weakened a voter-approved constitutional amendment and after a new election police unit championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis arrested 20 former felons. Several of them said they were confused by the arrests because they had been allowed to register to vote.

Attempts like those to discourage ex-felons from voting appear to be an outlier among the states, even as some Republican-led states continue to restrict voting access in other ways.

At least 14 states have introduced proposals this year focused on restoration of voting rights, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. An Oregon proposal would allow felons to vote while incarcerated. A Tennessee bill would automatically restore voting rights once a sentence is completed, except for a small group of crimes. Texas legislation would restore voting rights to those on probation or parole.

In Minnesota, Democratic Gov. Tim Walz on Friday signed a bill restoring voting rights to convicted felons as soon as they get out of prison. A bill moving through the New Mexico Legislature would do the same.

"Restoring voting rights really is an issue where we've seen bipartisan momentum," said Patrick Berry, counsel for the Democracy program at the Brennan Center.

More than 4.6 million people are disenfranchised in the United States because of felony convictions, according to the Sentencing Project, which studies the issue and advocates for restoration of voting rights for former felons.

Laws vary by state, based on pardon requirements, payment of fines, fees and child support, and when a sentence (including probation and parole) is considered complete. The impacts fall disproportionately on people of color, especially Black citizens, who account for one-third of the total disenfranchised population while making up about 12% of the overall population.

In Nebraska, nearly 18,000 people are unable to vote because of felony convictions, said the Sentencing Project's director of advocacy, Nicole Porter. That includes 7,072 who fall under the two-year wait requirement and are currently unable to cast a ballot. The rest have not completed their full sentences.

Steve Smith of Civic Nebraska, part of a large coalition of groups supporting the measure, said the wait creates a group of taxpayers who can't choose their representatives.

"You're civically dead and you can't vote for the people who are levying those taxes," he said.

The bill that would eliminate the wait would alter a 2005 law. Before then, felonies in Nebraska brought a lifetime voting ban in most cases.

At the time Nebraska was in step with other states. Now, while a few states require wait times for specific offenses or define completion of a sentence as including things such as fines and restitution, Nebraska is alone in requiring a general waiting period beyond imprisonment and release from parole or probation, said Margaret Love, co-founder and director of the Collateral Consequences Resource Center, which keeps a 50-state database on restoration of rights.

The bill's author, Democratic state Sen. Justin Wayne, said he was going door to door in his first election in 2016 and was told by would-be constituents that they could not vote. Much of the reason was confusion over the law's waiting period, he said.

He has introduced bills multiple times to do away with the wait period, coming close to success in 2017 when a bill passed the Legislature but was vetoed by then-Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts. Wayne, who represents parts of Omaha with strong minority populations, said reconnecting people to the voting process is integral to successful reentry. His bill advanced this past week from a committee to the full Legislature.

"When people get out of our system, they've got to feel engaged in their community, and the number

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one way for a person to feel engaged in their community is to be able to vote for the leadership of that community," he said.

Kathy Wilcot, a member of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, was the lone dissenter from among the nearly 20 witnesses who spoke on Wayne's bill. Wilcot stressed she was speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the university.

"I do think that hopefully the waiting period reinforces the fact that voting is something very special, and hopefully that will be part of the things that an individual would consider if they're tempted to break the law again," she said.

Three of the witnesses with criminal records who spoke in favor of the legislation said in later interviews the waiting period is not a deterrent to future crime, but rather a barrier for those who have served their sentences.

King, 51, fought addiction for years and spent five years in prison after being convicted of possessing the party drug Ecstasy and theft by deception, ending probation last August.

King works in the HIV/AIDS field and volunteers at various organizations, but said voting is still the most direct way to be involved and became tearful when talking about being unable to vote.

"I felt so hopeless and helpless not being able to have my voice heard in this last election," King said. "There are a lot of things that were on the ballot here in Nebraska that hit home with a lot of things that I advocate for."

Demetrius Gatson is among the more than 10,000 people in Nebraska who has no right to vote because they haven't completed their sentences. Because of her probation, she will have to wait until 2030 to vote.

Since her 2018 release, she has obtained graduate degrees and served in a variety of volunteer roles. Now 48, Gatson has set up her own nonprofit and is executive director of Q.U.E.E.N.S Butterfly House, a safe house for women trying to reenter society.

For the people she works with, being able to register to vote provides a sense of acceptance, especially when there are so many barriers on where they can live, jobs they can work and who they can associate with, she said.

Gatson said there are critical issues she cares about, including education and criminal justice, but said, "I don't have a say in anything that goes on in my country because I'm a felon."

Steven Scott, 33, was paroled in 2015 after serving more than four years on assault and other charges. After his release, he was rejected repeatedly for apartments, got a job only because his boss knew him and had his pursuit of an advanced degree derailed after his record came to light.

He is now married with two small children and owns his own business, a physical rehabilitation and athletic coaching center. He also has regained voting rights and cast ballots for Republican candidates in his first elections, including 2020. He sees the two-year wait period as one link in a long chain of barriers for those trying to reenter society.

"You can't harm society by voting," he said. "You can only help it."

## Recycling lake litter, Ugandan makes innovative tourist boat

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

LUZIRA, Uganda (AP) — Flowering plants rise as if by magic from Lake Victoria onto a wooden boat, giving it a leafy ambiance that enchants many visitors.

The initial attraction becomes more compelling when tourists to Uganda learn that the greenery emerges from an innovative recycling project which uses thousands of dirt-encrusted plastic bottles to anchor the boat.

Former tour guide James Kateeba started building the boat in 2017 in response to the tons of plastic waste he saw in the lake after heavy rains. He realized the vessel could serve as an example of a sustainable business on the shores of Lake Victoria: a floating restaurant and bar that could be unmoored to drift for pleasure.

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Many who come to relax here in Luzira, a lakeside suburb of Uganda's capital, Kampala, know nothing of the boat's backstory. Kateeba insists it's first and foremost "a conservation effort," one man's attempt to protect one of Africa's great lakes from degradation.

Lake Victoria is the world's second-largest freshwater lake and spans three countries. Yet it is plagued by runoff waste and other pollution, sand mining and a decline in water levels due in part to climate change.

Layers of plastic waste float near some beaches during the rainy season, a visible sign of the pollution that's a worry for fishing communities heavily dependent on the lake.

"The fact that we had a problem of pollution as a country ... I decided to design something out of the ordinary," Kateeba said, surveying the lake horizon tinged with a green substance that indicates contaminants from a nearby brewery.

He started by asking fishermen from nearby landing sites to collect plastic bottles for a small fee. He received more than 10 tons of bottles within six months. Batches were tied up in fishing nets and daubed with solid dirt, creating the firm bases upon which the boat is moored and that are also fertile ground for climbing tropical plants.

Today, the boat, marketed as the Floating Island, can comfortably serve 100 visitors at a time, Kateeba said.

"This is morning glory," he said proudly, caressing a vibrant flowering vine one recent afternoon as he prepared to unmoor the boat for the enjoyment of his customers. Elsewhere on the boat, a group of Tik-Toking teenagers danced. Upstairs, a carpenter was building a new wooden sun deck.

Jaro Matusiewicz, a businessman visiting from Greece, said he had "never seen a place like this," praising the boat's "accommodative" atmosphere as he dug into fish and chips.

"This is a very good idea," he said. "If he's collecting the bottles and using them, it's fantastic! ... You are not only cleaning the environment but also providing something unique, very unique."

A similar project was launched in 2018 on the beaches of Kenya, where a small boat, known as the Flipflop, was built entirely from recycled plastic that once littered sandy shores and towns along the Indian Ocean.

In 2021 the Flipflop went on a voyage on Lake Victoria "to raise awareness of the pollution plaguing the region's most critical freshwater ecosystem," according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Kateeba said he hopes his boat is exemplary.

"I am sure, with some bit of experience that we gain from this, we should be able to encourage other people to design things," he said. "Other methods, not necessarily this type ... of trying to deal with plastic pollution on Lake Victoria."

## Crisis over suspected Iran schoolgirl poisonings escalates

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A crisis over suspected poisonings targeting Iranian schoolgirls escalated Sunday as authorities acknowledged over 50 schools were struck in a wave of possible cases. The poisonings have spread further fear among parents as Tehran has faced months of unrest.

It remains unclear who or what is responsible since the alleged poisonings began in November in the Shiite holy city of Qom. Reports now suggest schools across 21 of Iran's 30 provinces have seen suspected cases, with girls' schools the site of nearly all the incidents.

The attacks have raised fears that other girls could be poisoned apparently just for going to school. Education for girls has never been challenged in the over 40 years since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran has been calling on the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan to have girls and women return to school.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi on Saturday said without elaborating that investigators had recovered "suspicious samples" in the course of their investigations into the incidents, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. He called for calm among the public, while also accusing the "enemy's media terrorism" of inciting more panic over the alleged poisonings.

However, it wasn't until the poisonings received international media attention that hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi announced an investigation into the incidents on Wednesday.

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Vahidi said at least 52 schools had been affected by suspected poisonings. Iranian media reports have put the number of schools at over 60. At least one boy's school reportedly has been affected.

Videos of upset parents and schoolgirls in emergency rooms with IVs in their arms have flooded social media. Making sense of the crisis remains challenging, given that nearly 100 journalists have been detained by Iran since the start of protests in September over the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini. She had been detained by the country's morality police and later died.

The security force crackdown on those protests has seen at least 530 people killed and 19,700 others detained, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran.

Attacks on women have happened in the past in Iran, most recently with a wave of acid attacks in 2014 around Isfahan, at the time believed to have been carried out by hard-liners targeting women for how they dressed.

Speculation in Iran's tightly controlled state media has focused on the possibility of exile groups or foreign powers being behind the poisonings. That was also repeatedly alleged during the recent protests without evidence. In recent days, Germany's foreign minister, a White House official and others have called on Iran to do more to protect schoolgirls — a concern Iran's Foreign Ministry has dismissed as "crocodile tears."

However, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom noted that Iran has "continued to tolerate attacks against women and girls for months" amid the recent protests.

"These poisonings are occurring in an environment where Iranian officials have impunity for the harassment, assault, rape, torture and execution of women peacefully asserting their freedom of religion or belief," Sharon Kleinbaum of the commission said in a statement.

Suspicion in Iran has fallen on possible hard-liners for carrying out the suspected poisonings. Iranian journalists, including Jamileh Kadivar, a prominent former reformist lawmaker at Tehran's Ettelaat newspaper, have cited a supposed communique from a group calling itself Fidayeen Velayat that purportedly said that girls' education "is considered forbidden" and threatened to "spread the poisoning of girls throughout Iran" if girls' schools remain open.

Iranian officials have not acknowledged any group called Fidayeen Velayat, which roughly translates to English as "Devotees of the Guardianship." However, Kadivar's mention of the threat in print comes as she remains influential within Iranian politics and has ties to its theocratic ruling class. The head of the Ettelaat newspaper also is appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Kadivar wrote Saturday that another possibility is "mass hysteria." There have been previous cases of this over the last decades, most recently in Afghanistan from 2009 through 2012. Then, the World Health Organization wrote about so-called "mass psychogenic illnesses" affecting hundreds of girls in schools across the country.

"Reports of stench smells preceding the appearance of symptoms have given credit to the theory of mass poisoning," the WHO wrote at the time. "However, investigations into the causes of these outbreaks have yielded no such evidence so far."

Iran has not acknowledged asking the world health body for assistance in its investigation. The WHO did not immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday.

However, Kadivar also noted that hard-liners in Iranian governments in the past carried out so-called "chain murders" of activists and others in the 1990s. She also referenced the killings by Islamic vigilantes in 2002 in the city of Kerman that saw one victim stoned to death and others tied up and thrown into a swimming pool, where they drowned. She described those vigilantes as being members of the Basij, an all-volunteer force in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

"The common denominator of all of them is their extreme thinking, intellectual stagnation and rigid religious view that allowed them to have committed such violent actions," Kadivar wrote.



## Nations reach accord to protect marine life on high seas

By CHRISTINA LARSON and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time, United Nations members have agreed on a unified treaty to protect biodiversity in the high seas — nearly half the planet's surface — concluding two weeks of talks in New York.

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea came into force in 1994, before marine biodiversity was a well-established concept.

An updated framework to protect marine life in the regions outside national boundary waters, known as the high seas, had been in discussions for more than 20 years, but previous efforts to reach an agreement had repeatedly stalled. The unified agreement treaty was reached late Saturday.

"We only really have two major global commons — the atmosphere and the oceans," said Georgetown marine biologist Rebecca Helm. While the oceans may draw less attention, "protecting this half of earth's surface is absolutely critical to the health of our planet."

Now that long-awaited treaty text has been finalized, Nichola Clark, an oceans expert at the Pew Charitable Trusts who observed the talks in New York, said, "This is a once in a generation opportunity to protect the oceans — a major win for biodiversity."

The treaty will create a new body to manage conservation of ocean life and establish marine protected areas in the high seas. And Clark said that's critical to achieve the U.N. Biodiversity Conference's recent pledge to protect 30% of the planet's waters, as well as its land, for conservation.

The treaty also establishes ground rules for conducting environmental impact assessments for commercial activities in the oceans.

"It means all activities planned for the high seas need to be looked at, though not all will go through a full assessment," said Jessica Battle, an oceans governance expert at the Worldwide Fund for Nature.

Many marine species — including dolphins, whales, sea turtles and many fish — make long annual migrations, crossing national borders and the high seas. Efforts to protect them — and human communities that rely on fishing or tourism related to marine life — have previously been hampered by a confusing patchwork of laws.

"This treaty will help to knit together the different regional treaties to be able to address threats and concerns across species' ranges," said Battle.

That protection also helps coastal biodiversity and economies, said Gladys Martínez de Lemos, executive director of the nonprofit Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense focusing on environmental issues across Latin America.

"Governments have taken an important step that strengthens the legal protection of two-thirds of the ocean and with it marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of coastal communities," she said.

The question now is how well the ambitious treaty will be implemented.

The high seas have long suffered exploitation due to commercial fishing and mining, as well as pollution from chemicals and plastics. The new agreement is about "acknowledging that the ocean is not a limitless resource, and it requires global cooperation to use the ocean sustainably," said Malin Pinsky, a biologist at Rutgers University.

## Jon Jones returns to win UFC heavyweight title in 1st round

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Jon Jones ended a three-year sabbatical from the UFC, moved up to its highest weight class and then left no doubt Saturday night about his place in the sport's history.

Already widely considered the greatest UFC fighter, the 35-year-old Jones took Ciryl Gane to the mat just a little more than a minute into the first round and won with a guillotine choke at 2:04 in UFC 285.

"I'm so excited," Jones said. "I've been working for this for a long time. A people thought I wasn't coming back. I've been faithful to my goal, faithful to my mission."

As short as the fight was, Jones made sure to take his time entering the octagon, playing up to the

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sold-out crowd of 19,471. UFC President Dana White said the gate was \$12.5 million, the highest for a heavyweight match and the fourth-highest ever.

This was Jones' first fight in three years and his first in the heavyweight division. The former light heavyweight champion said it was important to cement in his own mind that he deserved the honor as the greatest ever.

With another GOAT, Tom Brady, sitting nearby, Jones did just that. Brady flew in the day of the fight from Florida and spent time with Jones' brother, Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Chandler Jones.

"(Jones is) a total freak of nature," White said, "and he's the best ever."

There were questions whether so much time off would affect Jones' effectiveness, and he spent time at his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to prepare for this night. His last fight was Feb. 8, 2020, a unanimous decision over Dominick Reyes.

Jones didn't look the same as did before taking the time off, and he acknowledged the extra weight he put on took away his muscle tone. All along, though, Jones insisted looks were deceiving.

He backed up his words.

"Cyril Gane is a monster," White said. "Jon Jones showed up and treated him like a kid."

Jones believed the time away preparing for this night would show the step up in weight was worth it. He hired a team in Albuquerque to get him into optimal shape.

"I had to show up and get (Gane) down to the ground," Jones said. "I been wresting since I was 12 years old. I feel stronger than ever. Once I got him in my hands, I know I could take control."

The victory extended Jones' record unbeaten streak to 19 in a row, and he improved to 27-1 with one no-contest. He won a record 14 title fight at light heavyweight.

Jones said he next wants Stipe Miocic, who is the second-ranked contender and who Jones called the greatest heavyweight ever. White said that fight will take place, but didn't know when it would occur.

France's Gane, 32, was the top-ranked heavyweight contender. He dropped to 11-2.

"This one is so painful," Gane said. "This one is a win lost. So now this is past, and most of all for what I see is in the future. I'm going to go straight back to the gym."

In the co-main event in a women's bout, sixth-ranked Alexa Grasso (16-3) of Mexico submitted champion Valentina Shevchenko (23-4) Kyrgyzstan by 4:34 at of the fourth round to capture the belt. Grasso became the third Mexican champion.

"I feel like this is a dream," Grasso said. "I've dreamed of this moment."

Shevchenko, 34, had won her previous eight title matches and was in control of this one through three rounds by dictating the action and repeatedly taking Grasso to the floor.

Grasso, however, got Shevchenko to the mat late in the fourth when the now former champ went for a back kick. Then Grasso, 29, put Shevchenko in a position where she was forced to tap out.

Shevchenko said she wanted a rematch, but White wasn't sure it would happen.

Middleweight Bo Nickal, 27, won his UFC debut, submitting Jamie Pickett, 34 by arm triangle at 2:54 of the first round. Nickal won three NCAA wrestling championships at Penn State. He moved to 4-0 overall; Pickett is 13-9.

Scenes of the remake of 1989 movie "Road House" were shot in between action in the octagon with actor Jake Gyllenhaal portraying an MMA fighter.

## Year after the slap, Chris Rock punches back in new special

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

A year after Will Smith smacked him on the Academy Awards stage, Chris Rock finally gave his rebuttal in a forceful stand-up special, streamed live on Netflix, in which the comedian bragged that he "took that hit like Pacquiao."

The 58-year-old comedian on Saturday night performed his first stand-up special since last year's Oscars in a much-awaited sequel that had all the hype — and more — of a Manny Pacquiao prizefight. "Chris Rock: Selective Outrage," streamed live from the Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore, marked Netflix's first

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foray into live streaming. But it was also a long-awaited comedy counterpunch to Academy Awards infamy.

Rock, performing in all white and with a Prince medallion around his neck, immediately touched on last year's Oscars while riffing on "wokeness," hypersensitivity and what he called "selective outrage."

"You never know who might get triggered," said Rock. "Anybody who says words hurt hasn't been punched in the face."

But Rock then launched into a series of wide-ranging topics examining contemporary issues, including virtue signaling, high-priced yoga pants, the Duchess of Sussex, the Kardashians, abortion rights, the Capitol riot and what he called America's biggest addition: Attention.

"We used to want love, now we just want likes," said Rock.

Rock, who also riffed on how he'd respond if his father transitioned to a woman (he would support him, Rock said), made clear "Selective Outrage" was not going to be just a Will Smith show. Only occasionally did Rock's material dovetail with the 2022 Oscars, like it did when Rock joked about the oddity of Snoop Dogg becoming such a venerated pitch man for advertisers.

"I'm not dissing Snoop," said Rock. "The last thing I need is another mad rapper."

But an hour into his set, Rock closed the special with a torrent of material about the notorious Academy Awards moment.

"You all know what happened to me, getting smacked by Suge Smith. Everybody knows," Rock said. "It still hurts. I got 'Summertime' ringing in my ears."

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.

"I'm not a victim, baby," said Rock. "You will never see me on Oprah or Gayle crying. You will never see it. Never going to happen."

But Rock did use his encounter with Smith to shape and enliven his second stand-up special for Netflix. Some of his best material was on their physical differences.

"We are not the same size. This guy does movies with his shirt off," said Rock. "You will never see me do a movie with my shirt off. If I'm in a movie getting open-heart surgery, I got on a sweater."

"He played Muhammed Ali," added Rock. "I played Pookie in 'New Jack City.'"

Ultimately, Rock suggested he was just caught in the crossfire in Smith's relationship with his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith. It was a joke that Rock told about Pinkett Smith that prompted Smith to stride on stage and strike Rock. The comedian on Saturday referenced Pinkett Smith's earlier confessions of having an "entanglement" with another man while married.

"I did not have any entanglements," said Rock. "She hurt him way more than he hurt me."

"I love Will Smith," added Rock. "Now I watch 'Emancipation' just to see him get whooped."

Before dropping his microphone and holding his arms up triumphantly, Rock left the crowd with one last zinger. Rock said the reason why he didn't physically retaliate at the Oscars was because "I got parents."

"And you know what my parents taught me?" he said. "Don't fight in front of white people."

Netflix added pre- and post-show bookends of star-studded live programming with, as host comedian Ronny Chieng said, "every comedy legend who owes Netflix a favor." Bono lent a opening introduction. Dana Carvey and David Spade hosted the after-show. Paul McCartney, Tracy Morgan, Adam Sandler, Jerry Seinfeld and one of last year's Oscar hosts, Wanda Sykes, all added pre-taped messages. Arsenio Hall guaranteed Rock's set would cause Smith to smack his television set.

For much of the past year, Rock has 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. 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."

After plenty of processing, Rock retook 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,

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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.

As new as the live "Selective Outrage" was for Netflix, it was hard not to notice a few familiar things about it.

"You've got to give it to the tech companies for inventing something that existed for decades," said Chieng. "We're doing a comedy show on Saturday night ... live. Genius."

## Biden's Selma visit puts spotlight back on voting rights

By AAMER MADHANI and KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to pay tribute to the heroes of "Bloody Sunday," joining thousands for the annual commemoration of the seminal moment in the civil rights movement that led to passage of landmark voting rights legislation nearly 60 years ago.

The visit to Selma, Alabama, on Sunday also presents Biden with the opportunity to speak directly to the current generation of civil rights activists. Many feel dejected because Biden has been unable to make good on a campaign pledge to bolster voting rights and are eager to see his administration keep the issue in the spotlight.

Biden intends to use his remarks to underscore the importance of commemorating Bloody Sunday so that history can't be erased, while making the case that the fight for voting rights remains integral to delivering economic justice and civil rights for Black Americans, according to White House officials.

This year's commemoration also comes as the historic city of roughly 18,000 is still digging out from the aftermath of a January EF-2 tornado that destroyed or damaged thousands of properties in and around Selma.

Ahead of Biden's visit, the Rev. William Barber II, a co-chair of Poor People's Campaign, along with six other activists wrote to Biden and members of Congress to express their frustration with the lack of progress on voting rights legislation. They also urged Washington politicians visiting Selma this weekend not to sully the memories of the late civil rights activists John Lewis, Hosea Williams and others with empty platitudes.

"We're saying to President Biden, let's frame this to America as a moral issue, and let's show how it affects everybody," Barber said in an interview. "When voting rights passed after Selma, it didn't just help Black people. It helped America itself. We need the president to reframe this: When you block voting rights, you're not just hurting Black people. You're hurting America itself."

Few moments have had as lasting importance to the civil rights movement as what happened on March 7, 1965, in Selma and in the weeks that followed.

Some 600 peaceful demonstrators led by Lewis and Williams had gathered that day, just weeks after the fatal shooting of a young Black man, Jimmie Lee Jackson, by an Alabama trooper.

Lewis, who would later serve in the U.S. House representing Georgia, and the others were brutally beaten by Alabama troopers and sheriff's deputies as they tried to cross Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge at the start of what was supposed to be a 54-mile walk to the state capital in Montgomery, part of a larger effort to register Black voters in the South.

The images of the police violence sparked outrage across the country. Days later, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. led what became known as the "Turnaround Tuesday" march, in which marchers approached a wall of police at the bridge and prayed before turning back.

President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eight days after Bloody Sunday,

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calling Selma one those rare moments in American history where "history and fate meet at a single time." On March 21, King began a third march, under federal protection, that grew by thousands by the time they arrived at the state capital. Five months later, Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law.

As a 2020 White House candidate, Biden vowed to pursue sweeping legislation to bolster protection of voting rights, .

Biden unveiled his legislation in 2021 — naming it the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. It included provisions to restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that allows wealthy donors to bankroll political causes anonymously.

It passed in the then-Democratic-controlled House, but failed to garner the 60 votes needed to win passage in the Senate. With Republicans now in control of the House, passage of such sweeping legislation is highly unlikely.

Keisha Lance Bottoms, director of the White House office of public engagement, said Biden understands civil rights activists' anger over the lack of progress.

"He's frustrated," she said. "But it doesn't mean we have to stop. It doesn't mean we stop pushing in the way that then 25-year-old John Lewis led 600 marchers across that bridge in Selma."

Civil rights activists say the Biden administration can do more on the issue.

Two years ago on the day of the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration, Biden issued an executive order directing federal agencies to expand access to voter registration, called on the heads of agencies to come up with plans to give federal employees time off to vote or volunteer as nonpartisan poll workers, and more.

But many federal agencies are lagging in meeting the voting registration provision of Biden's order, according to a report published Thursday by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

Only three of 10 agencies reviewed — the departments of Interior, Treasury and Veterans Affairs — were rated on track in integrating voter registration services into their everyday interactions with the public, according to the report.

The group says if agencies fully implemented voter registration efforts laid out in the executive order, it would generate an additional 3.5 million voter registration applications annually.

"We are two years into this executive order and two years into this administration, and agencies have had plenty of time for for evaluation and deliberation," said Laura Williamson, associate director for democracy at the left-leaning group Demos.

Selma officials hope Biden will also address the January tornado that devastated the city and laid bare issues of poverty that have persisted in Selma for decades.

Biden approved a disaster declaration and agreed to provide extra help for debris cleanup and removal, a cost that Selma Mayor James Perkins said the small city could not afford on its own. Perkins said Selma still needs more help.

"I understand other communities our size and our demographics have similar challenges ... but I don't think anyone can claim what Selma has done for this nation and the contributions that we made to this nation," he said.

## 76ers rally to win 133-130, snap Bucks' 16-game streak

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Nothing could faze the Philadelphia 76ers.

Not the loss of two starters. Not an 18-point deficit late in the third quarter. Not even the fact they were facing the NBA's hottest team on the road.

Joel Embiid made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 41.4 seconds left and the 76ers rallied to beat Milwaukee 133-130 on Saturday night, snapping the Bucks' 16-game winning streak.

"You find something that works and you try to stick with it," said James Harden, who had 38 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. "We found something late, in that fourth quarter, and we just stuck with it. We got some stops and things changed for us."

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Milwaukee had the longest winning streak by any NBA team since the Phoenix Suns had 18 straight victories early last season. The streak ended because the Bucks got outscored 48-31 during a fourth quarter in which the 76ers shot 12 of 21 overall, 7 of 11 from 3-point range and 17 of 19 from the line.

"They went wherever they wanted to go, scoring from the paint, floaters, isos, offensive rebounds, free throws, 3s," said Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo, who had 34 points and 13 rebounds. "You name it. They were able to get everything. We've got to be able to play 48 minutes of good basketball, defend for 48 minutes. This is a good lesson for us."

Philadelphia completed the comeback even though Tobias Harris didn't play in the second half due to left calf soreness and PJ Tucker sat out the fourth quarter with back spasms. 76ers coach Doc Rivers didn't have an immediate update on either player.

Embiid finished with 31 points, 10 assists and six rebounds. This marked the first time the 76ers had two players collect at least 30 points and 10 assists in the same game since Wilt Chamberlain and Hal Greer did it way back on Oct. 30, 1965.

Philadelphia's MVP candidate still wasn't satisfied. Embiid argued that he "didn't have a good game."

"I thought tonight I could have been better," Embiid said. "I missed a lot of easy shots I usually make." Not when it mattered, though.

The 76ers trailed 125-121 before Harden hit a 3-pointer with 1:21 left. After Antetokounmpo missed a shot from around the basket, Embiid sank a 3-pointer that gave Philadelphia its first lead of the second half. "I had to make it, being down one at that point," Embiid said. "I had to do it."

After Jrue Holiday missed a 3-point attempt with 25 seconds remaining, the 76ers went 6 of 6 from the line the rest of the way to seal the victory.

"I thought it was a great look," Holiday said. "Honestly I thought it was in. I left it a little bit short."

Tyrese Maxey added 26 points and Georges Niang had 16 for the 76ers. Maxey has scored at least 23 in four straight games.

Brook Lopez and Holiday scored 26 points apiece for Milwaukee. Grayson Allen had 20, all during the first 9 minutes, 19 seconds of the third quarter.

Allen went 6 of 6 from 3-point range during that stretch. His final 3-pointer gave Milwaukee a 95-77 lead with 2:41 left in the third.

But the 76ers came all the way back.

"In the last couple minutes, it's a tight game, it's just shot-making and who can get a couple of stops in a row," Harden said. "We were the team to do that."

TIP-INS

76ers: Dewayne Dedmon was available to play but didn't take the floor. Dedmon has been dealing with a sore left hip and hasn't played for the 76ers since signing with them on Feb. 14. ... Rivers, a former Marquette star whose jersey hangs from the Fiserv Forum banners, says he visited with Marquette coach Shaka Smart on Friday night during the team's trip to Milwaukee.

Bucks: The Bucks signed veteran guard Goran Dragic for the rest of the season. ... Wesley Matthews missed a fifth straight game with a strained right calf. ... Antetokounmpo went 16 of 18 on free-throw attempts. One of the misses was a 10-second violation on his first attempt. ... The Bucks signed C Meyers Leonard to a second 10-day contract.

UP NEXT

76ers: At Indiana on Monday.

Bucks: At Washington on Sunday. \_\_\_\_

AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/nba> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

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## China sets this year's economic growth target at 'around 5%'

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's government announced plans for a consumer-led revival of the struggling economy as its legislature opened a session Sunday that will tighten President Xi Jinping's control over business and society.

Premier Li Keqiang, the top economic official, set this year's growth target at "around 5%" following the end of anti-virus controls that kept millions of people at home and triggered protests. Last year's growth in the world's second-largest economy fell to 3%, the second-weakest level since at least the 1970s.

"We should give priority to the recovery and expansion of consumption," Li said in a speech on government plans before the ceremonial National People's Congress in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing.

The full meeting of the 2,977 members of the NPC is the year's highest-profile event but its work is limited to endorsing decisions made by the ruling Communist Party and showcasing official initiatives.

This month, the NPC is due to endorse the appointment of a government of Xi loyalists including a new premier after the 69-year-old president expanded his status as China's most powerful figure in decades by awarding himself a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, possibly preparing to become leader for life. Li, an advocate of free enterprise, was forced out as the No. 2 party leader in October.

Xi's new leadership team will face challenges ranging from weak global demand for exports and lingering U.S. tariff hikes in a feud over technology and security to curbs on access to Western processor chips due to security fears.

Separately, the Ministry of Finance announced a 7.2% budget increase for the ruling party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, to 1.55 trillion yuan (\$224 billion), the 29th straight annual increase. China's military spending is the world's second highest after the United States. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute says the two countries together account for half of global military outlays.

Li's report called for boosting consumer spending by increasing household incomes but gave no details in his unusually brief, 53-minute speech. It was less than half the length of work reports in some previous years.

The premier called for "building up our country's strength and self-reliance in science and technology," an area in which Beijing's state-led efforts to create competitors in electric cars, clean energy, telecoms and other fields have strained relations with Washington and other trading partners. They complain China steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology and improperly subsidizes and shields its fledgling competitors in violation of its market-opening commitments.

Xi earlier singled out encouraging jittery consumers and entrepreneurs to spend and invest as a priority at the ruling party's economic planning meeting in December.

Beijing needs to "fully release consumption potential," Xi said, according to a text released last month.

Since taking power in 2012, Xi has promoted an even more dominant role for the ruling party. He has called for the party to return to its "original mission" as China's economic, social and cultural leader and carry out the "rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation."

Xi has crushed dissent, stepped up censorship and control over information, and tightened control over Hong Kong.

Xi's government has tightened control over e-commerce and other tech companies with anti-monopoly and data security crackdowns that wiped billions of dollars off their stock market value.

Beijing is pressing them to pay for social welfare and official initiatives to develop processor chips and other technology. That has prompted warnings economic growth will suffer.

Li's report Sunday reinforced the importance of state industry. It promised to support entrepreneurs who generate jobs and wealth but also said the government will "enhance the core competitiveness" of state-owned companies that dominate industries from banking and energy to telecoms and steel.

Li also called for "resolute steps" to oppose formal independence for Taiwan, the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory. He called for "peaceful reunification" between China and Taiwan, which split in 1949 after a civil war, but announced no initiatives.

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Taiwan never has been part of the People's Republic of China, but Beijing says it is obligated to unite with the mainland, by force if necessary. Xi's government has stepped up efforts to intimidate the island by flying fighter jets and bombers nearby and firing missiles into the ocean.

Chinese economic growth has struggled since mid-2021, when tighter controls on debt that Beijing worries is dangerously high triggered a slump in the vast real estate industry, which supports millions of jobs. Smaller developers were forced into bankruptcy and some defaulted on bonds, causing alarm in global financial markets.

Longer term, the workforce has been shrinking for a decade, putting pressure on plans to increase China's wealth and global influence.

Consumer spending is gradually recovering, but the International Monetary Fund and some private sector forecasters expect economic growth this year as low as 4.4%, well below the official target.

A measure of factory activity rose to a nine-year high in February. Other measures of activity including the number of subway passengers and express deliveries rose.

A central bank official said Friday real estate activity is recovering and lending for construction and home purchases is rising.

A recovery based on consumer spending is likely to be more gradual than one driven by government stimulus or a boom in real estate investment. But Chinese leaders are trying to avoid reigniting a rise in debt and want to nurture self-sustaining growth based on consumption instead of exports and investment.

The official in line to become premier is Li Qiang, a former party secretary of Shanghai who is close to Xi but has no government experience at the national level. Li Qiang was named No. 2 party leader in October.

That reflects Xi's emphasis on promoting officials with whom he has personal history and bypassing party tradition that leadership candidates need experience as Cabinet ministers or in other national-level posts.

If achieved, the official growth target would be an improvement over last year but down sharply from 2021's 8.1%.

Last year's slump had global repercussions, depressing Chinese sales of autos and consumer goods and demand for oil, food and other imports. Even after the end of anti-virus curbs, auto sales fell by double digits in January and retail sales contracted.

Entrepreneurs and foreign companies have been rattled by tighter political controls.

Foreign business groups said last year global companies were shifting investment plans away from China because travel curbs blocked executives from visiting the country.

Li, the premier, tried to reassure foreign investors by promising to open Chinese markets wider and repeating official pledges of equal treatment with domestic enterprises.

"China is sure to provide even greater business opportunities for foreign companies," he said.

The party has indicated its tech crackdown is winding down but has given no sign it is backing off a campaign to tighten political control over the industry.

Entrepreneurs were shaken anew in mid-February when a star banker, Bao Fan, who was involved in some of the biggest tech deals, disappeared. His company announced last week Bao was "cooperating in an investigation" but gave no details.

## Trump pitches a sequel, but shies away from attacking rivals

By JILL COLVIN, MICHELLE L. PRICE and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump cast himself Saturday as the only Republican candidate who can build on his White House legacy but shied away from directly critiquing his potential rivals, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Trump, giving the headlining address at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, told a cheering crowd that he was engaged in his "final battle" as he tries to return to the White House.

"We are going to finish what we started," he said. "We're going to complete the mission. We're going to see this battle through to ultimate victory."

Though DeSantis, seen as Trump's biggest potential rival, is frequently a subject of name-calling and



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other attacks in Trump's social media posts and in interviews, he wasn't mentioned directly in Trump's address before conservative activists, who earlier in the day applauded when an old video clip of the Florida governor was shown in a montage.

While CPAC was once a must-stop for candidates mulling Republican presidential runs, DeSantis and other major likely contenders skipped this year's gathering amid scandal and as the group has increasingly become aligned with Trump.

The former president's enduring popularity with this segment of voters was on display throughout the conference this week. Some attendees wore Trump-themed outfits, with "MAGA" hats and sequined jackets.

Members of his family and his presidential administration were swarmed like celebrities in the hallways and dominated the list of speakers. The handful of other potential and declared candidates not named Trump who spoke received only tepid applause.

And the annual CPAC straw poll, an unscientific survey of attendees, found Trump the top choice to be the party's nominee, with 62% support, trailed by DeSantis at 20% and businessman Perry Johnson, who announced his long shot bid at the conference, with 5%.

Nearly all — 95% of respondents — said they approved of Trump's performance as president.

Ahead of his speech, Trump told reporters that he would continue his third presidential campaign even if indicted. He is under investigation by prosecutors probing his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Georgia and by the U.S. Justice Department, as well as his handling of classified documents, among other issues.

He condemned all the probes as politically motivated and vowed that criminal charges wouldn't deter him. "Oh, absolutely, I won't even think about leaving," he told reporters, adding that "probably, it'll enhance my numbers, but it's a very bad thing for America. It's very bad for the country."

"This is an audience that supports President Trump," said Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., the No. 3 House Republican, who endorsed Trump days before he officially launched his 2024 campaign.

The only member of House leadership to attend the conference, Stefanik told The Associated Press that Trump continued to be the party's leader.

"President Trump is in a very strong position and I think he will be the Republican nominee," she said.

While Trump did not launch broadsides against his potential challengers for the White House, many of whom were pitching themselves to conservative donors near his Florida home this week, he did repeatedly criticize the old guard of the Republican Party, which is eager to move past him.

"We had a Republican Party that was ruled by freaks, neo-cons, globalists, open borders zealots and fools. But we are never going back to the party of Paul Ryan, Karl Rove and Jeb Bush," he said.

He took only a veiled jab at DeSantis, calling out those who have proposed raising the age for Social Security or privatizing Medicare — positions DeSantis has expressed support for in the past, but has since abandoned. "We're not going to mess with Social Security as Republicans," DeSantis recently said.

Trump told the crowd, "If that's their original thought, that's what they always come back to."

Trump threaded his speech with grievances related to his term in office and outlined his agenda for a second, including restrictions on gender-affirming care and transgender athletes, which drew some of the strongest applause from the room and was a recurrent theme in speeches at the four-day conference.

While many top Republicans steered clear of the conference, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a potential candidate, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who declared her candidacy last month, both spoke Friday and made shrouded critiques of Trump. Their refusal to call him out by name underscored the risks faced by challengers looking to offer an alternative in a party in which Trump remains the dominant force.

"There is no one in that field I want as my president other than Donald J. Trump," said Waverly Woods, a Republican activist and marketer from Virginia Beach, Virginia, who said she likes DeSantis but that Trump has first claim on the hearts of many at the conference.

That includes Woods' sometimes partner in local GOP races, Kim Shourds, whose car bears a "TRUMP WON" license plate.

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DeSantis? She likes him, she said, but not enough. She wants the governor to sit down "and let my man come in and run this country," Shourds said.

But not everyone at CPAC was on board.

E. Payne Kilbourn, a retired Navy submarine captain from Neavitt, Maryland, who now writes and advocates for carbon dioxide, said he was "very, very" happy with Trump's presidency, but now thinks it's time for the party to move on.

"I think Donald Trump's just too toxic for most of the country," said Kilbourn, 69, an independent who votes for Republicans in general elections and wishes Trump would "bow out and just be the guy behind the scenes."

Strategically, he sees DeSantis as better positioned to eventually win the White House.

"I think he would have a better chance of getting elected," he said.

## Snow blankets Northeast as cleanup begins from deadly storm

By BRUCE SCHREINER, DAVID SHARP and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

Cleanup began in battered parts of the South and Midwest after a sprawling storm system produced ferocious winds and heavy snow that caused widespread damage and multiple deaths before racing through the Northeast on Saturday.

More than a foot of snow fell in parts of New York state, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine before the late-winter storm started to ebb late in the day. Driving conditions were hazardous, as dozens of cars, trucks and tractor-trailers slid off roads, police said. In New York's capital region of Albany, crews worked to restore power to nearly 20,000 customers as heavy, damp snow snapped tree branches.

The storm's death toll rose with additional fatalities reported in Indiana and Michigan, while Kentucky's governor said at least five people died in that state as the system spawned straight-line winds, possible tornadoes and powerful thunderstorms in the South on Friday.

The system previously slammed California with as much as 10 feet (3 meters) of snow. Search crews have rescued several Californians stranded in the state's mountain communities, and some residents in the mountains east of Los Angeles will likely remain trapped in their homes for at least another week after the snowfall proved too much to handle for most plows.

In Indiana, a state trooper was struck by a vehicle and killed Friday afternoon while assisting with traffic backups following weather-related crashes.

Master Trooper James R. Bailey, 50, was hit while deploying stop sticks on Interstate 69 near Auburn to stop a speeding vehicle fleeing Fort Wayne police, state police said. A 42-year-old Marion, Indiana, man was arrested and faces a charge of resisting law enforcement causing death to a law enforcement officer.

In Michigan, an 80-year-old man was struck and killed Friday evening by a snowplow that was backing up while clearing snow from a driveway in Ann Arbor, MLive.com reported. The snowplow driver said he didn't know he had struck the man until a bystander got his attention, police said.

At least five deaths were reported in hard-hit Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear said Saturday. The storm, with wind gusts surpassing 70 mph, downed trees and power lines and damaged homes and other buildings.

"This is very significant, widespread damage throughout Kentucky," Beshear said.

In central Tennessee, where the severe weather took down power lines and damaged homes, at least two deaths were blamed on the storm. In both cases, the victims were struck by falling trees, authorities told local news outlets.

About 728,000 utility customers in Kentucky, Michigan and Tennessee were without power, according to PowerOutage.us. More than 330,000 of those customers were in Kentucky, and the governor warned it would take days for utility crews to fully restore service.

Kentucky's electric cooperatives reported hundreds of snapped utility poles and thousands of power lines down across the Bluegrass State. Soft ground from heavy rains slowed the progress of heavy equipment to access damaged infrastructure.

"The damage from this event is as widespread as any natural disaster I have ever seen in Kentucky co-

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op history," said Chris Perry, president and CEO of Kentucky Electric Cooperatives.

In Alabama, a 70-year-old man sitting in his truck in Talledega County was killed when a tree fell onto his vehicle. A 43-year-old man in Lauderdale County and a man in Huntsville also were killed by falling trees Friday, local authorities said. Heavy rain caused flooding in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas.

In the upper Midwest, winter-weary residents dug out Saturday from snowfall that caused widespread power outages and forced Detroit's Metropolitan Wayne County Airport to briefly close late Friday. Thousands of residents in the region already had lost power for days following recent ice storms that slammed Michigan.

Victoria Burnett felt a sense of foreboding as the snow began falling Friday in Farmington Hills, northwest of Detroit. Burnett lost power for seven days following the first ice storm. She was able to use a generator until her service returned.

"When it started snowing (Friday) and I saw it was heavy, wet snow, I was really worried," Burnett said. Her lights flickered, but the power remained on.

## Civilians flee embattled town as Ukrainian pullout looms

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KHROMOVE, Ukraine (AP) — Pressure from Russian forces mounted Saturday on Ukrainians hunkered down in Bakhmut, as residents attempted to flee with help from troops who Western analysts say may be preparing to withdraw from the key eastern stronghold.

A woman was killed and two men were badly wounded by shelling while trying to cross a makeshift bridge out of the city in Donetsk province, according to Ukrainian troops who were assisting them.

A Ukrainian army representative who asked not to be named for operational reasons told The Associated Press that it was now too dangerous for civilians to leave Bakhmut by vehicle and that people had to flee on foot instead.

Bakhmut has for months been a prime target of Moscow's grinding eastern offensive in the war, with Russian troops, including forces from the private Wagner Group, inching ever closer.

An AP team near Bakhmut on Saturday saw a pontoon bridge set up by Ukrainian soldiers to help the few remaining residents reach the nearby village of Khromove. Later they saw at least five houses on fire as a result of attacks in Khromove.

Ukrainian units over the past 36 hours destroyed two key bridges just outside Bakhmut, including one linking it to the nearby town of Chasiv Yar along the last remaining Ukrainian resupply route, according to U.K. military intelligence officials and other Western analysts.

The U.K. defense ministry said in the latest of its regular Twitter updates that the destruction of the bridges came as Russian fighters made further inroads into Bakhmut's northern suburbs.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, assessed late on Friday that Kyiv's actions may point to a looming pullout from parts of the city. It said Ukrainian troops may "conduct a limited and controlled withdrawal from particularly difficult sections of eastern Bakhmut," while seeking to inhibit Russian movement there and limit exit routes to the west.

Capturing Bakhmut would not only give Russian fighters a rare battlefield gain after months of setbacks, but it might rupture Ukraine's supply lines and allow the Kremlin's forces to press toward other Ukrainian strongholds in the Donetsk region.

Civilians spoke about daily struggles as the fighting raged on nearly nonstop, reducing much of Bakhmut to rubble. Husband and wife Hennadiy Mazepa and Natalia Ishkova, who chose to remain in the city, said they lack food and basic utilities.

"Humanitarian (aid) is given to us only once a month. There is no electricity, no water, no gas," Ishkova told AP on Saturday.

"I pray to God that all who remain here will survive," she added.

At the United Nations on Friday, deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said U.N. humanitarian staff reported "intensive hostilities" near Bakhmut and the few humanitarian partners on the ground were focusing on

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evacuating the most vulnerable.

Also Saturday, Russia's defense chief traveled to eastern Ukraine to inspect troops and award them with state decorations, the Defense Ministry said.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited a command post where he was briefed by regional commander Rustam Muradov, according to a video published by the ministry. It did not disclose the command post's location.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's emergency services reported in the morning that the death toll from a Russian missile strike that hit a five-story apartment building in southern Ukraine on Thursday rose to 11.

Emergency services said in an online statement that rescuers pulled three more bodies from the wreckage overnight, some 36 hours after a Russian missile tore through four floors of the building in the riverside city of Zaporizhzhia. A child was among those reported killed, and the rescue effort was ongoing.

Russian shelling on Saturday also killed two residents of front-line communities in the surrounding Zaporizhzhia region, the local military administration reported.

A 57-year-old woman and a 68-year-old man also died in Nikopol, a town farther west near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, as Russian forces fired artillery shells and rockets at Ukrainian-held territory across the Dnieper river, regional Gov. Serhiy Lysak reported.

In the western city of Lviv, hundreds of kilometers from the front lines, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Saturday with the head of the European Union parliament. Hours earlier, Zelenskyy held talks with U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and top European legal officials on how to hold Russia accountable for its actions in Ukraine.

In a joint press briefing with Zelenskyy, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said that "all those responsible" for suspected Russian war crimes in Ukraine, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, must be brought to justice before a durable peace is achieved.

Metsola voiced support for the EU's announcement Thursday that an international center for the prosecution of the crime of aggression — the act of invading another country — would be set up in The Hague.

She also called for Ukraine to start negotiations on joining the 27-nation bloc as early as this year and urged Western nations to keep arming Kyiv as it battles Russian forces in the east and south.

The EU agreed in June to put Ukraine on a path toward membership, setting in motion a process that could take years or even decades. However, Moscow's invasion and Ukraine's request for fast-track consideration have lent urgency to the negotiations.

"Ukraine's future is in the European Union. We will walk all the way with you," Metsola said on Twitter late Friday.

## Ja Morant says he'll get help after video shows apparent gun

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Ja Morant will be away from the Memphis Grizzlies for at least their next two games, the team announced Saturday, not long after the NBA opened an investigation into a social media post by the guard, who livestreamed himself holding what appeared to be a gun at a nightclub.

Morant said in a statement distributed through the agency that represents him that he takes "full responsibility" for his actions and that he was going to "take some time away to get help."

The video was streamed by Morant on his Instagram page early Saturday, hours after the Grizzlies played in Denver. They were flying to Los Angeles on Saturday for games against the Clippers on Sunday and the Lakers on Tuesday.

Morant will miss those two games, at minimum, the Grizzlies said, without further comment.

"We are aware of a social media post involving Ja Morant and are investigating," NBA spokesman Mike Bass said earlier Saturday.

The league will try to speak with Morant as part of that investigation, though it is unclear when any meeting may occur. Morant apologized in a statement released by Tandem Sports + Entertainment.

"I take full responsibility for my actions last night," Morant said. "I'm sorry to my family, teammates,

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coaches, fans, partners, the city of Memphis and the entire Grizzlies organization for letting you down. I'm going to take some time away to get help and work on learning better methods of dealing with stress and my overall well-being."

It was not immediately clear what Morant meant by "help" or if he planned to be away from the team for longer than the two-game minimum announced by the Grizzlies.

The league, if it finds wrongdoing, could fine or suspend Morant. Based on the Grizzlies' statement, the earliest Morant could play is Thursday at home against Golden State. His Instagram and Twitter accounts were disabled shortly after the Grizzlies announced his absence.

Memphis is currently No. 2 in the Western Conference standings, led by Morant, a two-time All-Star averaging 27.1 points and 8.2 assists per game.

This is at least the second time in the last few weeks that Morant has been the subject of a league investigation. Morant's actions were investigated after a Jan. 29 incident in Memphis that he said led to a friend of his being banned from home games for a year.

That incident followed a game against the Indiana Pacers; citing unnamed sources, The Indianapolis Star and USA Today reported that multiple members of the Pacers saw a red dot pointed at them, and The Athletic reported that a Pacers security guard believed the laser was attached to a gun.

The NBA confirmed that unnamed individuals were banned from the arena but said its investigation found no evidence that anyone was threatened with a weapon.

Morant responded to that incident by tweeting that the reports "paint this negative image on me and my fam. & banned my brother from home games for a year. unbelievable." During the Jan. 29 game, there was barking between Pacers players and friends of Morant seated along the sideline. A close friend of Morant's, Davonte Pack, was escorted from the arena as Pacers bench players shouted in Pack's direction.

Pack and Morant also are involved in a civil lawsuit brought after an incident at Morant's home this past summer, in which a 17-year-old alleged that they assaulted him. The Shelby County district attorney's office said in January that it was "aware of the incident, and after careful review of the facts, decided that there was not enough evidence to proceed with a case."

There is precedent for the NBA when sanctioning a player over conduct involving guns. In January 2010, then-Commissioner David Stern suspended Washington's Gilbert Arenas indefinitely without pay after saying the player's behavior made him "not currently fit to take the court."

The suspension followed Arenas getting photographed before a game in Philadelphia playfully pointing his index fingers in a gun imitation at his teammates while he was under investigation by federal and local authorities after admittedly bringing guns into the Wizards' locker room.

Arenas ultimately missed 50 games, the rest of the 2009-10 season.

Morant, the No. 2 pick in the 2019 NBA draft, has become a full-fledged superstar. His five-year, \$194 million extension with the Grizzlies kicks in to start next season and would rise to about \$230 million if he makes an All-NBA team this season.

He also is a sought-after endorser. On Christmas, Nike unveiled Morant's first signature shoe, which is set to be released in the coming weeks. And earlier this week, Powerade announced a multiyear endorsement deal with Morant.

On the same day the Powerade deal was revealed, The Washington Post published a story, based on police records it obtained, detailing how Morant and some associates "have been accused of threatening and even violent behavior," the newspaper said.

The questions about Morant's conduct come at a time when gun violence again is a prominent talking point in the sports world.

Top NBA draft prospect Brandon Miller and his Alabama teammate Jaden Bradley, by courtroom revelations, have been linked to the scene of a killing. Neither has been charged or accused of a crime, but then-teammate Darius Miles and another man are facing capital murder charges.

And New Mexico State's men's basketball season was shut down in February because of a fatal shooting and allegations of locker-room hazing. Mike Peake, the New Mexico State player implicated in the shooting death of New Mexico player Brandon Travis in November, said he was acting in self-defense and has not

been charged with a crime.

## Can't take statins? New pill cuts cholesterol, heart attacks

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Drugs known as statins are the first-choice treatment for high cholesterol but millions of people who can't or won't take those pills because of side effects may have another option.

In a major study, a different kind of cholesterol-lowering drug named Nexletol reduced the risk of heart attacks and some other cardiovascular problems in people who can't tolerate statins, researchers reported Saturday.

Doctors already prescribe the drug, known chemically as bempedoic acid, to be used together with a statin to help certain high-risk patients further lower their cholesterol. The new study tested Nexletol without the statin combination -- and offers the first evidence that it also reduces the risk of cholesterol-caused health problems.

Statins remain "the cornerstone of cholesterol-lowering therapies," stressed Dr. Steven Nissen of the Cleveland Clinic, who led the study.

But people who can't take those proven pills "are very needy patients, they're extremely difficult to treat," he said. This option "will have a huge impact on public health."

Too much so-called LDL or "bad" cholesterol can clog arteries and lead to heart attacks and strokes. Statin pills like Lipitor and Crestor -- or their cheap generic equivalents -- are the mainstay for lowering LDL cholesterol and preventing heart disease or treating those who already have it. They work by blocking some of the liver's cholesterol production.

But some people suffer serious muscle pain from statins. While it's not clear exactly how often that occurs, by some estimates 10% of people who'd otherwise qualify for the pills can't or won't take them. They have limited options, including pricey cholesterol-lowering shots and another kind of pill sold as Zetia.

Nexletol also blocks cholesterol production in the liver but in a different way than statins and without that muscle side effect.

The new five-year study tracked nearly 14,000 people who were unable to tolerate more than a very low dose of a statin. Half got daily Nexletol and half a dummy pill.

The main finding: Nexletol-treated patients had a 13% lower risk of a group of major cardiac problems. Then researchers teased apart those different conditions and found a 23% reduced risk of a heart attack, the biggest impact. The drug also cut by 19% procedures to unclog arteries. There wasn't a difference in deaths, which researchers couldn't explain but said might require longer to detect.

The data was published in the New England Journal of Medicine and presented Saturday at a meeting of the American College of Cardiology. The study was funded by Nexletol maker Esperion Therapeutics.

The results are "compelling," Dr. John H. Alexander of Duke University, who wasn't involved with the study, wrote in the journal. They "will and should" spur use of the drug by patients unwilling or unable to take statins.

"It is premature, however, to consider bempedoic acid as an alternative to statins," he cautioned. "Given the overwhelming evidence of the vascular benefits," statins remain the top choice for most patients.

## Fiery tanker crash kills driver, burns Maryland homes

FREDERICK, Md. (AP) — A tanker truck hauling a flammable liquid crashed on a Maryland highway Saturday and caught fire, killing the driver and damaging several homes and vehicles, authorities said.

The truck crashed around noon on U.S. 15 in Frederick, about an hour's drive west of Baltimore. Photos showed massive flames and billowing smoke.

Fire crews arrived within minutes of receiving several emergency calls and found the truck completely engulfed in a fire that had also spread to three homes and automobiles, Frederick Fire Chief Tom Coe said at a news conference

One of those homes was extensively damaged, displacing the residents. The other two sustained minor

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damage, Coe said.

The tanker driver, who was not immediately identified, died but no other injuries were reported, Coe said.

Authorities said the exact chain of events that led to the crash is under investigation. Officials are also working to determine exactly what substance the tanker was hauling, though Coe said it was believed to be a commonly transported flammable liquid like gasoline or diesel fuel that poses no threat to the general public.

Crews will be monitoring the air quality and isolating the area where the liquid saturated soil for cleanup, he said. Officials said there was no breach of the city's sewer system or a nearby creek.

The crash initially shut down U.S. 15, which runs through the city of about 80,000 people, in both directions, the State Highway Administration said.

## Marianne Williamson begins longshot 2024 challenge to Biden

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Self-help author Marianne Williamson, whose 2020 White House campaign featured more quirky calls for spiritual healing than actual voter support, launched another longshot bid for the presidency on Saturday, becoming the first Democrat to formally challenge President Joe Biden for the 2024 nomination.

"We are upset about this country, we're worried about this country," Williamson told a crowd of more than 600 at a kickoff in the nation's capital. "It is our job to create a vision of justice and love that is so powerful that it will override the forces of hatred and injustice and fear."

The 70-year-old onetime spiritual adviser to Oprah Winfrey should provide only token primary opposition — a testament to how strongly national Democrats are united behind Biden. Still, she tweaked the president, a longtime Amtrak rider, by holding her opening rally at the ornately marble-columned presidential suite at Union Station, Washington's railway hub.

Biden gave his own speech from Union Station just before last November's elections, when he led Democrats to a surprisingly strong showing, urging voters to reject political extremism and saying "democracy itself" was at stake.

Williamson, whose red, blue and black campaign signs feature the dual slogans "A New Beginning" and "Disrupt the System," says she'll be campaigning in early-voting states on the 2024 election calendar.

That includes New Hampshire, which has threatened to defy a Biden-backed plan by the Democratic National Committee to have South Carolina lead off the nominating contests. Democrats and Republicans in New Hampshire have warned that if Biden skips the state's unsanctioned primary and a rival wins it, that outcome could prove embarrassing for the sitting president — even if that challenger has no real shot of actually being the nominee.

Striking a defiant tone Saturday, Williamson denounced "those who feel they are the adults in the room" and aren't taking her candidacy seriously, proclaiming, "Let me in there."

"I have run for president before. I am not naïve about these forces which have no intention of allowing anyone into this conversation who does not align with their predetermined agenda," she said. "I understand that, in their mind, only people who previously have been entrenched in the car that brought us into this ditch can possibly be considered qualified to bring us out of it."

Luke Stowell, 20, a musician and student at American University in Washington who sat in the front row for Williamson's announcement, said "she has a really nice message that incorporates all of the prejudices and the social structures that inhibit, I think, a lot of people on a daily basis."

Seated next to him, 24-year-old American University law student Ivan Claudio noted that, should he win a second term, Biden would be in his late 80s by the time he leaves office and "I think it is a cause for concern."

Biden, the oldest president in U.S. history, would be 86 at the end of a second term. Most people in the United States — and even most Democrats — say they don't want him to run again, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

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The president is expected to announce in the coming weeks that he's running again. His political advisers have said they aren't worried about the Democratic primary but that Biden is anxious to defeat Donald Trump again in the general election. They say a 2024 campaign against another GOP nominee, such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, would look much the same because top Republicans remain promoters of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

Williamson didn't mention Biden by name in her speech, and though she noted that Trump not being reelected in 2020 kept the country from going "over the cliff," she also said it was still "six inches" from doing so.

The Democratic establishment — and even potential presidential hopefuls who could have competed against Biden from the left or middle — is behind Biden, showing how smooth his path to the nomination probably will be. Even if other Democrats follow Williamson into the race, the party is not planning to hold primary debates.

Williamson said she was opposing a free market "mindset" and corrupt political system that she said prioritized greed above all else "like an atomizer spray of economic injustice."

"The American people have been trained to expect so little," she said. "The American people have been played."

A Texas native who now lives in Beverly Hills, California, Williamson is the author of more than a dozen books and ran an unsuccessful independent congressional campaign in California in 2014. In 2020, she was best known for wanting to create a Department of Peace and arguing the federal government should pay large financial reparations to Black Americans as atonement for centuries of slavery and discrimination.

Arguably her most memorable moment of that campaign came during a primary debate when she called for a "moral uprising," but she dropped out of the race shortly before the leadoff Iowa caucuses began.

She said Saturday that the nation faced so many challenges, "I'm not saying one person can fix it. Not even one president can fix it."

"But let me tell you something," Williamson added. "A president who tells it like it is would do a lot of good."

## **Biden expected to tighten rules on US investment in China**

By AAMER MADHANI and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — The Biden administration is close to tightening rules on some overseas investments by U.S. companies in an effort to limit China's ability to acquire technologies that could improve its military prowess, according to a U.S. official familiar with the deliberations.

The soon-to-be-issued executive order from President Joe Biden will limit American investment in advanced technologies that have national security applications — such as next-generation military capabilities that could help China improve the speed and accuracy of military decision making, according to the official, who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The expected action is the latest effort by the White House to target China's military and technology sectors at a time of increasingly fraught relations between the world's two biggest economies.

In October, the Biden administration imposed export controls to limit China's ability to access advanced chips, which it says can be used to make weapons, commit human rights abuses and improve the speed and accuracy of its military logistics.

The complicated relationship has become further strained in recent weeks after the U.S. shot down a Chinese spy balloon last month that traversed the country. The Biden administration has also publicized U.S. intelligence findings that raise concern Beijing is weighing providing Russia weaponry for its ongoing war on Ukraine.

The tensions were on display as top diplomats from the Group of 20 industrialized and developing nations ended a contentious meeting in New Delhi on Thursday with no consensus on the Ukraine war and concerns about China's widening global influence dominating much of the talks.

Meanwhile, China this past week blasted the new House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist



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Party after it held its first hearing on countering Beijing's influence. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning demanded its members "discard their ideological bias and zero-sum Cold War mentality."

Administration officials have been consulting with allies as they've worked on formulating the new regulations on U.S. investment, according to the official.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on Saturday that the Treasury and Commerce departments delivered reports to lawmakers on Friday detailing plans for the new regulatory system to address U.S. overseas investment in advanced technologies. The agencies said they expected to seek additional money for the investment screening program in the White House budget, which is scheduled to be released on March 9, according to the Journal.

A White House National Security Council spokesperson declined to comment on the Treasury and Commerce reports, but noted that administration officials have kept Congress apprised on its progress in crafting an approach to overseas investment.

The expected action is certain to face pushback from U.S. firms. Administration officials have sought to signal to the business community that even as they look to examine rules on U.S. investment in China, they are mindful of not overreaching.

"One of the most important things we can do, from my perspective, is make sure that we draw clear lines between what is competition and what is national security because, fundamentally, my view is that the United States does well when we're competing on a level playing field with any country in the world," Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo said at recent Council on Foreign Relations event. "But we also want, in the narrow spaces where we see national security risk, be able to use the tools at our disposal to protect the national security of the United States of America."

A bipartisan group of lawmakers last year urged Biden to establish a tougher screening system for investments in foreign adversaries with China being top of mind.

## Texas congressman who broke with GOP is censured

By PAUL J. WEBER and KEN MILLER Associated Press

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

The Republican Party of Texas voted 57-5 with one abstention, underlining 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 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 was defiant before the vote and did not attend the meeting of Texas GOP leaders and activists in Austin.

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

Gonzales spent the day working, according to Sarah Young, his spokesperson.

"He talked to veterans, visited with Border Patrol agents, and met constituents," Young said in a statement. "The Republican Party of Texas would be wise to follow his lead and do some actual work."

The vote followed an hourlong, closed-door executive session in which party members were allowed to debate the resolution.

There were no public comments by members before or after the executive session, and the vote was held about one minute after the meeting resumed, followed by applause and cheers from committee members.

In practical terms, a censure allows the state party to come off the sidelines if Gonzales runs again in 2024 and to spend money to remind primary voters about the rebuke. Passage of a censure required a three-fifths majority, or 39 votes of the State Republican Executive Committee, according to committee

Chair Matt Rinaldi.

More than a dozen county GOP clubs in Gonzales' district had 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 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, which 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.

## Chase Elliott out of NASCAR indefinitely after tibia surgery

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Chase Elliott is out indefinitely after undergoing a successful three-hour surgery to repair a fractured tibia, Hendrick Motorsports general manager Jeff Andrews said Saturday.

Andrews said there was no timeline on when the star NASCAR driver would return. Elliott injured his left leg Friday while snowboarding in Colorado. Josh Berry will drive the No. 9 Chevrolet in place of Elliott in Sunday's Cup race in Las Vegas.

"We're going to race a long time together with Chase Elliott and we're going to win a lot more races together," Andrews said. "Certainly, there's a little bit of a setback, and obviously Chase is very disappointed. The most important thing is Chase's health, and we'll have a suit ready for him when he's healthy and ready to get back in a race car."

Andrews said the process has begun to attain a waiver from NASCAR for Elliott — the 2020 Cup champion — to be eligible for this year's playoffs. Waivers have been granted to other drivers for various circumstances.

Brad Keselowski, who won the series championship in 2012, said he wouldn't have a problem if Elliott received a waiver.

"Life happens," Keselowski said. "The schedule is just so demanding. It's inevitable that it's going to happen to somebody sometimes."

Berry, in the meantime, will be in charge of trying to collect points for the team. His first race will be at a place where the 32-year-old has won two Xfinity Series races, including last October, and finished in the top 10 in all four starts.

"I'm going to be learning a new car here in an hour or so, so at least having some success on the track, I think that definitely gives me more confidence in what I'm doing," Berry said Saturday. "It's been a wild couple of days. You never know what will happen when you wake up."

Two-time Cup Series champion Kyle Busch said he spoke with Elliott and shared his own experiences of returning from a broken right leg and left foot at Daytona in 2015. He missed 10 races but then won his first series championship that season.

"Even as good of a support system as I had around me during my injury, there was a time when we were watching the races on Sunday and you kind of break down and miss being out there and being in your car and having a chance of going out there to compete," Busch said. "That's what we live for and build on our whole lives to have success. Chase is plenty young (27) and I'm sure plenty healthy enough that it's not going to be anything too crazy to go through."

Three-time Daytona champion Denny Hamlin missed four races in 2013 after suffering a compound fracture in his back during a crash with Joey Logano.

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"I had to sit out with a back injury in 2013 and watch the car go around with Mark Martin and Brian Vickers and it was like, 'Wow, this is different seeing someone in it,'" Hamlin said. "But I do think there's are positives in it. I think you become rejuvenated. I think you become more appreciative of the opportunity that you have."

Most injuries occur on the track, and team owner Rick Hendrick had until 2021 a policy of not letting drivers compete in other series or in potentially high-danger activities.

Andrews said Hendrick Motorsports will not change its new policy regarding drivers' activities away from the track, saying "that these guys have to go out and live a life."

Elliott would have been coming off a strong performance had he not been injured. He was second last week in Fontana, California, in the series' second event of the season. Elliott was involved in a crash the week before at the Daytona 500.

He is a second-generation driver and the son of NASCAR Hall of Famer Bill Elliott. The Georgia native is NASCAR's five-time fan-voted most popular driver.

## UN nuclear head says Iran pledges more access for inspectors

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — The head of the U.N.'s nuclear agency said Saturday that Iran pledged to restore cameras and other monitoring equipment at its nuclear sites and to allow more inspections at a facility where particles of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade were recently detected.

But a joint statement issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency and Iran's nuclear body only gave vague assurances that Tehran would address longstanding complaints about the access it gives the watchdog's inspectors to its disputed nuclear program.

IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and other top officials in Tehran earlier Saturday.

"Over the past few months, there was a reduction in some of the monitoring activities" related to cameras and other equipment "which were not operating," Grossi told reporters upon his return to Vienna. "We have agreed that those will be operating again."

He did not provide details about which equipment would be restored or how soon it would happen, but appeared to be referring to Iran's removal of surveillance cameras from its nuclear sites in June 2022, during an earlier standoff with the IAEA.

"These are not words. This is very concrete," Grossi said of the assurances he received in Tehran.

His first visit to Iran in a year came days after the IAEA reported that uranium particles enriched up to 83.7% — just short of weapons-grade — were found in Iran's underground Fordo nuclear site.

The confidential quarterly report by the nuclear watchdog, which was distributed to member nations Tuesday, came as tensions were already high amid months of anti-government protests in Iran and Western anger at its export of attack drones to Russian forces fighting in Ukraine.

The IAEA report said inspectors in January found that two cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Fordo were configured in a way "substantially different" to what Iran had previously declared. That raised concerns that Iran was speeding up its enrichment.

Grossi said the Iranians had agreed to boost inspections at the facility by 50%. He also confirmed the agency's findings that there has not been any "production or accumulation" of uranium at the higher enrichment level, "which is a very high level."

Iran has sought to portray any highly enriched uranium particles as a minor byproduct of enriching uranium to 60% purity, which it has been doing openly for some time.

The chief of Iran's nuclear program, Mohammad Eslami, acknowledged the findings of the IAEA report at a news conference with Grossi in Tehran but said their "ambiguity" had been resolved.

Nonproliferation experts say Tehran has no civilian use for uranium enriched to even 60%. A stockpile of material enriched to 90%, the level needed for weapons, could quickly be used to produce an atomic bomb, if Iran chooses.

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Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers limited Tehran's uranium stockpile and capped enrichment at 3.67% — enough to fuel a nuclear power plant. It also barred nuclear enrichment at Fordo, which was built deep inside a mountain in order to withstand aerial attacks.

The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018, reimposing crushing sanctions on Iran, which then began openly breaching the deal's restrictions. Efforts by the Biden administration, European countries and Iran to negotiate a return to the deal reached an impasse last summer.

The joint statement issued Saturday said Iran "expressed its readiness to continue its cooperation and provide further information and access to address the outstanding safeguards issues."

That was a reference to a separate set of issues from the highly enriched particles.

Over the past four years, the IAEA has accused Iran of stonewalling its investigation into traces of processed uranium found at three undeclared sites in the country. The agency's 35-member board of governors censured Iran twice last year for failing to fully cooperate.

The board could do so again when it meets on Monday, depending in part on how Western officials perceive the results of Grossi's visit.

Western officials have suggested the so-called safeguards probe of the three sites could confirm long-standing suspicions that Iran had a nuclear weapons program up until 2003. Iran has long denied ever seeking nuclear weapons and continues to insist that its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes.

The dispute over the safeguards probe was the main obstacle in negotiations last year to restore the nuclear agreement.

"The process has been long. I have not hidden that for us, it has been too long," Grossi said, referring to the safeguards issue. But he said there was a "marked improvement" in his dialogue with Iranian officials.

"I was heard," he said. "I hope we will be seeing results soon. We will see."

## **Paid express lanes grow more popular in once-reluctant South**

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

Trucker Tim Chelette has been making the same twice-daily drive for 16 years hauling empty whiskey barrels from Louisville, Kentucky, to the Jack Daniels distillery in Tennessee, yet his workday keeps getting longer due to time lost in Nashville traffic.

Although trucks wouldn't be eligible for the pay-to-use express lanes Republican Gov. Bill Lee is advocating for some of Tennessee's most-congested highways, Chelette supports them because he thinks enough drivers in the fast-growing state capital would take advantage to benefit everyone.

"They're going to have to do something," said Chelette, of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, who gets paid by distance, not time — even when his 245-mile (394-kilometer) return trip to the Lynchburg distillery spikes by an hour or more during afternoon rush. "When I get stuck in traffic, I lose money."

Unlike traditional toll plazas where every vehicle that passes through pays a standard fee, price-managed lanes allow some drivers to pay up to circumvent congestion — and the fee usually increases as the traffic does.

According to the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association (IBTTA), which lobbies on behalf of the projects, 54 of the 89 tolling facilities that opened in the U.S. in the past decade were for price-managed lanes. They can be found across the South in Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia, as well as such other places as California, Colorado, Washington and Minnesota.

Opponents call them "Lexus lanes," implying that only drivers of expensive cars can afford to use them, but Lee prefers another name: "choice lanes."

"I think (the name) is brilliant. I wish I had invented it," said Robert Poole, director of transportation policy at the libertarian Reason Foundation and a vocal advocate for price-managed lanes.

The marketing pitch is important, particularly in the conservative South where voters have long resisted anything resembling a tax hike. But with fuel tax revenues and federal infrastructure payments failing to keep up with the need to repair aging roads or add capacity to reduce congestion, the projects are winning favor — even, and perhaps especially, in Republican-led states where "toll" has been considered a

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four-letter word in more ways than one.

"All you're doing is allowing those wealthy enough to use those lanes a quicker ride to work," said Terri Hall, founder and director of Texans for Toll-free Highways. "It's like a scapegoat for state legislatures to say, 'We solved the problem.' No, you kicked the can down the road."

Supporters counter that the lanes are a way to pay for roads without raising taxes, though they acknowledge they're sometimes a tricky sell — particularly the public-private partnerships that have funded many of the projects.

"If you have somebody who is anti-tax and pro-free market, they might say it's a great idea," said Pat Jones, IBTTA's executive director and CEO. "Then, if you tell them the company is from Spain or Australia, they'll say, 'I don't want there to be foreigners owning highways.' You often see opposition to toll facilities before people use them, but once they're open and people realize they're getting value ... the resistance tends to go down."

California's experience with tolling — both traditional plazas and price-managed lanes — has provided fodder for advocates on both sides of the heated debate.

A grand jury in Orange County examined a state agency that was created to build three traditional toll roads. Its report, issued in 2021, found that on one hand, California produced "excellent roads with minimal tax dollars." But on the other, the jurors found ballooning debt and the need to change the initial plans amid financial downturns meant that drivers are on pace to shell out \$28 billion by 2053 for roads that cost a tenth of that to build.

The nation's first price-managed lane opened in 1995 in Orange County, using a public-private partnership to fund it. Poole, who advised on the project and still calls it a model for others, said officials agreed not to add free lanes on the corridor for 35 years. Surging growth ultimately made that impossible, so the county terminated the contract and paid the company for its lost revenue. New bonds were issued, and the tolls had to stay in place to pay for them.

"These agencies often become self-fulfilling entities," said Jay Beeber, director of public policy for the National Motorists Association, which advocates for drivers' rights. "They have huge organizations with lots of staff members, lots of salaries, huge pensions from the government, and they want to stay in business forever. Nobody wants to legislate themselves out of a job."

Lee is seeking legislative support to authorize a public-private partnership for the project in Tennessee — one of 14 states that don't have tolls on any roads.

Republican state Sen. Frank Niceley said he expects Lee will get enough votes to pass the plan, but he strongly opposes it — even pointing out that fascist Italian dictator Benito Mussolini liked public-private partnerships, too.

"We're not really giving these things to the private sector," Niceley said. "We're kind of co-signing the note. And most people who co-sign the note end up paying the note."

The governor's administration brushes off such criticism. Will Reid, chief engineer and deputy commissioner at the Tennessee Department of Transportation, said the state is uniquely positioned to establish a partnership that avoids the financial pitfalls seen in California and elsewhere.

"We're one of six no-debt states," Reid said. "We own every piece of pavement. We own every bridge. We have a strong belief in paying as we go, and paying for the things we decide to build."

Mark Burris, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Texas A&M University, researched public sentiment for price-managed lanes in four metro areas: Los Angeles, Dallas, Miami and the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. His review found widespread support from drivers in those areas, with more than three-quarters of those surveyed saying they wanted to see more price-managed lanes open.

Some of the paid express lanes in Texas have allowed speed limits as much as 10 mph higher than general-purpose lanes, and Hall, with Texans for Toll-free Highways, said the fee can rise to \$3 a mile when traffic is busiest. She argues that's a regressive double-tax that doesn't alleviate congestion nearly as much as building additional free lanes would — something she contends the state can afford.

Texas also proves how fleeting the support for these projects can be — even with the same party in

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control. Former Gov. Rick Perry advocated for price-managed lanes, but his successor, fellow Republican Greg Abbott, has backed a moratorium on new tolls.

"Fifteen years ago it was all the rage," Mark Muriello, IBTTA's director of public policy and government affairs, said of the appetite for the projects in Texas. "The politics tend to change. Nothing stays still."

It typically takes 15 years in the U.S. for a road project to open after winning approval, though Tennessee officials are determined to cut that in half. Considering a recent study showing a \$34 billion need, Reid — the state transportation official — acknowledges the clock is ticking.

"As far as whether it works 10, 20, 30 years from now, the proof will be in the pudding," Reid said. "But one thing is certain — in order to keep pace with the demands on our infrastructure in Tennessee, we're going to have to find a different way to generate revenue."

## Olympic ticket sales for Paris Games get off to rocky start

By NICOLAS 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.

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 new 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 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.

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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: Mourners commemorate 8 men killed in Bucha

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — Clutching flowers and wiping away tears, relatives, neighbors and friends of eight men executed by Russian forces during the occupation of the Ukrainian town of Bucha gathered Saturday to mark the first anniversary of the deaths.

The eight had set up a roadblock in an attempt to prevent Russian troops from advancing as they swept toward Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, at the start of their invasion. But the men were captured, Ukrainian authorities say, and executed.

Their bodies lay outside a building on Yablunska Street for a month, with relatives only able to collect them in April after Russian troops pulled out of Bucha.

After the Russians left, Ukrainian authorities found mass graves and bodies strewn in the town's streets, buildings and homes. The events there are being investigated as war crimes.

"My heart is torn apart and my soul is in such pain for everyone who died here," said Oleksandr Turovskiy, whose 35-year-old son, Sviatoslav, was among the eight.

Photos of the men now hang on the wall of the building where they were found, between two blue and yellow Ukrainian flags. A wreath of red plastic roses and bouquets of blue and yellow flowers lean against the wall beneath the pictures.

As relatives gathered for the anniversary commemoration, Halyna Stakhova, 67, tenderly touched the photo of Sviatoslav Turovskiy, her son-in-law. Her lip trembled and she wiped away a tear.

She lived in a basement in Bucha during the occupation, she said, and relatives told her Sviatoslav had been executed. At first, Stakhova refused to believe them, but she eventually had to accept that her daughter's husband was dead.

"We were trying to get the body back," she said. "But the Russians said: 'Do you want to end up lying beside him? Ok, let's go.' So we waited for one month to collect the body."

Nataliia Matviichuk, whose 37-year-old brother, Andrii was among the eight, said the killings had brought the families of those lost together.

"In the history of Ukraine, the city and every Ukrainian family, and of course our families, this has been

the hardest and the scariest year," she said. "I cannot express this pain or sorrow with any words, and any amount of tears would be less than enough."

At the age of 81, Anna Levchenko braved the icy wind and post-surgery pain in her leg to attend the ceremony. Great-aunt to Nataliia and Andrii Matviichuk, she said the two considered her their grandmother.

"One year has passed, but I still have all these images in my head," Levchenko said. "My father had told me after World War II that there would be no more war for another 200-300 years. But look at what happened. Nobody was expecting this."

## Lawyers fight for man they say US wrongly deported to Haiti

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Paul Pierrilus was deported two years ago from the U.S. to Haiti where he has been trying to survive in a chaotic and violent country where he wasn't born and had never lived.

Both his parents are Haitian but they emigrated to the French Caribbean territory of St. Martin where Pierrilus was born. The family did not apply for citizenship for him in either Haiti or St. Martin and later moved to the U.S. when he was 5. He grew up in New York speaking English.

Deported — after a long delay — because of a drug conviction two decades ago, Pierrilus is now in Haiti where he does not speak Haitian Creole, has been unable to find work and has little savings left as he hopes for a way to leave the increasingly unstable country.

"You have to be mentally strong to deal with this type of stuff," Pierrilus said. "A country where people get kidnapped every day. A country where people are killed. You have to be strong."

The 42-year-old financial consultant spends most of his days locked inside a house reading self-help, business and marketing books in a neighborhood where gunshots often echo outside.

Lawyers for Pierrilus in the U.S. are still fighting his deportation order, leaving him in legal limbo as the Biden administration steps up deportations to Haiti despite pleas from activists that they be temporarily halted because of the Caribbean country's deepening chaos.

His case has become emblematic of what some activists describe as the discrimination Haitian migrants face in the overburdened U.S. immigration system. More than 20,000 Haitians have been deported from the U.S. in the past year as thousands more continue to flee Haiti in risky boat crossings that sometimes end in mass drownings.

Cases like Pierrilus' in which people are deported to a country where they have never lived are unusual, but they happen occasionally.

Jimmy Aldaoud, born of Iraqi parents at a refugee camp in Greece and whose family emigrated to the U.S. in 1979, was deported in 2019 to Iraq after amassing several felony convictions. Suffering health problems and not knowing the language in Iraq, he died a few months later in a case oft-cited by advocates.

Pierrilus' parents took him to the United States so they could live a better life and he could receive a higher quality education.

When he was in his early 20s, he was convicted of selling crack cocaine. Because he was not a U.S. citizen, Pierrilus was transferred from criminal custody to immigration custody where he was deemed a Haitian national because of his parentage and ordered deported to Haiti.

Pierrilus managed to delay deportation with several legal challenges. Because he was deemed neither a danger to the community nor a flight risk, he was released, issued a work authorization and ordered to check with immigration authorities yearly.

He went on to become a financial planner.

Then, in February 2021, he was deported without warning, and his lawyers don't know exactly why his situation changed.

Lawyers for the nonprofit Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization in Washington have taken up his cause. "We demand that the Biden administration bring Paul home," organization attorney Sarah Decker said.

French St. Martin does not automatically confer French citizenship to those born in its territory to foreign



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parents, and his family did not seek it. They also did not formally seek Haitian citizenship, which Pierrilus is entitled to.

Though he could obtain Haitian citizenship, his lawyers have argued that he is not currently a Haitian citizen, had never lived there and should not be deported to a country with such political instability.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a brief general statement to The Associated Press that each country has an obligation under international law to accept the return of its nationals who are not eligible to remain in the U.S. or any other country. An ICE spokeswoman said no further information about Pierrilus' case could be provided, including what proof does the U.S. government have that he's an alleged Haitian citizen and why 13 years passed before he was suddenly deported.

In 2005, the Board of Immigration Appeals dismissed an appeal by Pierrilus' previous attorneys to halt his deportation, saying "it is not necessary for the respondent to be a citizen of Haiti for that country to be named as the country of removal." Decker, his current attorney, disagrees with that finding.

Pierrilus said that while he was being deported he told immigration officers, "I'm not going anywhere. I'm not from where you're trying to send me."

Overpowered and handcuffed, he said he stopped resisting. As he boarded the flight, he recalled that women were screaming and children wailing. Inside, he felt the same. Pierrilus did not know when and if he would see his family or friends again.

After being processed at the airport, someone lent Pierrilus a cell phone so he could call his parents. They gave him contacts for a family friend where he could temporarily stay. Since then, gang violence has forced him to bounce through two other homes.

Warring gangs have expanded their control of territory in the Haitian capital to an estimated 60% since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, pillaging neighborhoods, raping and shooting civilians.

The U.N. warned in January that Haitians are suffering their worst humanitarian emergency in decades. More than 1,350 kidnappings were reported last year, more than double the previous year. Killings spiked by 35%, with more than 2,100 reported.

Pierrilus says he saw a man who was driving through his neighborhood get shot in the face as bullets shattered the windows and pock-marked the man's car.

"Can you imagine that? This guy is swirling around trying to flee the area. I don't know what happened to the guy," he said.

As a result, he rarely goes out and relies on his faith for hope. He says he stopped going to church after he saw a livestreamed service in April 2021 in which gangs burst into the church and kidnapped a pastor and three congregants.

Pierrilus talks to his parents at least once a week, focusing on the progress of his case rather than on challenges in Haiti.

He hesitated to share his first impressions of his parents' homeland upon landing in Haiti two years ago. "I had mixed feelings," he said. "I wanted to see what it looked like on my time, not under these circumstances."

## Election conspiracies fuel dispute over voter fraud system

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A bipartisan effort among states to combat voter fraud has found itself in the crosshairs of conspiracy theories fueled by Donald Trump's false claims about the 2020 presidential election and now faces an uncertain future.

One state has dropped out, a second is in the process of doing so and a handful of other Republican-led states are deciding whether to stay.

The aim of the Electronic Registration Information Center, a voluntary system known as ERIC, has been to help member states maintain accurate lists of registered voters by sharing data that allows officials to identify and remove people who have died or moved to other states. Reports also help states identify and ultimately prosecute people who vote in multiple states.

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In Maryland, state election officials have received reports through the system identifying some 66,000 potentially deceased voters and 778,000 people who may have moved out of state since 2013. In Georgia, the system is credited with providing data to remove nearly 100,000 voters no longer eligible to vote in the state.

Yet the effort to improve election integrity and thwart voter fraud has become a target of suspicion among some Republicans after a series of online posts early last year questioning its funding and purpose.

Shortly after, Louisiana left the group, citing concerns raised by the posts. A day after being sworn in last month, Alabama's new secretary of state, Wes Allen, sent a letter informing the center of the state's exit after criticizing the program during his campaign.

Other Republican-led states could follow, according to a survey of state election offices by The Associated Press. Officials in Florida and Missouri said they are evaluating their participation, while legislation in Texas could force the state to leave. West Virginia election officials declined to weigh in, saying they are "closely monitoring the situation with ERIC's membership."

The departures and potential for additional ones have frustrated state election officials involved in the effort and have demonstrated how deeply election conspiracies have spread throughout the Republican Party.

"The idea that any state would leave, and we know many are leaving or considering leaving, based solely on misinformation that in most cases they know is not accurate -- it's bizarre to me," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat. "Their leaving directly harms the security and integrity of their own state voter rolls and their ability to keep them up to date and accurate."

Not all Republican-led states are reevaluating their participation in the program. Of those surveyed by AP, election offices in 23 states and the District of Columbia said they had no intention of leaving, including eight led or controlled by Republicans. Four state offices did not respond: Alaska, Colorado, Delaware and Washington.

Republican officials who said they had no intention to leave signaled strong support for the effort. Iowa's chief election official said the program, in less than a year, had helped the state identify more than 1,300 deceased voters not included in state data.

"ERIC is an effective tool for ensuring the integrity of Iowa's voter rolls," said Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, a Republican in his third term.

The program was started in 2012 by seven states and was bipartisan from the beginning, with four of the founding states led by Republicans. Today, 32 states and the District of Columbia are members.

In April, that will drop to 31 when Alabama officially leaves the group. Allen made various claims during his 2022 campaign about the group that prompted a rebuke from then-Secretary of State John Merrill. Merrill, a Republican, noted that ERIC had identified more than 19,000 records of potentially deceased Alabama voters since 2016.

A chief complaint about the program is that it was funded by George Soros, the billionaire investor and philanthropist who has long been the subject of conspiracy theories. While ERIC received initial funding from the nonpartisan Pew Charitable Trusts, that money was separate from the money provided to Pew by a Soros-affiliated organization that went to an unrelated effort, said ERIC's executive director, Shane Hamlin.

The effort has since been funded through annual dues by member states. Hamlin said the current discussions among member states have been "robust" and decisions are expected soon on potential changes.

"Is the mission of ERIC still relevant? Yes," Hamlin said. "But are the ways in which members use ERIC to achieve that mission still relevant? Still effective? That is what we are talking about internally."

Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, a Republican, is among those pushing for changes. In an interview, Ashcroft said he wants the system to drop a requirement for member states to send mailings to eligible but unregistered voters.

"It needs to be focused on cleaning rolls," Ashcroft said. "It is not the job of the secretary of state to add voters to the rolls. It's our job to make sure there is a good, simple process for people who meet the requirements to be registered."

Ashcroft also is weighing the value that taxpayers receive from the program, arguing the state misses

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out on data for voters who leave Missouri because several surrounding states don't participate. Time is running out, he said, for changes to be made.

"I have raised them with ERIC, and so far I am not satisfied with their response," Ashcroft said. "The clock is ticking."

A fellow Republican, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, said he was aware of concerns about the program but remained confident in the effort.

"Like any human endeavor, there are imperfections to that organization and, you know, some of the people involved have caused concern for others," LaRose told reporters last month. "But I can tell you that it is one of the best fraud-fighting tools that we have -- when it comes to actually catching people who try to vote in multiple states, when it comes to maintaining the accuracy of our voter rolls by removing those that move out of state."

Lawmakers in Texas have introduced legislation that, if passed and signed into law, would require the state to leave the system. In Oklahoma, proposed legislation would prohibit the state from joining.

In California, Kansas and New Hampshire, lawmakers have introduced bills that would enable their states to join it, according to the Voting Rights Lab, which tracks voting legislation in the states. New York is another high population state that is not currently a member.

Gabriel Sterling, a top official in the Georgia secretary of state's office, said he recently appealed to representatives from three other Republican-led states to join the system.

"A lot of this is politics and gets in the way of good election administration," Sterling said. "At the end of the day, we want more people to join than leave. A lot of this is a tempest in a teacup."

## Today in History: MARCH 5, Stalin dies after long USSR reign

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 5, the 64th day of 2023. There are 301 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 5, 1770, the Boston Massacre took place as British soldiers who'd been taunted by a crowd of colonists opened fire, killing five people.

On this date:

In 1849, Zachary Taylor was inaugurated as the 12th president of the United States. (The swearing-in was delayed by a day because March 4 fell on a Sunday.)

In 1868, the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson began in the U.S. Senate, with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase presiding. Johnson, the first U.S. president to be impeached, was accused of "high crimes and misdemeanors" stemming from his attempt to fire Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton; the trial ended on May 26 with Johnson's acquittal.

In 1933, in German parliamentary elections, the Nazi Party won 44 percent of the vote; the Nazis joined with a conservative nationalist party to gain a slender majority in the Reichstag.

In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in which he said: "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an 'iron curtain' has descended across the continent, allowing police governments to rule Eastern Europe."

In 1953, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin died after three decades in power.

In 1963, country music performers Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins died in the crash of their plane, a Piper Comanche, near Camden, Tennessee, along with pilot Randy Hughes (Cline's manager).

In 1970, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons went into effect after 43 nations ratified it.

In 1979, NASA's Voyager 1 space probe flew past Jupiter, sending back photographs of the planet and its moons.

In 1982, comedian John Belushi was found dead of a drug overdose in a rented bungalow in Hollywood; he was 33.

In 1998, NASA scientists said enough water was frozen in the loose soil of the moon to support a lunar

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base and perhaps, one day, a human colony.

In 2004, Martha Stewart was convicted in New York of obstructing justice and lying to the government about why she'd unloaded her Imclone stock just before the price plummeted; her ex-stockbroker, Peter Bacanovic, also was found guilty in the stock scandal. (Each later received a five-month prison sentence.)

In 2020, Palestinian officials closed the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem over fears of the coronavirus. Officials ordered a cruise ship with 3,500 people aboard to stay back from the California coast until passengers and crew could be tested; a traveler from its previous voyage died of the coronavirus.

Ten years ago: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Latin America's most vocal and controversial leader, died in Caracas at age 58 after a struggle with cancer. Transportation Security Administration head John Pistole announced that airline passengers would be able to carry small knives, souvenir baseball bats, golf clubs and other sports equipment onto planes (the plan was dropped three months later amid fierce congressional and industry opposition).

Five years ago: House Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republican allies of President Donald Trump pleaded with him to back away from his threatened tariffs, but Trump responded, "We're not backing down." Los Angeles police arrested Terry Bryant, 47, on charges that he stole Frances McDormand's Oscar trophy after the Academy Awards a night earlier; the award was returned to the actress. (Charges against Bryant would later be dismissed.) The Nielsen company announced that the Academy Awards viewership had plunged to a record low of 26.5 million, down 20 percent from a year earlier.

One year ago: A promised cease-fire in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol collapsed amid scenes of terror in the besieged town. The number of people fleeing the country reached 1.4 million just 10 days after Russian forces invaded. Officials in Russia revealed that WNBA All-Star Brittney Griner had been arrested at a Moscow airport weeks earlier when a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges containing oil derived from cannabis. (Nine months later, Griner would be released in a prisoner swap with the U.S.)

Today's birthdays: Actor Paul Sand is 91. Actor James B. Sikking is 89. Actor Fred Williamson is 85. Actor Samantha Eggar is 84. Actor Michael Warren is 77. Singer Eddy Grant is 75. Rock musician Alan Clark (Dire Straits) is 71. Actor-comedian Marsha Warfield is 69. Magician Penn Jillette is 68. Actor Adriana Barraza is 67. Actor Talia Balsam is 64. Rock singers Charlie and Craig Reid (The Proclaimers) are 61. Pro Football Hall of Famer Michael Irvin is 57. Actor Paul Blackthorne is 54. Rock musician John Frusciante is 53. Singer Rome is 53. Actor Kevin Connolly is 49. Actor Eva Mendes is 49. Actor Jill Ritchie is 49. Actor Jolene Blalock is 48. Model Niki Taylor is 48. Actor Kimberly McCullough is 45. Actor Karolina Wydra is 42. Singer-songwriter Amanda Shires is 41. Actor Dominique McElligott is 37. Actor Sterling Knight is 34. Actor Jake Lloyd is 34. Actor Micah Fowler is 25.