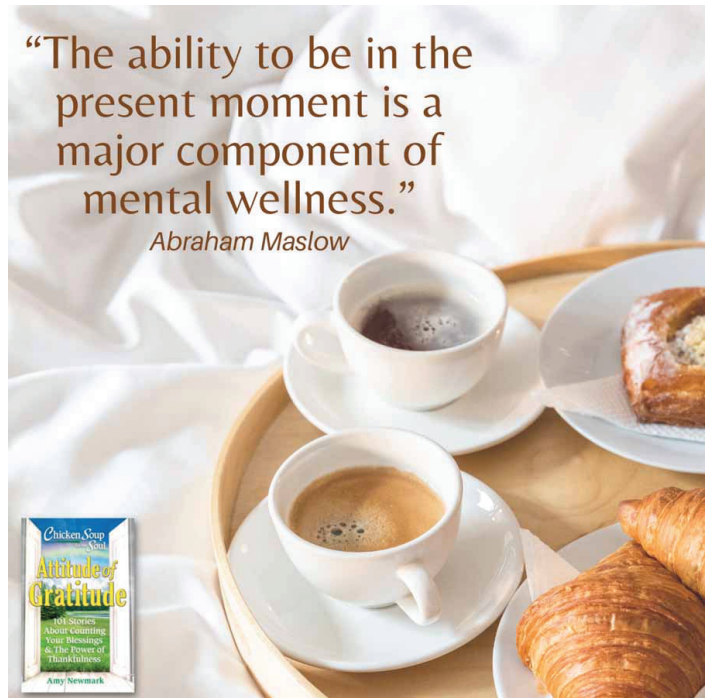


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“The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.”

Abraham Maslow

**Aberdeen paper did not make it to Groton this morning. They should arrive sometime this weekend.**

## Groton Community Calendar Saturday, March 11

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

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

Girls Basketball State Tournament in Watertown

## Sunday, March 12

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS

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, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Confirmation Sunday. Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school and sing in church at 10:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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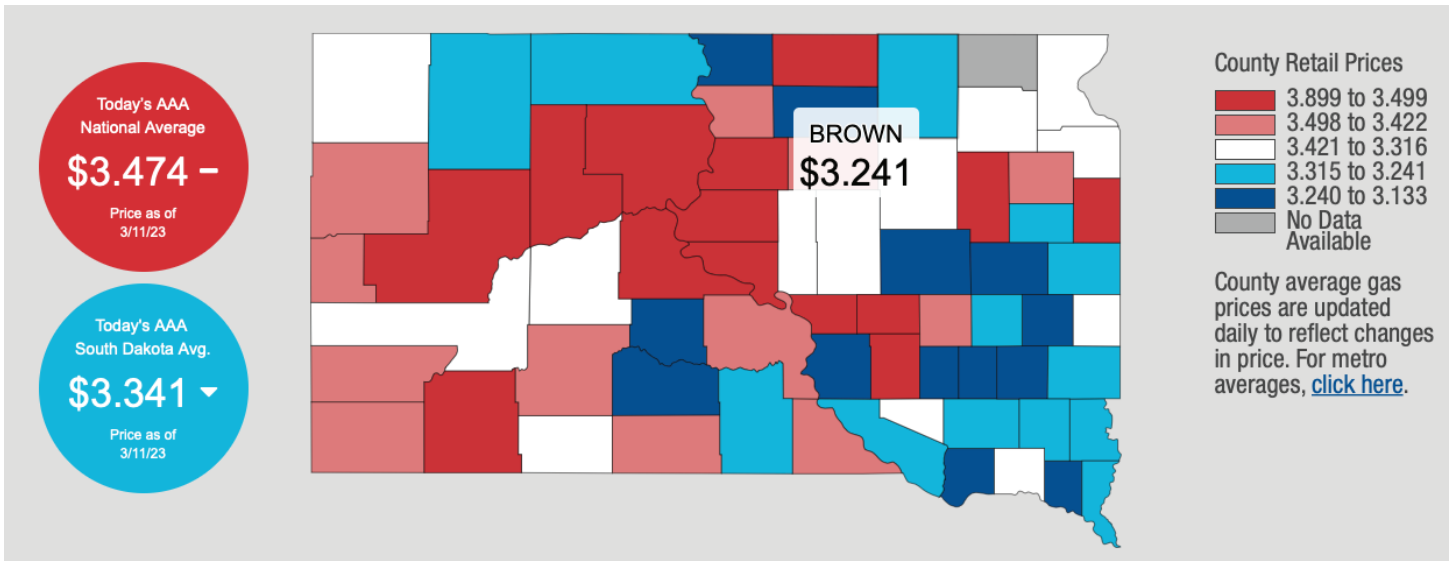
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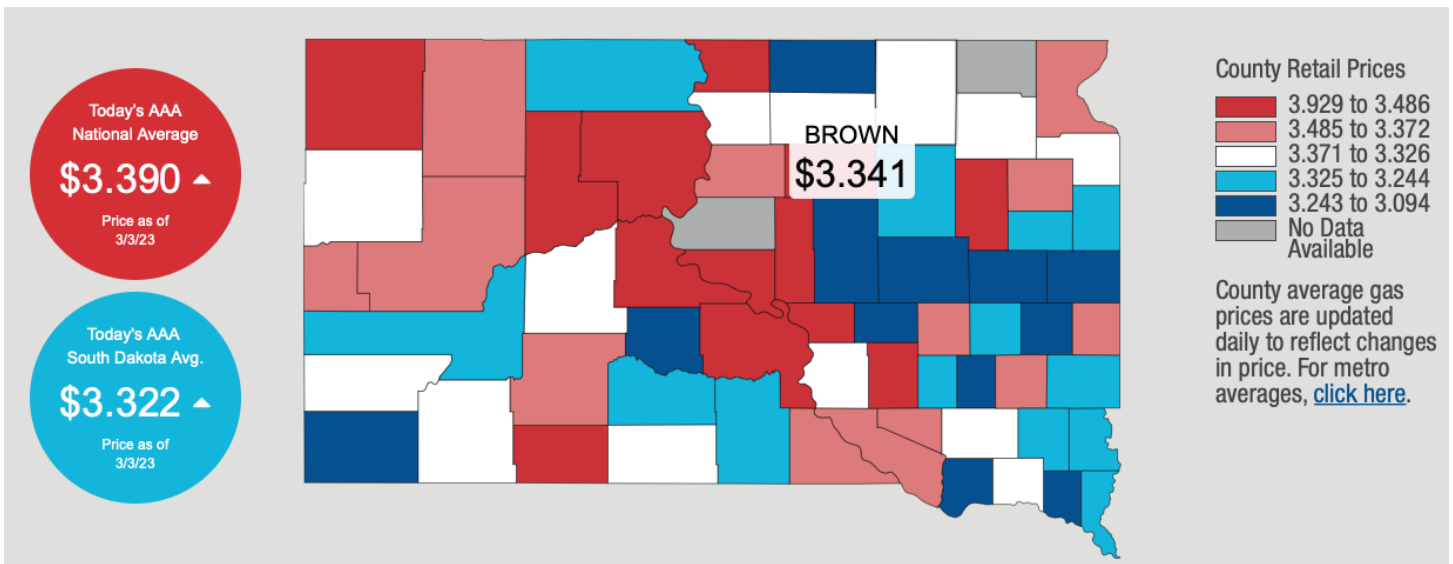
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.341	\$3.508	\$3.950	\$4.123
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.346	\$3.505	\$3.947	\$4.144
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.322	\$3.477	\$3.940	\$4.161
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.378	\$3.531	\$3.986	\$4.307
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.975	\$4.097	\$4.472	\$4.677

### This Week



### Two Weeks Ago



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## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

A better-than-expected February jobs report showed the U.S. economy added 311,000 jobs last month while unemployment increased slightly to 3.6 percent.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to mend ties after years of tensions, in an agreement brokered by China and backed by the U.S.

A major election for Turkey has been teed up for May 14, one month early, in what will be a big test for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and for voters to decide how the country will be governed.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, efforts to restore power continue in Kharkiv after Russia's latest missile attack, meanwhile, the U.S. and E.U. pledged their support of Ukraine for "as long as it takes."

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis faces questions as he seeks nearly \$100 million to fund the Florida State Guard, a group of "civilian volunteers" to aid during emergencies.

Mexican cartel members are asking for forgiveness as they reportedly turned in the suspects behind the deadly kidnapping of four Americans in Matamoros; five men are now under arrest.

Gas prices are ticking up across the U.S., partially due to the switch to summer blend gasoline, which experts say can add 5 to 10 cents per gallon.

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**The Groton Area Pep Band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, was the band of the day for the afternoon session on Friday at the State A Girls Basketball Tournament in Watertown.**

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting. ©2023 SDPB | Tim Tushla)



**Groton School Board Member, Band Parent, and SDHSAA Board Member Marty Weismantel presented the GHS Band with a plaque and special director's medal to Desiree Yeigh.**

(Photo courtesy of Dez Yeigh's Facebook Page)

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- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
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- 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\*\*

MSRP  
**\$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
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- Heated hand grips
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MSRP  
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†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 FDI 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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## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Legislative Roundup: Noem says no three times, but leaves big questions unanswered

BY: JOHN HULT AND SETH TUPPER - MARCH 10, 2023 2:10 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem has not vetoed the Legislature's "historic" sales tax cut this week – which lawmakers passed Thursday in spite of her opposition – but she did flex her veto power.

Noem issued her first veto on March 2, using a cattle "VETO" brand on a bill that would have allowed local business improvement districts to hike their hotel taxes. Lawmakers tried to bring it back to life this week, but failed to get the required two-thirds majority.

Two more vetoes landed on Thursday, the last day of regular session. The first knocked out Senate Bill 108, a bipartisan proposal to allow students between 18 and 21 years of age to taste alcohol as part of college courses on beer brewing or culinary arts. Noem cited potential difficulties for police, who might smell alcohol on students' breath but be unable to write an underage drinking ticket without investigating their coursework.

The other Thursday veto landed on Senate Bill 129. That one would've upped the criminal classification to a felony for assaulting school employees during school activities. Noem's veto news release characterized the change as a "special treatment" bill. Current law makes it a felony to assault a law enforcement or correctional officer. Noem said SB 129 would open the door for other "special treatment" requests from other types of public employees.

The last veto of the week came early Friday morning, when Noem said no to House Bill 1193 for what she called an "attack on economic freedom." The "attack" was the bill's attempt to write cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin out of South Dakota's definition of money. Noem's other issue with the bill was about its acceptance of Central Bank Digital Currencies – which do not exist in the United States – as a form of money. As written, Noem said, the bill paved the way for the federal government to be the sole issuer of digital currencies in the future.

The Freedom Caucus, a group of lawmakers that considers itself more conservative than the rest of the GOP caucus, applauded the veto.

The Legislature will return March 27 to consider vetoed bills. By then, Noem may have acted on the tax cut compromise and state budget adopted on Thursday. Also unsigned: SB 146, often called "truth in sentencing," arguably the biggest change to South Dakota's adult criminal justice system in a decade.

We'll learn more in the coming days and weeks.

For now, see below for an update on bills we've been tracking.

#### **New prisons**

Lawmakers sent Noem two bills allocating about \$400 million for the design and construction of two new prisons. One would be built in Rapid City to ease the burden of the overcrowded women's prison in Pierre. The other would replace the South Dakota State Penitentiary, a 142-year-old building whose design makes it unsafe for inmates and staff. Noem proposed the funding, but has yet to sign the bills. The location for the new penitentiary has yet to be determined.

#### **Diet weed regulations die**

HB 1226 would have forced the Department of Health to write rules regulating the testing and marketing of Delta-8 and Delta-10 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). The chemicals are hemp-derived cousins of Delta-9 THC, which is the active ingredient in marijuana. The two chemicals produce a similar "high" when ingested,

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albeit to a lesser degree, and products containing them are widely available to anyone older than 21. The Senate could have sent the bill to the governor, but chose to table it instead.

## Medical marijuana

Final legislative passage came this week for SB 1, which would bring more specificity to the debilitating medical conditions that qualify a person for a medical marijuana card. Current state law defines those conditions broadly. SB 1, if signed by the governor, would insert a list of seven specific diseases and conditions into the law. The bill would also eliminate a section of existing law that lays out a public process for petitioning more conditions onto the list.

## Repeat drunken driving

HB 1170, which would attach mandatory minimum sentences to people convicted of driving under the influence four or more times, made it through the Senate on Monday on a 23-12 vote. It was delivered to the governor Wednesday to sign or veto.

## Domestic violence

SB 50 will make it easier for prosecutors to charge domestic abusers with witness tampering, as it earned Noem's signature this week. The law will make it clear that attempting to convince a victim to recant testimony is grounds for a new crime. Witness tampering is a class 4 felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison and/or a \$20,000 fine.

## Nursing home funding

The Senate rejected House Bill 1167 on Monday. The bill would have required 100% cost reimbursement every year for nursing homes and other community service providers that rely on government programs to fund patient care. But the next state budget, adopted Thursday, includes 100% reimbursement, and HB 1167 prime sponsor Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, pledged to keep advocating for 100% reimbursement each year.

## Foreign ag land

The governor signed HB 1189 into law Wednesday. It will require South Dakota companies to disclose whether they own agricultural land and whether any of their owners are foreigners. Companies will have to do that when they file already-required annual reports to the Secretary of State's Office. The new law is part of a broader push to counteract foreign ownership of ag land. An existing state law already includes a 160-acre limit on ownership of ag land in South Dakota by foreigners from some countries.

## Petition perjury

People who circulate petitions to put a question on the ballot have to sign a verification promising they followed the rules: that they're residents of South Dakota, that to the best of their knowledge all of their signatures are from registered South Dakota voters, etc. SB 46 would introduce a penalty and make it a felony to lie as part of that verification process. The governor signed the bill Monday.

## Inmate records

Legislators sent SB 53 to the governor this week. It would close the disciplinary records of jail inmates from public view.

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

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

## **\$50 million water legislation falls two votes short on final day**

**BY: SETH TUPPER - MARCH 10, 2023 2:09 PM**

Amid all the excitement over the passage of a sales-tax reduction on the final day of regular legislative business Thursday, a bill to devote \$50 million of federal money to water projects quietly died.

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, had hoped her water legislation, Senate Bill 156, would pass before legislators left the Capitol. They won't be back in Pierre until March 27, a day reserved to consider bills vetoed by the governor.

"It was really disappointing not just for me, but for a whole community in the state that was cheering for a big investment in water," Duhamel said Friday.

In its original form, the legislation would have allocated \$100 million for engineering, design and other pre-construction activities associated with a proposed water pipeline from the Missouri River to western South Dakota. The funding source is South Dakota's unspent money from the American Rescue Plan Act, which is an economic stimulus law passed by Congress and President Joe Biden in 2021.

Duhamel's bill had a long and difficult journey through the legislative process, beginning with its first committee hearing in mid-February and continuing all the way to Thursday. Along the way, the bill was amended to make the \$100 million available as grants to any qualifying water project.

The bill eventually passed both legislative chambers, but amendments put the House and Senate versions of the bill in conflict. Legislative leaders appointed a committee – which included Duhamel – to work out the differences.

The committee voted 6-0 to change the allocation to \$50 million. The Senate voted 30-3 on Thursday to accept that amendment.

"I had every indication that was acceptable to the House," Duhamel said. "Unfortunately, when it hit the floor, it fell two votes short of the two-thirds required."

A two-thirds majority is required for bills that appropriate money. In the House, that means 47 members. The vote on Thursday afternoon was 45-25.

Duhamel's bill was opposed by the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Department representatives said much of the \$600 million in federal money allocated to water and wastewater projects last year is unspent, because of the time-consuming nature of designing big projects and getting bids from contractors. Department representatives said they currently lack the staff, time and specific project plans they'd need to accommodate another big chunk of federal money.

Duhamel said the extra money is needed not only for the proposed western South Dakota pipeline, but also for several other major pipeline proposals in eastern South Dakota. She and other supporters reminded lawmakers that the federal money must be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by 2026.

In the conference committee and on the House floor Thursday, opponents said the money should not be appropriated until state water officials are ready.

Duhamel said Friday she'll press state water officials to come up with plans for the money.

"I hope to hold their feet to the fire, to see what their plan is and to make sure it goes to water," she said.

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

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **Open primaries should be part of debate over candidate nominations**

**Dana Hess**

As the legislative session wound down, Republicans had a tough time deciding the fate of Senate Bill 40, a bill that originally called for primaries, rather than political party conventions, to decide on top state candidates. In the end, Republicans couldn't agree on how to change the system.

In its original form, SB 40 called for a political party's candidates for attorney general, secretary of state, auditor, treasurer, school and public lands commissioner and public utilities commissioner to be chosen via primary. Currently they are chosen at a state convention. SB 40 also called for the governor to be able to



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choose the candidate for lieutenant governor. Currently the candidate for lieutenant governor is chosen by the convention as well.

Proponents of the bill said it's best to give the decision on major party candidates to the voters in a primary. Opponents said that the grassroots of the political party, through its convention delegates from across the state, are the best ones to make that decision.

## **Senate scraps bill to switch nominations from conventions to primaries**

Based on the testimony concerning SB 40, it seems that neither system is perfect. During testimony it was revealed that 1,400 of the 2,000 delegate positions for the 2022 Republican convention weren't filled. Ten South Dakota counties had no representation at the convention.

Just as delegates fail to show up for the convention, voters fail to show up for party primary elections. According to opponent testimony, 70% of South Dakota voters didn't participate in the 2022 primaries.

Each time they testified in favor of the bill, its sponsors denied that the legislation was a reaction to the 2022 Republican convention. Well, it sure looked like a reaction.

At the convention, David Natvig, a holdover from the less than spectacular administration of Jason Ravensborg, almost defeated Marty Jackley for the nomination as attorney general. And, in a move dripping with irony, convention delegates nominated an election denier to run state elections with the nomination of Monae Johnson over incumbent secretary of state Steve Barnett.

Even the portion of the legislation dealing with the governor, rather than the convention, choosing the candidate for lieutenant governor, is a reflection of the 2022 Republican convention. At the convention, Gov. Kristi Noem had to make a direct plea to delegates to get them to choose Larry Rhoden over upstart lieutenant governor candidate Steve Haugaard.

Republicans were left with this mess because party conventions tend to draw a more rabid believer than regular party members. This may be another indication of the strength of the Freedom Caucus, a wing of the Republican Party fondly referred to as "wackadoodle crazies" by GOP Senate Leader Lee Schoenbeck.

The Senate passed SB 40 on an 18-16 vote. In the House, where the Freedom Caucus has a larger contingent, the bill was amended to exclude the larger primary but include just the provision that the governor gets to pick the candidate for lieutenant governor. It was endorsed by the House on a 48-21 vote. In the last week of the session, the two chambers failed to reconcile what turned out to be wildly different versions of the same bill.

While they deny that SB 40 had its origins in the party's reaction to its 2022 convention, its backers were on the right track by calling for a primary to select candidates for top positions on the ballot. Conventions, by their very nature, reek of political favors and backroom deals. That's likely how the party ended up backing candidates like Ravensborg and Johnson — not the finest moments in South Dakota political history.

While the call for a primary is a good one, it did not go far enough. The largest growing segment of voters in South Dakota are independents. They're shut out of the Republican primary because they lack the right political party affiliation. Yet, as taxpayers, they get to pay for an election where they have been disenfranchised by the rules developed by lawmakers who are largely members of the Republican Party.

As for the Democratic Party, it allows independents to vote in its primaries. This is usually a hollow invitation as Democrats have a tough time fielding even one candidate for a statewide office, let alone two that would need to fight it out in a primary.

Because they dominate both chambers of the Legislature, SB 40 boiled down to how Republican candidates would be chosen. If, as proponents of SB 40 say, a primary allows voters to have a say in the nomination of candidates, that primary should be open to all voters. It shouldn't be limited to a specific party that has the power to give itself the luxury of having the state pay for its candidate selection process.

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

## Head of Denver airport doesn't need waiver to lead the FAA, Biden administration says

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MARCH 10, 2023 7:20 PM

President Joe Biden's nominee to lead the Federal Aviation Administration — the CEO of Denver International Airport — does not need a congressional waiver to allow him to serve in the role, the U.S. Transportation Department's top lawyer said in a Thursday letter to Congress.

Federal law requires the FAA administrator to be a civilian and some Republicans, including U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee ranking member Ted Cruz of Texas, had said Phil Washington, who served in the Army from 1976 to 2000, would require a waiver from Congress to serve in the role.

But Transportation Department general counsel John Putnam said in a Thursday letter to Cruz, obtained Friday by States Newsroom, that because Washington's service ended more than two decades ago, he is not a member of the military.

"Mr. Washington retired from the U.S. Army after 24 years of stellar service in July 2000 as a Command Sergeant Major," Putnam wrote in the letter. "Since his retirement from the military nearly 23 years ago, Mr. Washington has engaged in solely civilian pursuits and clearly fits the plain and widely understood meaning of the word 'civilian.'"

"No further analysis is required to confirm Mr. Washington's eligibility. If Congress had wanted to impose additional restrictions on individuals with prior service in the military, it could have done so."

A spokesperson for the Transportation Department confirmed the letter's authenticity but declined to comment further on the issue Friday.

Putnam, who was an energy, environment and transportation lawyer in Denver before joining the Biden administration, said he was responding to a March 2 letter from Cruz inquiring about Washington's qualifications to lead the FAA.

In a Friday statement, Melissa Braid, a spokeswoman for Republicans on the Senate Commerce Committee, disagreed with Putnam's interpretation.

"Congress and the President have strictly, repeatedly, and on a bipartisan basis interpreted the law, since it was written, as excluding retired military members like Phil Washington," she wrote.

"Now a politically-appointed Department of Transportation lawyer from Denver simply denies this inconvenient truth and declares, based on a dictionary and an unrelated NASA statute, that Congress was wrong on the numerous occasions it required legislative waivers."

### Military background

Washington enlisted in the Army in 1976. He retired in 2000 as a command sergeant major. He then spent more than 20 years in public transit, leading agencies in Denver and Los Angeles before getting the job at Denver's airport.

Federal statute requires the FAA administrator to be a "civilian," though it does not define the term or say for how long a former service member must be retired. A similar requirement that the Defense secretary not be an active-duty military member requires a secretary to have ended their military career at least seven years before they are confirmed.

Congress can — and routinely does — grant waivers to allow former military members to serve in civilian roles. But Washington's case is somewhat complicated because Republicans, who have largely opposed Washington's confirmation, control the U.S. House and both chambers of Congress would have to approve a waiver.

The absence of a waiver could cause problems for the FAA under Washington, Cruz warned at a March 1 confirmation hearing.

"If Senate Democrats forced this nomination through without a waiver, a legal cloud will hang over every single FAA action," the Texas Republican said.

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## Experience issue also dismissed

In his March 2 letter, Cruz also asked if Washington had experience in an aviation-related field, as federal law requires, according to Putnam's letter.

At the confirmation hearing, Cruz told Washington, who led large public transit agencies before taking the Denver airport job in 2021, that operating an airport was not sufficient aviation safety experience.

Putnam disagreed, saying past administrators had held similar experience.

Jane Garvey, who was nominated by Democratic President Bill Clinton, had run Boston's airport for two years after she spent most of her career in non-aviation areas of transportation.

And Marion Blakey, who was nominated by Republican President George W. Bush, had chaired the National Transportation Safety Board and led the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, but had limited experience in aviation, Putnam wrote.

"Mr. Washington's experience not only meets, but exceeds the qualifications of the position when viewed historically," he wrote.

At the hearing, Republicans cited several reasons for opposing Washington, including his relatively thin aviation experience, a local corruption scandal when he was in Los Angeles and his stated commitment to diversity and inclusion.

But Democrats rejected those claims, saying Washington had an excellent record as a manager and leader and was not involved in wrongdoing in the Los Angeles case.

Longtime Commerce Committee member Brian Schatz, a Hawaii Democrat, said Republicans resorted to "fake scandals" to tarnish the Biden nominee.

A committee vote to advance Washington's confirmation has not been scheduled.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

## U.S. House votes to roll back Biden's WOTUS rule

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MARCH 10, 2023 4:45 PM

The U.S. House voted Thursday to undo a Biden administration definition of wetlands that allows for regulations on private lands.

The chamber approved, 227-198, a resolution to roll back the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's broader definition of what qualifies as "waters of the United States," or WOTUS, for the purposes of federal regulation under the Clean Water Act. The move was largely symbolic, as President Joe Biden has said he intends to veto the measure if it reaches his desk.

Republicans used a procedure allowed under the Congressional Review Act, which permits Congress to reject new executive branch rules. The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers proposed the new definition in late 2021 and the final rule would go into effect on March 20, if it is not halted through congressional action.

While Republicans were the most vocal in opposing the rule, nine Democrats — including two leaders in agriculture policy — crossed party lines to vote for the resolution.

Georgia Democrats David Scott, the top Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee, and Sanford Bishop, the ranking member on the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, both voted for the resolution.

The other seven Democrats to vote in favor were Angie Craig of Minnesota, Don Davis of North Carolina, Jared Golden of Maine, Jim Costa and Jimmy Panetta of California, and Henry Cuellar and Vicente Gonzalez of Texas.

Pennsylvania's Brian Fitzpatrick was the sole Republican to oppose it.

## Senate passage possible

Such resolutions need only a simple majority to pass the Senate. With swing-vote Democrat Joe Manchin III apparently in favor, the WOTUS rollback could attract enough support in a nearly evenly divided Senate.

Unlike most legislation in the Senate, the majority party cannot block consideration of a Congressional

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Review Act resolution.

A Senate vote is likely sometime in the middle of next week, a Senate Republican aide said Friday.

All 49 Senate Republicans have signed on to sponsor the resolution and E&E News reported this month Manchin would also support it.

A spokesman for Montana Democrat Jon Tester, another moderate from a rural state up for reelection next year, said Friday the senator is undecided on the measure.

A spokeswoman for Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona independent who caucuses with Democrats, did not immediately return a request for comment.

Biden would have to sign a rollback, though, and the White House pledged in a March 6 statement of administration policy that he would veto any such measure.

Contrary to Republican complaints that the rule would create more uncertainty, the White House said that revoking the rule would only complicate the situation by voiding any working definition.

"The increased uncertainty would threaten economic growth, including for agriculture, local economies, and downstream communities," the White House said. "Compared to the kind of uncertain, fragmented, and watered-down regulatory system that H.J. Res. 27 might compel, the final rule will secure substantial and valuable benefits each year."

## Overreach v. fundamental protections

Republicans have for years objected to an expansive definition. During House debate Thursday, several Republicans offered their reasons for rejecting the rule.

U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Sam Graves, a Republican from Missouri who was the chief sponsor of the House resolution, said Thursday the issue was a prime example of federal overreach, and only hurt the ultimate goal of improving water quality.

"We have consistently seen increasingly expansive interpretations of the Clean Water Act result in the implementation of a flawed and overreaching water policy," Graves said. "Decades of agency interpretation and misinterpretations have created uncertainty for rural communities, for farmers, for ranches, for businesses and industries that rely on clean water."

Democrats said the rule would create regulatory certainty for farmers and others while also providing essential clean water protections.

"The American people want clean water," New Mexico Democrat Melanie Stansbury said on the House floor. "We cannot gut this fundamental underlying environmental law that protects the health and safety of our communities."

## A long history

The resolution is an attempt to add another chapter in a long recent history of expanding and contracting definitions on regulatable wetlands.

Responding to longstanding confusion over what qualified as a water of the United States, the EPA near the end of President Barack Obama's administration in 2015 finalized a regulation holding that any standing water that eventually drained into a navigable waterway or drinking water supply could be regulated by federal authorities.

Under President Donald Trump, the EPA significantly narrowed that definition in 2020.

Biden reopened the issue and claimed, as environmental advocates hoped, a broader definition that allowed for more robust Clean Water Act enforcement.

The rule is unpopular with farmers and others who say that construction and maintenance on private property is much more difficult and time-consuming when permission from the federal government must be granted.

The Obama-era rule is being challenged by an Idaho couple at the U.S. Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on the case before the court adjourns in June.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

## **GOP state officials at U.S. House hearing push back against federal election oversight**

**BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MARCH 10, 2023 4:26 PM**

WASHINGTON — Republican election officials from Florida, Ohio and Louisiana on Friday detailed to lawmakers on a U.S. House Administration panel the success of their states' handling of the 2022 midterm elections, and said they can run their own elections without federal intervention.

The chair of the Elections Subcommittee, Florida GOP freshman Rep. Laurel Lee, said the purpose of the hearing was to learn the best practices states are using and to make those practices available for other states to follow.

She argued against federal involvement in state elections and touted requirements instituted by some states such as voter ID cards and contingency plans for natural disasters such as hurricanes that might disrupt a polling location.

Lee said the witnesses from the three states "are getting elections right and can share some of the policies and practices that have led to their success."

Democrats on the panel, however, urged the need for federal oversight, particularly after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a provision in the Voting Rights Act that required states with a history of voter suppression to get approval from the Justice Department before enacting any voting-related legislation.

The top Democrat on the panel, Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama, said there is still more work that needs to be done to protect voting rights, particularly of those of Black voters and voters of color.

Sewell said if Congress wants to protect voting rights and encourage people to vote, it should pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which restores the section of the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court struck down in 2013. The legislation has repeatedly failed to advance in the U.S. Senate.

### **Securing elections**

Lee served as Florida's secretary of state from 2019 to 2022. She said her prior work as an election official makes her passionate about secure elections, and she believes Republicans and Democrats have a "common goal of ensuring that every eligible American citizen has an opportunity to vote and for their ballot to be counted and to be secure."

Rep. Barry Loudermilk, R-Ga., made similar remarks.

"There's always going to be some level of fraud, we're never going to eliminate all of it," he said. "But we do have to make sure that our elections have the integrity and the people feel that their vote really matters."

The supervisor of elections for Seminole County, Florida, Chris Anderson, told the panel that the 2022 election there was secure and that there were no instances of massive voter fraud.

Anderson added that all of Florida's 67 counties worked with the Florida Department of State to strengthen cybersecurity infrastructure in elections.

"We had cyber navigators from the Department of State come and meet with our IT professionals, they scanned our networks, they gave us best practices, and I'm very happy to report that in Seminole County, we pass with flying colors," Anderson said.

### **Voting Rights Act**

In the *Shelby County v. Holder*, decision, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which had put in place a pre-clearance formula for nine states and a handful of counties and cities with a history of discriminating against voters of color.

Those states included Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. The handful of counties included those in New York, Florida, North Carolina, California and South Dakota.

One of the hearing witnesses, Damon Hewitt, the president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said that Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act was the most powerful provision in the act.

"It stopped fires before it happened," he said.

Sewell said her hometown of Selma just commemorated the 58th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, "a reminder that the violent struggle for voting rights and equal access to the ballot box is not one of a (distant) past."

She added that following the 2020 presidential election, in which there was high voter turnout, many states moved to pass restrictive voting legislation. Former President Donald Trump made false claims of fraud in that election.

"We should applaud increases in voter turnout, not respond to them with new restrictions to voting," she said.

## State voter ID laws

Lee pushed back on criticism that changes in voting laws made voting difficult.

She pointed out that those same criticisms were made in Georgia, and in the 2022 elections, the Peach State saw a record voter turnout. The state legislature passed a massive voting overhaul following the 2020 presidential and U.S. Senate elections won by Democrats, drawing lawsuits from civil rights groups and the Justice Department.

The secretary of state from Louisiana, Kyle Ardoin, and the secretary of state from Ohio, Frank LaRose, said their states have offered free voter IDs to eliminate any type of financial burden those laws could create.

LaRose said Ohio even put in place a religious exemption for a photo to not be required for the voter ID. He touted the state's new voting requirement legislation.

"We believe this will increase (voter) participation," he said.

That law is already facing legal challenges.

But Sewell said with Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act struck down, "there is no federal oversight of states."

Rep. Joe Morelle of New York, the top Democrat on the House Administration Committee, asked Ardoin why he believed the federal government should not have any oversight in state elections, and that states should be able to make their own voting requirements.

"I think states should be sovereign, with regards to elections," Ardoin said.

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

## Congress unanimously votes to require declassified information on COVID-19 origins

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 10, 2023 10:30 AM

WASHINGTON — The divided 118th Congress approved its first bill Friday, after lawmakers in both the House and Senate voted unanimously to send President Joe Biden legislation that would require declassification of intelligence on the origins of COVID-19.

The four-page bill, which the House voted 419-0 to clear, would require the Director of National Intelligence to "declassify any and all information relating to potential links between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origin of the Coronavirus Disease 2019" within 90 days of becoming law.

The measure allows the director to redact any information that would risk sources and methods the intelligence community used to gather the information.

The Democratically controlled Senate approved the bill earlier this month by unanimous consent, a fast-track process that allows that chamber to pass bills as long as no senator objects.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley introduced the bill with Indiana Sen. Mike Braun, Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall, Utah Sen. Mike Lee and Florida Sen. Rick Scott as original co-sponsors. All are Republicans.

Connecticut Democratic Rep. Jim Himes, ranking member on the House Permanent Select Committee

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on Intelligence, said during floor debate that determining how COVID-19 began has been especially challenging due to the Chinese government.

"At every juncture, the PRC government has obfuscated and obstructed legitimate inquiries and investigations into the origins of the disease," Himes said. "China's approach has been deeply irresponsible and dangerous to global public health."

That is one of the reasons, Himes said, Biden ordered the U.S. intelligence community to look into the origins of the virus, leading to an unclassified report in August 2021.

"In short, the intelligence community agencies could not come to an agreement on whether the virus originated from a lab accident or from natural exposure," Himes said.

"Some individual agencies did reach a judgment, a narrow judgment, about which path was more likely, but they could not do so with high confidence — simply because we don't have enough reliable information to draw those conclusions," Himes added.

Declassifying more intelligence about the origins of COVID-19, Himes said, could be an "antidote to the speculation, the rumor and the theories that grow in the absence of good information."

Ohio Republican Rep. Mike Turner, chair of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said that Americans deserve "answers to every aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic, including how this virus was created."

"The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc across the country with almost every household feeling its effects," Turner said. "The United States death toll from this virus has surpassed 1 million people."

Turner said the intelligence committee "is aware of classified information that could help inform the public why COVID-19 as a lab leak theory is not just a possibility, but approaches the idea that it is likely."

The U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic held a hearing on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this week, with the majority of the panel's lawmakers agreeing the scientific and intelligence communities should be left alone to determine the virus' origins.

While there is yet no consensus about the origins of COVID-19, the experts who testified before the panel said researchers are working to determine if it was a spillover event from nature or if the virus was accidentally leaked from a laboratory.

Congress passed a joint resolution earlier this week to block a restructuring of the District of Columbia's criminal code that the city government had approved.

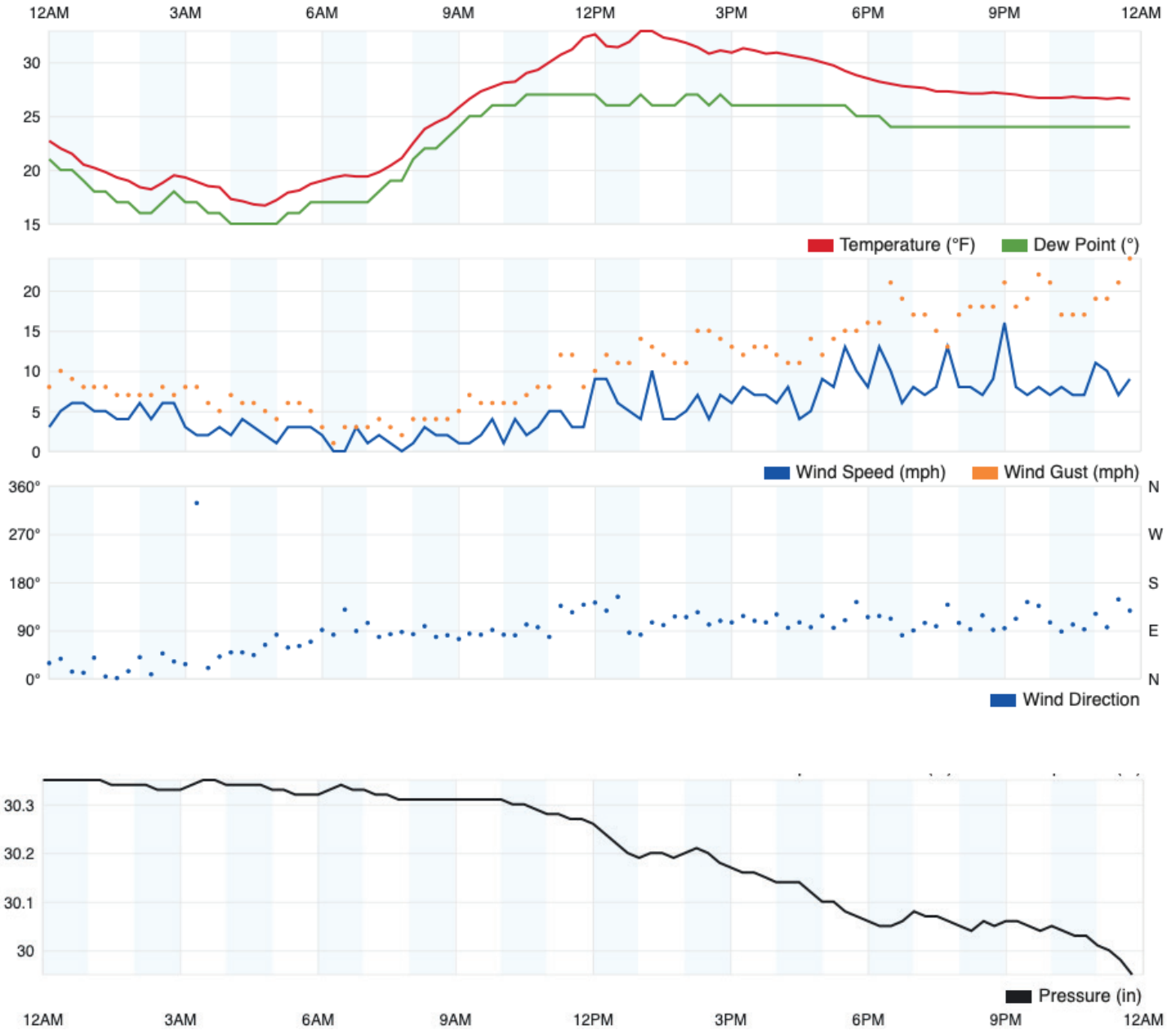
While the joint resolution moved through Congress much like a bill and is expected to garner Biden's signature to take effect, it's not technically a bill. That makes the origins of COVID-19 bill the first legislation to pass the divided Congress this year.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





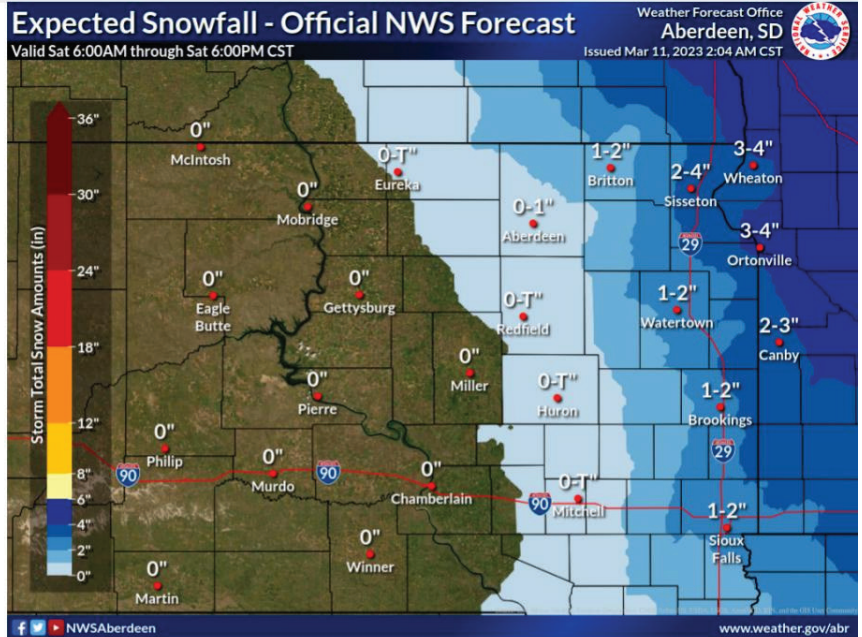
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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
90%						
Snow and Areas Blowing Snow then Patchy Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Sunny and Breezy
High: 34 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 22 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 35 °F

## Additional Snow During the Day Today March 11, 2023 3:41 AM

- Snow will be slowly ending west to east today, lingering over far eastern SD and west central MN through mid afternoon.
- Expect slick roads and reduced visibilities in snow and blowing snow.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Before slowly diminishing west to east, additional snow during the daytime hours of 1 to 4 inches will be possible over portions of eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota, with the highest amounts across Minnesota. Strong winds and falling snow could result in near-blizzard conditions over portions of far northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota during the morning hours.

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## Wind Speed and Direction Timing

March 11, 2023  
3:45 AM

- Gusty winds continue this morning, then again overnight.
- **Areas of blowing and drifting snow** over eastern SD and western MN into early this afternoon. Reduced winds over central SD to become strong out of the northwest this afternoon through tonight. Blowing snow will again be possible later today or tonight through the day Sunday for much of the area.

	Maximum Wind Gust Forecast																
	3/11 Sat						3/12 Sun					3/13 Mon					
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	2am	5am	8am	11am	2pm	5pm	8pm	11pm	2am	5am
Aberdeen	38↘	32↑	23↘	24↘	24↘	35↘	40↘	43↘	43↘	43↘	39↘	33↘	36↘	32↘	24↘	21↘	16↘
Britton	45↘	36↘	30↘	23↘	25↘	26↘	30↘	32↘	35↘	35↘	35↘	33↘	36↘	35↘	26↘	20↘	15↘
Eagle Butte	36↘	37↘	36↘	39↘	41↘	45↘	49↘	47↘	45↘	40↘	32↘	29↘	26↘	23↘	16↘	12↘	8↘
Eureka	35↘	20↘	30↘	33↘	39↘	43↘	47↘	49↘	49↘	41↘	37↘	35↘	32↘	26↘	18↘	12↘	9↘
Gettysburg	30↘	21↘	31↘	35↘	37↘	43↘	47↘	49↘	49↘	41↘	37↘	35↘	33↘	30↘	21↘	15↘	13↘
Kennebec	31↘	24↘	28↘	31↘	37↘	43↘	41↘	45↘	47↘	43↘	37↘	33↘	30↘	29↘	24↘	20↘	15↘
McIntosh	30↘	35↘	39↘	43↘	47↘	53↘	54↘	54↘	47↘	37↘	30↘	25↘	24↘	20↘	12↘	7↘	3↘
Milbank	38↘	32↘	26↘	18↘	16↘	20↘	25↘	30↘	35↘	30↘	36↘	36↘	40↘	40↘	35↘	28↘	25↘
Miller	38↘	26↘	23↘	24↘	31↘	37↘	41↘	48↘	48↘	44↘	37↘	35↘	35↘	31↘	24↘	18↘	15↘
Mobridge	24↘	21↘	25↘	31↘	39↘	43↘	45↘	45↘	44↘	35↘	31↘	29↘	29↘	21↘	12↘	9↘	7↘
Murdo	31↘	32↘	32↘	35↘	39↘	44↘	43↘	46↘	46↘	41↘	35↘	29↘	26↘	26↘	21↘	17↘	13↘
Pierre	20↘	20↘	26↘	33↘	35↘	41↘	45↘	45↘	41↘	36↘	30↘	29↘	28↘	26↘	18↘	13↘	10↘
Redfield	40↘	32↘	20↘	22↘	22↘	35↘	40↘	44↘	46↘	44↘	39↘	35↘	39↘	35↘	26↘	22↘	17↘
Sisseton	39↘	33↘	26↘	21↘	20↘	26↘	30↘	30↘	31↘	32↘	36↘	35↘	38↘	37↘	31↘	26↘	22↘
Watertown	40↘	36↘	30↘	21↘	21↘	25↘	30↘	35↘	37↘	36↘	36↘	35↘	37↘	36↘	29↘	23↘	20↘
Webster	47↘	41↘	31↘	25↘	26↘	32↘	37↘	39↘	40↘	40↘	39↘	39↘	41↘	39↘	31↘	24↘	20↘
Wheaton	38↘	37↘	33↘	25↘	18↘	16↘	16↘	17↘	21↘	26↘	31↘	32↘	36↘	35↘	29↘	24↘	22↘

\*Table values in mph

Don't see your city? Check out [weather.gov/forecastpoints](http://weather.gov/forecastpoints)



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

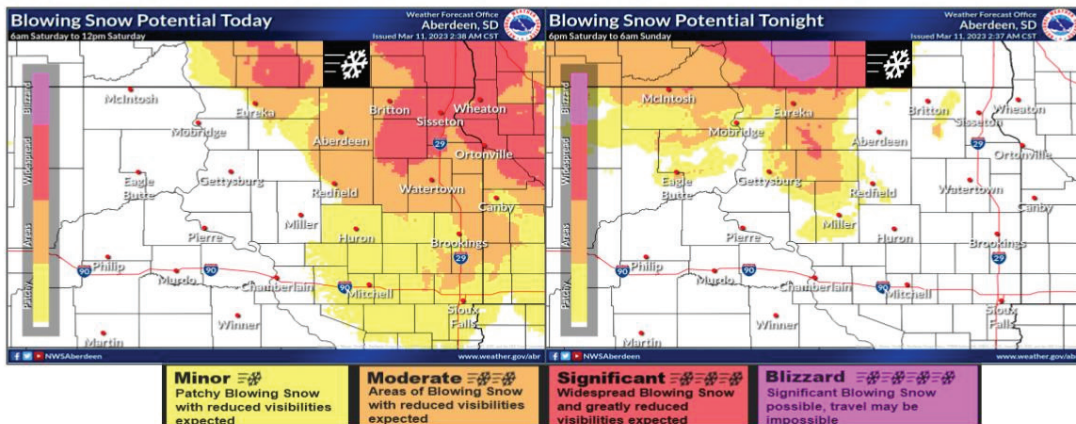


## Blowing Snow Potential Today/Tonight

March 11, 2023  
3:47 AM

### Overview

- Blowing snow will impact eastern areas through the morning. Another round of strong winds and blowing snow will be possible tonight into Sunday.
- Significant blowing snow is possible this morning, with **near-blizzard conditions** at times, especially where and when snow is falling (see *blowing snow potential map*).
- Though less, the blowing and drifting snow potential continues into Sunday afternoon before winds diminish Sunday evening.



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

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## Safety Message

March 11, 2023  
3:49 AM

### Winter Driving



\* Check the weather forecast  
& road conditions

\* Inform others of your travel plans  
\* Don't forget the emergency kit

#### North Dakota

<https://travel.dot.nd.gov/>

#### South Dakota

<https://www.sd511.org/>

#### Minnesota

<https://511mn.org/>

Check out your latest forecast  
[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

## Winter Weather Advisory

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE**

**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

**546 AM CST Sat Mar 11 2023**

Brown-Marshall-Day-  
Including the cities of Aberdeen, Britton, and Webster  
546 AM CST Sat Mar 11 2023

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL NOON CST TODAY...

\* WHAT...Snow. Additional snow accumulations of 1 to 3 inches with generally less than an inch over Brown County. Winds gusting as high as 50 mph, strongest east of the James River.

\* WHERE...Brown, Marshall and Day Counties.

\* WHEN...Until noon CST today.

\* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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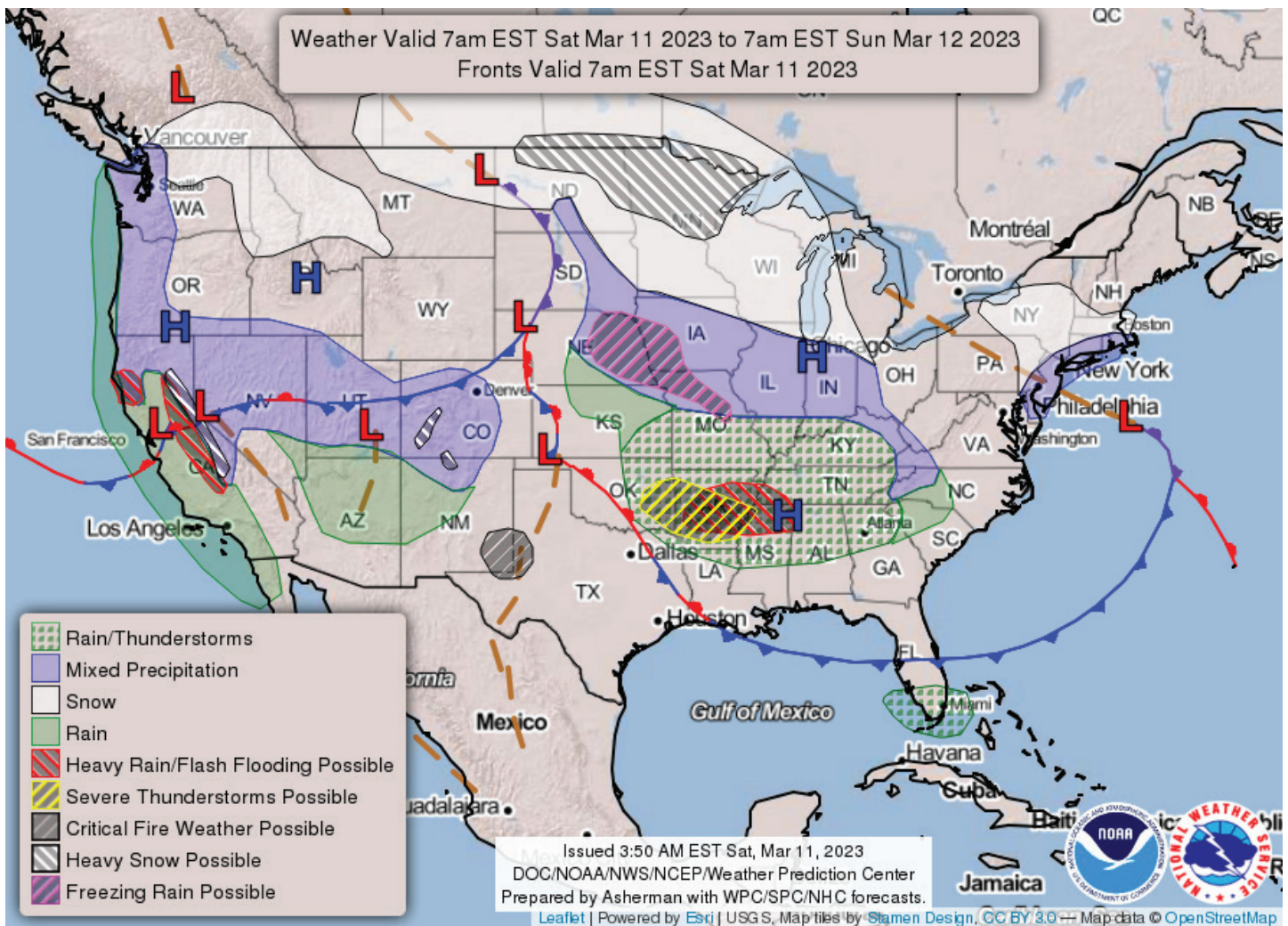
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 33 °F at 1:10 PM**  
**Low Temp: 17 °F at 4:29 AM**  
**Wind: 22 mph at 6:17 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 11 hours, 43 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 71 in 2016  
Record Low: -27 in 1948  
Average High: 39  
Average Low: 17  
Average Precip in March.: 0.27  
Precip to date in March.: 1.00  
Average Precip to date: 1.44  
Precip Year to Date: 2.58  
Sunset Tonight: 6:34:03 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:48:51 AM



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## Today in Weather History

March 11, 1991: A developing winter storm, centered to the south of the Black Hills, caused heavy snow to fall on the northern Black Hills from the evening of March 11 until the morning of March 12. Snowfall totals of 3-9 inches were reported, including 9 inches at Custer, 8 inches at Deerfield, and 8 inches at Lead.

March 11, 2011: A very intense low-pressure area moving across North Dakota brought widespread blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota. The low-pressure area brought 1 to 3 inches of snowfall to the region. The new snow combined with 30 to 50 mph winds with gusts to 60 to 70 mph brought widespread whiteout conditions. Traffic was brought to a standstill, with many motorists having to be rescued and taken to a shelter. Hundreds of cars were stranded on mainly Highway 12 and Interstate 29. Two people traveling on Highway 10 in McPherson County told about how they became stuck and were picked up by another vehicle and that it took them over 2 1/2 hours to travel just a few miles to safety. Interstate-29 was closed from Watertown to Sisseton from 6 pm on the 11th until noon on the 12th. Many events were affected, including the Girl's State Basketball Tournament in Watertown. There were several overturned semis along with several vehicle accidents across the area. Some of the highest wind gusts included 56 mph at Watertown; 58 mph at Mobridge, Sisseton, and Faulkton; 59 mph at Aberdeen; 61 mph at Bowdle; 66 mph near Hillhead, and 71 mph west of Long Lake.

1888: The Great Blizzard of 1888 paralyzed the east coast from the Chesapeake Bay to Maine on March 11 through the 14th. The blizzard dumped as much as 55 inches of snow in some areas, and snowdrifts of 30 to 40 feet were reported. An estimated 400 people died from this blizzard.

1911 - Tamarack, CA, reported 451 inches of snow on the ground, a record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1917: At 3:02 pm on Sunday, March 11, 1917, many New Castle lives were changed forever. In just a few terrifying minutes, 22 people were killed, hundreds were injured, 500 homes were damaged or destroyed, and many of the city's triumphant greenhouses were leveled in what would be part of \$1 million suffered in property damage.

1948 - Record cold followed in the wake of a Kansas blizzard. Lows of -25 degrees at Oberlin, Healy and Quinter established a state record for the month of March. Lows of -15 at Dodge City, -11 at Concordia, and -3 at Wichita were also March records. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - One of the most paralyzing snowstorms in decades produced record March snowfalls in Iowa. Four feet of snow covered the ground at Inwood following the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S., and a storm over the Gulf of Mexico spread rain and sleet and snow into the Appalachian Region. Sleet was reported in southern Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Chadron NE was buried under 33 inches of snow, up to 25 inches of snow was reported in eastern Wyoming, and totals in the Black Hills of South Dakota ranged up to 69 inches at Lead. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Mullen NE. Snow drifts thirty feet high were reported around Lusk WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-one cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 95 degrees at Lubbock TX equalled their record for March. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Forty-four cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Record highs included 71 degrees at Dickinson ND and Williston ND, and 84 degrees at Lynchburg VA, Charleston WV and Huntington WV. Augusta GA and Columbia SC tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with record highs of 88 degrees. A vigorous cold front produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains of Utah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Phoenix's record run for dry days finally ends at 143 days. The last measured rain fell on October 18, 2005. Not only did the rain break the dry spell, the 1.40 inches that fell was a record amount for the date.

2011: On March 11, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake off the Pacific coast of Japan generated a tsunami. This series of ocean waves sped towards the island nation, with waves reaching 24 feet high. The result was devastation and utter destruction.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### TRY, TRY AGAIN!

Jeanie had a very bad day. Nothing seemed to go the way she intended it to go, and she ended up embarrassing herself several times.

That evening, as she read her Bible, she went to the Lord in prayer. Confessing her sins, she said, "Lord, make me a good girl, please!"

After thinking for a moment, and realizing that it might be a difficult job even for the Lord, she quickly added, "If at first You don't succeed, Lord, try, try again!"

We can take great comfort in knowing that He will never give up on any of us, and more importantly, He will do all He can to help us succeed because His reputation is on the line!

Paul said that "those who become Christians become new creations. They become brand new persons!" Hard to believe? Of course. Impossible for God? Indeed not!

Christianity differs from every other religion. It is not the teachings of our Founder that save us, it is His death, burial and resurrection. It was His death that canceled our sins and His resurrection that made our new life in Christ possible. We become new persons through Him.

When there is sin in our life, He is anxious to forgive us. When we are trapped by habits that would destroy us, He wants to free us. "If we confess our sins, He will forgive us. If our lives are soiled, He will cleanse us." He's always there to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, even though we become new creations, we often behave like the old person we once were and fail to be who You intend us to be. Help us to succeed. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.10.23

9 20 59 60 63 5

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$229,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.08.23

3 7 29 31 49 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$39,580,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 44 Mins  
DRAW: 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.10.23

11 14 24 29 43 6

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 14 Mins 47  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.08.23

9 11 26 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$84,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 44 Mins  
DRAW: 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.08.23

13 20 29 41 45 19

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 43 Mins 47  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.08.23

26 27 43 61 69 4

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$45,000,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 43 Mins 47  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

## Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class A State=

Consolation Semifinal=

Flandreau 55, Lakota Tech 41

Sioux Falls Christian 52, Rapid City Christian 42

Semifinal=

Hamlin 57, Red Cloud 35

Wagner 63, Sisseton 45

Class AA State=

Consolation Semifinal=

Mitchell 48, Watertown 37

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 56, Rapid City Stevens 48

Semifinal=

Pierre T F Riggs High School 51, Harrisburg 37

Sioux Falls Washington 46, Sioux Falls Jefferson 43

Class B State=

Consolation Semifinal=

Castlewood 51, Howard 47

Jones County 47, Sully Buttes 38

Semifinal=

Viborg-Hurley 52, Ethan 34

Wall 76, Wolsey-Wessington 72

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

## Regulators cut pressure on pipeline after Kansas oil spill

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — U.S. government regulators have stopped allowing a large part of the Keystone oil pipeline to operate at higher-than-normal pressures following a massive oil spill in northeastern Kansas in December.

The order this week from the U.S. Department of Transportation's pipeline safety arm covers 1,220 miles (1,963 kilometers) of the Keystone pipeline in seven U.S. states. Regulators already had ordered the system's operator, Canada-based TC Energy, to reduce the pressure on a 96-mile (155-kilometer) segment of the pipeline from southern Nebraska near the Kansas border into central Kansas, where the spill occurred.

The regulators' action came ahead of the first hearings in the Kansas Legislature on the spill. A TC Energy official is set to face questions from lawmakers Tuesday during a joint meeting of two House committees.

TC Energy said in a statement Friday that it was already operating within the pressure limits set by this week's order and that it would continue to comply.

"Our commitment to the safe operations of our system is unwavering," the company said.

But Zack Pistora, a lobbyist in Kansas for the Sierra Club, said Friday that perhaps regulators should reconsider the Keystone pipeline's operation "in its entirety." The system has had more than 20 spills since it began operations in 2010, and the one in Kansas was the system's largest and the largest U.S. onshore spill in nine years, according to the regulators.

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"There's no confidence that this pipeline won't be breaking again in the near future, even with less pressure," Pistora said.

The latest order from regulators directed TC Energy to lower the maximum pressure by 10% on the pipeline from North Dakota's border with Canada to northern Oklahoma, as well as the system's spur from southern Nebraska through Missouri into central Illinois. That would bring the maximum pressure into line with what's normally allowed after TC Energy had received a special permit to exceed it six years ago.

A pipeline rupture Dec. 7 dumped nearly 13,000 barrels — each with enough crude to fill a standard household bathtub — in a creek through rural pasture land in Washington County, Kansas, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of Kansas City.

No one was evacuated following the spill, and officials said it did not affect the two larger rivers and reservoir downstream from the affected creek. With regulators' permission, the company reopened the affected segment a little more than three weeks after the spill.

However, in a separate Jan. 6 cleanup order, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the amount of oil spilled was "a harmful quantity" violating the nation's clean water laws. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the EPA order through a Freedom of Information Act request.

TC Energy must notify the state and the EPA's on-site coordinator before shipping out any hazardous materials. Also, the company will pay the U.S. government's costs from the cleanup and faces a fine of nearly \$52,000 a day if it violates the EPA order.

A U.S. Governmental Accountability Office report to Congress in July 2021 noted that pipeline regulators had allowed the higher-than-normal maximum pressure on the Keystone system starting in 2017. The regulators concluded the operating at the higher pressures was safe if TC Energy met more than 50 conditions.

TC Energy said last month that a flawed weld caused a crack that grew over time because of the stress on a bend in the pipeline where the rupture occurred. The company has estimated that the cleanup will cost \$480 million, and it has an average of 800 people on site in any given 24-hour period.

"We continue to progress," on the cleanup and investigating the root cause of the pipeline rupture, the company said in its statement.

The 2,700-mile (4,345-kilometer) Keystone system carries heavy crude oil extracted from tar sands in western Canada to the Gulf Coast and to central Illinois.

Concerns that spills could pollute waterways spurred opposition to plans by TC Energy to build another crude oil pipeline in the same system, the 1,200-mile (1,900-kilometer) Keystone XL, across Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. President Joe Biden's cancelation of a permit led the company to pull the plug on the project in 2021.

The pipeline regulators' order this week also requires TC Energy to review the pipeline pressure and consider potential problems each month on the 291-mile (468-kilometer) Keystone segment from southern Nebraska into northern Oklahoma.

The order said that not reducing the pressure on more of the pipeline and requiring other measures would make pipeline operations "hazardous to life, property or the environment."

## Florida abortion ban could have impact beyond the state

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Less than a year after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, an expected GOP presidential contender, signed a ban on abortions after the 15-week mark of pregnancy, he's showing support for an even stricter ban introduced this week by state lawmakers. His position could have implications on the availability of abortion not only in Florida but across the South — and also figure into the 2024 presidential race.

THE CURRENT FLORIDA LAW In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, giving control over abortion to the states. Some conservative legislatures passed bills years in advance that would impose abortion bans if Roe were overturned. Florida wasn't among those earlier states, but lawmakers acted after a leak of a draft version of the new abortion ruling, Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, in January 2022.

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Florida lawmakers agreed to ban abortion after 15 weeks, with an exception for the life of the woman but not for rape or incest. DeSantis signed it in April and it took effect in July.

## THE NEW PROPOSAL

The deeper ban, proposed as Florida's legislative session opened on Tuesday, would make it a crime to provide an abortion past six weeks' gestational age.

There would be an exception to save the life of the woman and exceptions in the case of pregnancy caused by rape or incest until 15 weeks of pregnancy. In those cases, the woman would have to provide documentation such as a medical record, restraining order or police report.

The measure would also require that the drugs used in medication-induced abortions — which make up the majority of those provided nationally — could be dispensed only in person by a physician.

DeSantis this week called the rape and incest provisions "sensible" and reiterated his support for tighter restrictions, saying, "We welcome pro-life legislation."

If Republican lawmakers can agree on the details, it's likely to become law.

DeSantis was easily re-elected in November, and at the same time, Republicans gained veto-proof majorities in the state Legislature.

## WHAT IT COULD MEAN ON THE GROUND

With bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy in nearby Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi and a ban on terminating pregnancies in Georgia after cardiac activity can be detected — around six weeks - Florida has become a haven for people in the region seeking abortions.

A ban at the gestational age of six weeks would mean fewer women traveling to Florida for abortions and more looking at going even further away, to places including North Carolina and Illinois.

"A six-week ban is a really substantial shock to practical abortion access across the South," said Caitlin Myers, an economics professor at Middlebury College in Vermont who studies abortion access.

There would also be an impact for Florida residents.

Nationally, only about 4% of abortions occur after the 15-week mark, but most of them happen after 6 weeks and 6 days.

Myers said that in states that have had six-week bans, it appears about half the women seeking abortions have been able to get them.

## WHAT IT COULD MEAN FOR DeSANTIS

Abortion bans are important for many Republican primary voters and the ban DeSantis signed into law last year was far less aggressive than action in most GOP-controlled states. Thirteen states now have effective bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy and another half-dozen have similar laws on the books but have had enforcement stopped by courts.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, another possible 2024 Republican presidential candidate, was asked in a CBS News interview last year whether she would nudge DeSantis to further restrict abortion. "I think that talking about situations and making statements is incredibly important," she said, "but also taking action and governing and bringing policies that protect life are even more important because that's what truly will save lives."

A six-week ban would move Florida closer to what other GOP-controlled states have done on abortion.

That could be important as DeSantis presents himself as the architect of a conservative policies in a state that he says is doing what the nation should.

The GOP legislative agenda for coming months there includes making guns more available, keeping immigrants who are in the country illegally out of the state, telling teachers which pronouns they can use for students and criminalizing some drag shows.

He is expected to launch his presidential candidacy formally sometime after the session wraps in May, though the wheels are already in motion. He's speaking in the early nominating state of Iowa on Friday and a former official in President Donald Trump's White House on Thursday launched a group encouraging DeSantis to run for president.

While aggressive abortion bans are popular with many conservatives, they are considered unpopular

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among other crucial voting blocs — especially suburban women who play an outsized role in general elections.

In 2022, there were ballot measures dealing with abortion in six states, including generally conservative Kansas, Kentucky and Montana. In each of them, the abortion-rights side prevailed.

## **UK: Russian advance in Bakhmut could come with heavy losses**

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces have made progress in the front-line hotspot of Bakhmut, a key target of Moscow's monthslong campaign in eastern Ukraine that has resulted in staggering casualties, but their assault will be difficult to sustain without further harsh losses, U.K. military officials said in an assessment Saturday.

The U.K. defense ministry said in the latest of its regular Twitter updates that units from the Kremlin-controlled paramilitary Wagner Group have captured most of eastern Bakhmut, with a river flowing through the city center now marking the front line.

However, the update added, it will be "highly challenging" for Wagner forces to push ahead, as Ukraine has destroyed key bridges over the river, while Ukrainian sniper fire from fortified buildings further west has made the thin strip of open ground in the center "a killing zone."

At the same time, Ukrainian troops and supply lines in the mining city remain vulnerable to "continued Russian attempts to outflank the defenders from the north and south," as Russian forces try to close in on them in a pincer movement, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, Russian military bloggers and other pro-Kremlin Telegram accounts on Friday claimed that Russian forces have entered a metal processing plant in northwestern Bakhmut. A Washington-based think tank late on Friday also referenced geolocated footage showing Russian forces within 800 meters of the AZOM plant, a heavily built-up and fortified complex.

The Institute for the Study of War assessed that Moscow's apparent focus on capturing the plant, rather than opting for a "wider encirclement of western Bakhmut" by attempting to take nearby villages, is likely to bring a further wave of Russian casualties.

Across Ukraine, repair work continued Saturday following a massive Russian missile and drone strike two days earlier that killed six people and left hundreds of thousands without heat or electricity.

Ukraine's state grid operator said that power supply issues persisted across four regions following the barrage, which saw 80 Russian missiles and a smaller number of exploding drones hit residential buildings and critical infrastructure across the country.

In a Facebook post, Ukrenergo said that scheduled blackouts remain in operation in the Kharkiv and Zhytomyr regions in Ukraine's northwest and northeast, respectively, as well as parts of the Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv provinces in the southeast. The company added that the situation in Zhytomyr was especially challenging, with some consumers still knocked off the grid.

Russian shelling on Saturday set a car driving through the southern city of Kherson on fire, killing one person inside it and wounding two others, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said in a Telegram post.

Earlier, authorities had reported that Russian shelling over the previous 24 hours killed at least five people and wounded another 19 across Ukraine's Kherson and Donetsk regions. The eastern Donetsk province, where Bakhmut is located, has been the epicenter of the fighting in recent months, while the Ukrainian-held parts of the Kherson region have seen daily shelling from Russian troops stationed across the Dnieper river.

## **Hong Kong activists behind Tiananmen vigil jailed for months**

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Three former organizers of Hong Kong's annual vigil in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown on pro-democracy protests were jailed Saturday for 4 1/2 months for failing to provide authorities with information on the group under a national security law.

Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong were arrested in 2021 during a crackdown on

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the city's pro-democracy movement following massive protests more than three years ago. They were leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China and were found guilty last week.

The now-defunct alliance was best known for organizing candlelight vigils in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the 1989 China military's crushing of Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, but it voted to disband in 2021 under the shadow of the Beijing-imposed national security law.

Supporters say its closure has shown freedoms and autonomy that were promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 are diminishing.

Before its disbandment, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to democracy groups overseas, accusing it of being a foreign agent. But the group refused to cooperate, arguing the police did not have a right to ask for its information because it was not a foreign agent and the authorities did not provide sufficient justification.

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

Chow denied the alliance was a foreign agent and said that nothing had emerged that proved otherwise. She said their sentencing as about punishing people for defending the truth.

She said national security is being used as a pretext to wage a war on civil society.

"Sir, sentence us for our insubordination if you must, but when the exercise of power is based on lies, being insubordinate is the only way to be human," she said.

Handing down the sentences, Principal Magistrate Peter Law said the case is the first of its kind under the new law and the sentencing has to send a clear message that the law does not condone any violation.

Law, who was approved by the city's leader to oversee the case, said he saw no justification for reducing the 4 1/2-month sentence.

Some crucial details, including the names of groups that were alleged to have links with the alliance, were redacted from court documents. In previous proceedings, the court ordered a partial redaction of some information after prosecutors argued that a full disclosure would jeopardize an ongoing probe into national security cases.

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

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

The law criminalizes secession, subversion, and collusion with foreign forces to intervene in the city's affairs as well as terrorism. Many pro-democracy activists were silenced or jailed after its enactment in 2020.

In a separate case, Elizabeth Tang, who was arrested for endangering national security earlier this week, was released on bail on Saturday. Tang is a veteran labor activist and also Lee's wife.

In a statement Thursday that did not provide a name, police said they had arrested a 65-year-old woman for suspected collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security. It said she was being detained for investigation.

"I feel clueless because my work is always about labor rights and organizing trade unions. So I don't understand why I was accused of breaking the law and endangering national security," she told reporters on Saturday after being released.

## Pope Francis at 10 years: A reformer's learning curve, plans

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — So much for a short pontificate.

Pope Francis celebrates the 10th anniversary of his election Monday, far outpacing the "two or three" years he once envisioned for his papacy and showing no signs of slowing down.

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On the contrary, with an agenda full of problems and plans and no longer encumbered by the shadow of Pope Benedict XVI, Francis, 86, has backed off from talking about retiring and recently described the papacy as a job for life.

History's first Latin American pope already has made his mark and could have even more impact in the years to come. Yet a decade ago, the Argentine Jesuit was so convinced he wouldn't be elected as pope that he nearly missed the final vote as he chatted with a fellow cardinal outside the Sistine Chapel.

"The master of ceremonies came out and said 'Are you going in or not?'" Francis recalled in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "I realized afterward that it was my unconscious resistance to going in."

He was elected the 266th pope on the next ballot.

## SEX ABUSE

Francis had a big learning curve on clergy sex abuse, initially downplaying the problem in ways that made survivors question whether he "got it." He had his wake-up call five years into his pontificate after a problematic visit to Chile.

During the trip, he discovered a serious disconnect between what Chilean bishops had told him about a notorious case and the reality: Hundreds or thousands of Chilean faithful had been raped and molested by Catholic priests over decades.

"That was my conversion," he told the AP. "That's when the bomb went off, when I saw the corruption of many bishops in this."

Francis has passed a series of measures since then aimed at holding the church hierarchy accountable, but the results have been mixed. Benedict removed some 800 priests, but Francis seems far less eager to defrock abusers, reflecting resistance within the hierarchy to efforts to permanently remove predators from the priesthood.

The next frontier in the crisis has already reared its head: the sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse of adults by clergy. Francis is aware of the problem — a new case concerns one of his fellow Jesuits — but there seems to be no will to take firm action.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SYNODS

When the history of the Francis pontificate is written, entire chapters might well be devoted to his emphasis on "synodality," a term that has little meaning outside Catholic circles but could go down as one of Francis' most important church contributions.

A synod is a gathering of bishops, and Francis' philosophy that bishops must listen to one another and the laity has come to define his vision for the Catholic Church: He wants it to be a place where the faithful are welcomed, accompanied and heard.

The synods held during his first 10 years produced some of the most significant, and controversial, moments of his papacy.

After listening to the plight of divorced Catholics during a 2014-2015 synod on the family, for instance, Francis opened the door to letting divorced and civilly remarried couples receive Communion. Calls to allow married priests marked his 2019 synod on the Amazon, although Francis ultimately rejected the idea.

His October synod has involved an unprecedented canvassing of the Catholic faithful about their hopes for the church and problems they have encountered, eliciting demands from women for greater leadership roles, including ordination.

## LATIN MASS

Catholic traditionalists were wary when Francis emerged as pope for the first time on the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica without the red cape that his predecessors had worn for formal events. Yet they never expected him to reverse one of Benedict's signature decisions by reimposing restrictions on the old Latin Mass, including where and who can celebrate it.

While the decision directly affected only a fraction of Catholic Mass-goers, his crackdown on the Tridentine Rite became the call to arms for the anti-Francis conservative opposition.

Francis justified his move by saying Benedict's decision to liberalize the celebration of the old Mass had become a source of division in parishes. But traditionalists took the renewed restrictions as an attack on orthodoxy, one that they saw as contradicting Francis' "all are welcome" mantra.

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"Instead of integrating them into parish life, the restriction on the use of parish churches will marginalize and push to the peripheries faithful Catholics who wish only to worship," lamented Joseph Shaw of the Latin Mass Society's U.K. branch.

While the short-term prospects for Francis relenting are not great, the traditionalists do have time on their side, knowing that in a 2,000-year-old institution, another pope might come along who is more friendly to the old rite.

## ROLE OF WOMEN

Francis' quips about the "female genius" have long made women cringe. Women theologians are the "strawberries on the cake," he once said. Nuns shouldn't be "old maids," he said. Europe shouldn't be a barren, infertile "grandmother," he told European Union lawmakers — a remark that got him an angry phone call from then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

But, it's also true that Francis has done more to promote women in the church than any pope before him, including naming several women to high-profile positions in the Vatican.

That's not saying much given only one in four Holy See employees is female, no woman heads a diocese, or department, and Francis has upheld church doctrine forbidding women from the priesthood.

But the trend is there and "there is no possibility of going back," said María Lía Zervino, one of the first three women named to the Vatican office that helps the pope select bishops around the world.

## LGBTQ FAITHFUL

Francis' insistence that long-marginalized LGBTQ Catholics can find a welcome home in the church can be summed up by two pronouncements that have book-ended his papacy to date: "Who am I to judge?" and "Being homosexual is not a crime."

In between making those historic statements, Francis made outreach to LGBTQ people a hallmark of his papacy more than any pope before him.

He ministers to members of a transgender community in Rome. He has counseled gay couples seeking to raise their children Catholic. During a 2015 visit to the U.S., he publicized a private meeting with a gay former student and the man's partner to counter the conservative narrative that he had received an anti-same-sex marriage activist.

"The pope is reminding the church that the way people treat one another in the social world is of much greater moral importance than what people may possibly do in the privacy of a bedroom," said Francis DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry, which advocates for greater acceptance of LGBTQ Catholics.

## WV Senate joins GOP effort to limit trans youth health care

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia's Republican supermajority Senate followed a growing national trend of GOP opposition to health care for transgender youth by passing a bill that would ban certain treatments and therapies, while approving a significant change to add exceptions for mental health.

The Senate version of the bill passed by a count of 30-2 on Friday was noteworthy in the addition of allowances for some transgender youth to continue receiving medical interventions, including hormone therapy, when they are considered at risk of self harm or suicide.

The bill faces steep opposition in the state House of Delegates, which will take up the amended Senate version. The GOP-dominated House last month passed a proposal including a ban on puberty-blocking medication and hormone therapy, with no exemptions for mental health.

Republican Gov. Jim Justice has not taken a public stance on the measure.

Lawmakers in West Virginia and other states advancing bans on transgender health care for youth and young adults often characterize gender-affirming treatments as medically unproven, potentially dangerous in the long term and a symptom of "woke" culture.

Every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association, supports gender-affirming care for youths.

The West Virginia Senate bill passed Friday would outlaw those under 18 from being prescribed hormone



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therapy and fully reversible medication suspending the physical changes of puberty, buying patients and parents time to make future decisions about hormones.

"These kids struggle, they have incredible difficulties," said Majority Leader Tom Takubo, a pulmonologist, who urged support for mental health protections.

Takubo's approved change would allow young people to access puberty blockers and hormone therapy if they are experiencing severe gender dysphoria, under certain circumstances.

Gender dysphoria is defined by medical professionals as severe psychological distress experienced by those whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.

The rate of suicide ideation for transgender youth in Virginia is three times higher than the rate for all youth in the state, according to research and data compiled by WVU Medicine physicians using the West Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

During a speech on the Senate floor, Takubo referenced 17 peer-reviewed studies showing a significant decrease in the rates of suicide ideation and suicide attempts among youth with severe gender dysphoria who have access to medication therapy.

He found a supporter in Senate Health and Human Resources Committee Chair Sen. Mike Maroney, another trained physician, who said lawmakers would set "a dangerous precedent" by disregarding medical research in favor of political gain.

"Who are we, to win an election, to tell people how to practice medicine? To change treatments? It's unbelievable," the Republican said, adding that lawmakers wouldn't apply the same standard for drugs for cancer or mental illness.

The legislation also includes a ban on gender-affirming surgery for minors, something medical professionals emphasize does not happen in West Virginia.

During Friday's debate, Republican Sen. Eric Tarr repeated those concerns, saying the medical interventions doctors are practicing are too extreme and driven by "woke" culture.

"They're trying to take pronouns out of our textbooks for kids," Tarr said.

With Takubo's change, a person under 18 would have to be diagnosed with severe gender dysphoria by at least two medical or mental health providers to access medication therapy. One would have to be a mental health provider or adolescent medicine specialist.

The dosage must be the lowest possible necessary to "treat the psychiatric condition and not for purposes of gender alteration," according to the bill.

The providers must be specifically trained to diagnose and treat severe gender dysphoria in adolescents and would have to provide written testimony that medical interventions are necessary to prevent or limit self-harm or the possibility of self-harm.

The minor's parents and guardians also would be required to give written consent to the treatments.

Hormonal therapy could not be provided to minors before the age of puberty, something West Virginia physicians say doesn't happen anyway.

The House version of the bill passed last month 84-10, with all 'no' votes coming from the body's shrinking delegation of Democrats. They accused GOP lawmakers of putting children's lives at risk to score political points with the national conservative movement.

That version provides exceptions for individuals born with a "medically verifiable disorder" including people with "external biological sex characteristics that are irresolvably ambiguous" and for people taking treatments for infection, injury, disease, or disorder that has been "caused by or exacerbated by the performance of gender transition procedures."

People also can access the treatment if they are in "imminent danger of death, or impairment of a major bodily function unless surgery is performed."

Speaking against Takubo's amendment Friday, Republican Sen. Mark Maynard said he didn't see why any changes were necessary. He worried additions could make the state vulnerable to a lawsuit.

"This amendment would disintegrate the clarity of the bill in its very simple terms," Maynard said. "These guardrails are already in this bill as it came to us from the House."

The vote came a day after a crowd of protesters descended on the state Capitol, where cries of "trans

kids matter” could be heard from the Senate chamber as lawmakers debated bills.

Democratic Del. Danielle Walker, the only openly LGBTQ member, led chants of the state motto: “Mountaineers are always free.”

“They are trying to come for trans kids in West Virginia, and they’re going to come for every single one of us next,” said Sam Green of Huntington, wearing a transgender pride flag draped around their shoulders while addressing the crowd.

Cecelia Moran, an 18-year-old high school student from Marion County, said she feared banning any kind of medically proven health care could result in more young people leaving West Virginia, one of only three states to lose population in the 2020 U.S. Census.

“I think a lot of young people already struggle to stay here and feel welcome here and are already planning on getting out of the state as soon as possible,” she said.

Her mother, Rebecca Moran, said the bill is “just completely unnecessary” and decisions about healthcare should be made by families and health care providers.

“This is not what’s harming our kids,” said Rebecca Moran, a city councilor in Fairmont. “There’s so many other things: homelessness, poverty.”

## Records in Fox defamation case show pressures on reporters

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It wasn’t critics, political foes or their bosses that united Fox News stars Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham when they gathered via text message for a gripe session shortly after the 2020 election.

It was their own network’s news division.

“They’re pathetic,” Carlson wrote.

“THEY AREN’T SMART,” Ingraham emphasized.

“What news have they broken the last four years?” Hannity asked.

The Nov. 13, 2020, conversation was included among thousands of pages of recently released documents related to Dominion Voting Systems’ \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox for its post-election reporting. Like much of what was uncovered, the exchange ultimately may have little bearing on whether Fox will be judged guilty of libel.

Instead, the material offers insight into how Fox’s stars and leadership responded at a time of high anxiety and how giving its audience what it wanted to hear took precedence over reporting uncomfortable truths.

The revelations have bolstered critics who say Fox News Channel should be considered a propaganda network rather than a news outlet.

Yet while Fox’s news side has seen the prominent defections of Shepard Smith and Chris Wallace in recent years, it still employs many respected journalists — such as Jennifer Griffin, Greg Palkot, John Roberts, Shannon Bream, Bryan Llenas, Jacqui Heinrich and Chad Pergram.

They’re left to wonder whether the raft of recent stories about Fox — from the Dominion documents and from Carlson’s use of U.S. Capitol security video to craft his own narrative of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack — will make their jobs more difficult. Will fewer people want to work with them because of the dominance of Fox’s opinion side?

Fox says it has increased its investment in journalism by more than 50% under Suzanne Scott, Fox News Media CEO, and usually leads its rivals in ratings during major breaking news stories.

“We are incredibly proud of our team of journalists who continue to deliver breaking news from around the world and will continue to fight for the preservation of the First Amendment,” the network said in a statement.

The post-election period in 2020 offered a stern test. The network’s election night declaration that Joe Biden had won in Arizona, ahead of any other news organization, infuriated its viewers. Many were sympathetic to former President Donald Trump’s claims of significant voter fraud even if, then as now, there

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has been no evidence of that.

After she covered a Nov. 19 news conference with Trump lawyer Rudolph Giuliani, then-Fox reporter Kristin Fisher said her boss in Washington, Bryan Boughton, called to say he was unhappy with her report. She said she was told she needed to do a better job of "respecting our audience," according to documents released in the case.

"I believed that I was respecting our audience by telling them the truth," Fisher, who now works at CNN, testified in a deposition on the Dominion case.

She later claimed that airtime was taken away from her in retaliation.

Heinrich drew the ire of Fox opinion hosts by tweeting a fact-check on some of Trump's claims. In a text message, Carlson profanely said she should be fired.

"She has serious nerve doing this," Fox publicity chief Irena Briganti said in an internal memo released among the court papers, "and if this gets picked up, viewers are going to be further disgusted. Her job is to report, not to taunt the president of the United States."

During a Nov. 14 text conversation, Scott and Lachlan Murdoch, the executive chairman and CEO of Fox Corp., talked about how a Trump rally should be covered on the network.

"News guys have to be careful how they cover this rally," Murdoch said. "So far some of the side comments have been slightly anti, and they shouldn't be. The narrative should be this huge celebration of the president."

In another message, he called Fox correspondent Leland Vittert "smug and obnoxious." Vittert now works at NewsNation.

A week after the election, a Fox Corp. senior executive, Raj Shah, said in a memo that "bold, clear and decisive action is needed for us to begin to regain the trust that we're losing with our core audience."

Dominion argues, as part of its lawsuit, that nervousness about what its viewers wanted led Fox to air allegations that the voting machine company was complicit in fraud that hurt Trump, even though many people at the network didn't believe them. In his own deposition, Fox founder Rupert Murdoch agreed the election had been fair and it "was not stolen."

Fox counters that it was airing newsworthy charges made by the president and his followers.

Concern over the Arizona backlash spread to the news division, according to court documents. Fox News anchor Bret Baier said defending the call made him uncomfortable and suggested instead awarding the state to Trump. Roberts also sent a memo saying he'd been getting "major heat" over the decision.

In 2012, Fox stood strongly behind its decision desk when network commentator and veteran GOP aide Karl Rove questioned its correct call that Barack Obama had won in Ohio, essentially assuring him of re-election against Republican Mitt Romney.

In a memorable television moment, Megyn Kelly marched down the hall to hear the decision desk's explanation for why the call was made.

Eight years later, signs of timidity at Fox appeared in the days after its Arizona call. When other news organizations ultimately declared Biden the president-elect on the Saturday morning after the election, Fox waited about 15 minutes.

On Nov. 20, 2020, Rupert Murdoch discussed with Scott in a private memo whether two Washington executives key to the Arizona race call should be fired, saying it would send a "big message" to Trump allies. The executives, Bill Sammon and Chris Stirewalt, lost their jobs two months later.

A Fox spokeswoman characterized the discussions about the Arizona call as part of a typical postmortem that happens after big news events. Despite "intense scrutiny," Fox stood by its call. Even though Sammon and Stirewalt were forced out, Fox kept consultant Arnon Mishkin, who has run its decisions desk, for the 2024 election.

Scott, answerable to corporate bosses, noted in her deposition that she considered herself a television producer.

"I don't consider myself a journalist," said the head of Fox News Media. "I consider myself a TV executive. I hire journalists. I hire news people."

Longtime Fox News Channel chief Roger Ailes wasn't a journalist, either — his background was in politics.

To some longtime Fox watchers, though, Ailes recognized that Fox's opinion side drew strength from a solid news side, and he kept stronger barriers between the two.

Some of the information revealed in recent weeks illustrates how, in many ways, Fox has become less of an agenda-setter than an outlet that follows its audience, said Nicole Hemmer, a Vanderbilt University professor and author of "Partisans: The Conservative Revolutionaries Who Remade American Politics in the 1990s."

To date, no one in Fox management has talked about the Dominion case to its journalists, leaving some wondering whether there is anyone standing up for them, said one Fox journalist, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of professional retribution.

"There is some fine journalism still being done at Fox News today," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. She cited the transition of "Fox News Sunday" from Wallace to Bream.

The fallout from the Dominion case, however, leaves open the question of whether Fox journalists will be allowed to do their jobs unconstrained by other forces, she said.

"It would be useful for Fox News, at this point, to make a clear statement that the news division has complete and total autonomy and that a clear line is drawn between it and the rest of Fox," Jamieson said.

## Michael Cohen to testify Monday in Trump hush-money probe

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen is scheduled to testify Monday before a Manhattan grand jury investigating hush-money payments made on the former president's behalf, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. They were not authorized to speak publicly about grand jury proceedings and did so on condition of anonymity.

Cohen is a key witness in Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's investigation and his testimony is coming at a critical time, as prosecutors close in on a decision on whether to seek charges against Trump. Prosecutors sometimes save their most important witnesses until the end stages of a grand jury investigation.

Cohen has been meeting regularly with Manhattan prosecutors in recent weeks, including a day-long session Friday to prepare for his appearance before the grand jury, which has been hearing evidence in the matter since January.

Cohen declined to comment to reporters as he left the meeting, saying he'd be "taking a little bit of time now to stay silent and allow the D.A. build their case."

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which thus far has declined to comment on the investigation, also declined to address whether Cohen would testify before the grand jury.

Trump continued to lash out at the probe on social media Friday, calling the case a "Scam, Injustice, Mockery, and Complete and Total Weaponization of Law Enforcement in order to affect a Presidential Election!"

Prosecutors appear to be looking at whether Trump committed crimes in arranging the payments, or in how they were accounted for internally at Trump's company, the Trump Organization. One possible charge would be falsifying business records, a misdemeanor unless prosecutors could prove it was done to conceal another crime.

No former U.S. president has ever been charged with a crime.

Prosecutors this week invited Trump to testify before the grand jury — another sign that phase of the investigation is winding down. Inviting the subject of an investigation to appear before a grand jury is typically one of the last steps before a potential indictment.

Trump has the right to testify under New York law, though legal experts say he is unlikely to do so because it wouldn't benefit his defense and he'd have to give up a cloak of immunity that's automatically granted to grand jury witnesses under state law.

Cohen served prison time after pleading guilty in 2018 to federal charges, including campaign finance violations, for arranging the payouts to porn actor Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal to keep

them from going public. Trump has denied the affairs.

Cohen paid Daniels \$130,000 through his own company and was then reimbursed by Trump, whose company logged the reimbursements as "legal expenses." McDougal's \$150,000 payment was made through the publisher of the supermarket tabloid the National Enquirer, which squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch-and-kill."

The Trump Organization "grossed up" Cohen's reimbursement for the Daniels payment for "tax purposes," according to federal prosecutors who filed criminal charges against the lawyer in connection with the payments in 2018. Cohen got \$360,000 plus a \$60,000 bonus, for a total of \$420,000.

Federal prosecutors said during Cohen's criminal case that Trump was aware of the payments to the women. The U.S. attorney's office in New York, however, declined at the time to seek a criminal charge against the then-sitting president.

Cohen, now estranged from Trump, has met with prosecutors 20 times through several iterations of the hush-money probe. In January, he gave his cell phones to Manhattan prosecutors so they could extract evidence, including voice recordings of conversations he had with a lawyer for Daniels — whose real name is Stephanie Clifford — as well as emails and text messages.

Other members of Trump's inner circle have met with Manhattan prosecutors in recent weeks, including his former political adviser Kellyanne Conway and former spokesperson Hope Hicks.

## China names Li Qiang premier nominally in charge of economy

BEIJING (AP) — China on Saturday named Li Qiang, a close confidant of top leader Xi Jinping, as the country's next premier nominally in charge of the world's second-largest economy now facing some of its worst prospects in years.

Li was nominated by Xi and appointed to the position at Saturday morning's session of the National People's Congress, China's ceremonial parliament. That came a day after Xi, 69, secured a norms-breaking third five-year term as state leader, setting him up to possibly rule for life.

Li is best known for having enforced a brutal "zero-COVID" lockdown on Shanghai last spring as party boss of the Chinese financial hub, proving his loyalty to Xi in the face of complaints from residents over their lack of access to food, medical care and basic services.

Li, 63, came to know Xi during the future president's term as head of Li's native Zhejiang, a relatively wealthy southeastern province now known as a technology and manufacturing powerhouse.

Prior to the pandemic, Li built up a reputation in Shanghai and Zhejiang before that as friendly to private industry, even as Xi enforced tighter political controls and anti-COVID curbs, as well as more control over e-commerce and other tech companies.

As premier, Li will be charged with reviving a sluggish economy still emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and confronted with weak global demand for exports, lingering U.S. tariff hikes, a shrinking workforce and an aging population.

He takes on the job as authority of the premier and the State Council, China's Cabinet, has been steadily eroding as Xi shifts more powers to bodies directly under the ruling Communist Party.

At the opening of the annual congress session on Sunday, outgoing Premier Li Keqiang announced plans for a consumer-led revival of the struggling economy, setting this year's growth target at "around 5%." Last year's growth fell to 3%, the second-weakest level since at least the 1970s.

As with Xi's appointment on Friday, there was no indication that members of the NPC had any option other than to endorse Li and other officials picked by the Communist Party to fill other posts.

Unlike Xi, who received the body's full endorsement, Li's tally included three opposed and eight abstentions.

The nearly 3,000 delegates deposited ballots into boxes placed around the vast auditorium in the Great Hall of the People, in a process that also produced new heads of the Supreme People's Court and the state prosecutor's office, and two vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission that commands the party's military wing, the 2 million-member People's Liberation Army.

Xi was renamed head of the commission on Friday, an appointment that has been automatic for the party leader for three decades. The premier has no direct authority over the armed forces, who take their orders explicitly from the party, and plays only a marginal role in foreign relations and domestic security.

Xi's new term and the appointment of loyalists to top posts underscore his near-total monopoly on Chinese political power, eliminating any potential opposition to his hyper-nationalistic agenda of building China into the top political, military and economic rival to the U.S. and the chief authoritarian challenge to the Washington-led democratic world order.

## Oregon closer to magic mushroom therapy, but has setback

By ANDREW SELSKY and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon was taking a major step Friday in its pioneering of legalized psilocybin therapy with the graduation of the first students trained in accompanying patients tripping on psychedelic mushrooms, although a company's bankruptcy has left another group on the same path adrift.

The graduation ceremony for 35 students was being held Friday evening by InnerTrek, a Portland firm, at a woody retreat center. About 70 more will graduate on Saturday and Sunday in ceremonies in which they will pledge to do no harm.

"Facilitator training is at the heart of the nation's first statewide psilocybin therapy and wellness program and is core to the success of the Oregon model we're pioneering here," said Tom Eckert, program director at InnerTrek and architect of the 2020 ballot measure that legalized Oregon's program.

The students must pass a final exam to receive InnerTrek certificates. They then take a test administered by the Oregon Health Authority to receive their facilitator licenses.

"The graduation of the first cohort of students from approved psilocybin facilitator training programs is a significant milestone for Oregon," said Angie Allbee, manager of the state health authority's psilocybin services section. "We congratulate Oregon's future facilitators and the training programs they are graduating from on this incredible and historic moment in psilocybin history."

The health authority reported Friday that so far it has received 191 license and worker permit applications, including licenses for manufacturers of psilocybin and service centers where the psychedelic substance would be consumed and experienced.

Allbee said she expects students will soon submit applications for licenses, "which will move us closer to service center doors opening in 2023."

Some classes in InnerTrek's six-month, \$7,900 course were held online, but others were in-person, held in a building near Portland resembling a mountain lodge.

The students were told that a dosing session at a licensed center should include a couch or mats for clients to sit or lie on, an eye mask, comfort items like a blanket and stuffed animals, a sketch pad, pencils and a bucket for vomiting. A session typically lasts at least six hours, often with music. Trainers emphasized that the facilitators' clients should be given the freedom to explore whatever emotions emerge during their inner journeys.

"We're not guiding," trainer Gina Gratza told the students in a December training session. "Let your participants' experiences unfold. Use words sparingly. Let participants come to their own insights and conclusions."

Researchers believe psilocybin changes the way the brain organizes itself, permitting users to adopt new attitudes more easily and help overcome depression, PTSD, alcoholism and other issues.

Eckert said the graduating students will be prepared to help clients see the benefits of psilocybin.

"I feel like it's a big moment for our culture and country as we collectively begin to reexamine and re-evaluate the nature of mental health and wellness, while bringing real healing to those in need," he said.

Another facilitator training effort in southern Oregon has left students upset and a lawyer in the Netherlands trying to figure out what happened.

Synthesis Institute — a company based in the Netherlands that has over 200 students in Oregon, according to an article in *Psychedelic Alpha* — was declared bankrupt Tuesday, Dutch court documents showed.

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The company's website, which as of Friday had not been taken down, shows tuition being \$12,997. The students are trying to get refunds.

"Synthesis really just has ripped the rug out from under us, for a lot of people," one of the students, Cori Sue Morris, told Psychedelic Alpha.

Roos Suurmond, a lawyer in Amsterdam specializing in insolvency law, confirmed she has been appointed as a trustee to deal with the bankruptcy. She said in an interview she could not yet answer questions on the bankruptcy as she had so recently been appointed and still must investigate.

By February, the company's liabilities totaled around \$850,000, and it could not afford to pay its employees in the U.S. and the Netherlands, Psychedelic Alpha reported.

A real estate purchase in southern Oregon did not help matters.

An Oregon limited liability company, Oregon Retreat Centers LLC, was formed by Synthesis co-founder Myles Katz, Psychedelic Alpha reported. It purchased a 124-acre rustic retreat near Ashland, Oregon, in Jackson County for \$3.6 million and planned to turn the site into a psilocybin service center, but a zoning problem developed.

While Oregon voters approved the measure on psilocybin in 2020, it did not make the drug legal until Jan. 1, 2023. The psilocybin sessions are expected to be available to the public in mid- or late-2023.

In November, Colorado voters also passed a ballot measure allowing regulated use of "magic mushrooms" starting in 2024.

## One of Silicon Valley's top banks fails; assets are seized

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Regulators rushed Friday to seize the assets of one of Silicon Valley's top banks, marking the largest failure of a U.S. financial institution since the height of the financial crisis almost 15 years ago.

Silicon Valley Bank, the nation's 16th-largest bank, failed after depositors hurried to withdraw money this week amid anxiety over the bank's health. It was the second biggest bank failure in U.S. history after the collapse of Washington Mutual in 2008.

The bank served mostly technology workers and venture capital-backed companies, including some of the industry's best-known brands.

"This is an extinction-level event for startups," said Garry Tan, CEO of Y Combinator, a startup incubator that launched Airbnb, DoorDash and Dropbox and has referred hundreds of entrepreneurs to the bank.

"I literally have been hearing from hundreds of our founders asking for help on how they can get through this. They are asking, 'Do I have to furlough my workers?'"

There appeared to be little chance of the chaos spreading in the broader banking sector, as it did in the months leading up to the Great Recession. The biggest banks — those most likely to cause an economic meltdown — have healthy balance sheets and plenty of capital.

Nearly half of the U.S. technology and health care companies that went public last year after getting early funding from venture capital firms were Silicon Valley Bank customers, according to the bank's website.

The bank also boasted of its connections to leading tech companies such as Shopify, ZipRecruiter and one of the top venture capital firms, Andreessen Horowitz.

Tan estimated that nearly one-third of Y Combinator's startups will not be able to make payroll at some point in the next month if they cannot access their money.

Internet TV provider Roku was among casualties of the bank collapse. It said in a regulatory filing Friday that about 26% of its cash — \$487 million — was deposited at Silicon Valley Bank.

Roku said its deposits with SVB were largely uninsured and it didn't know "to what extent" it would be able to recover them.

As part of the seizure, California bank regulators and the FDIC transferred the bank's assets to a newly created institution — the Deposit Insurance Bank of Santa Clara. The new bank will start paying out insured deposits on Monday. Then the FDIC and California regulators plan to sell off the rest of the assets

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to make other depositors whole.

There was unease in the banking sector all week, with shares tumbling by double digits. Then news of Silicon Valley Bank's distress pushed shares of almost all financial institutions even lower Friday.

The failure arrived with incredible speed. Some industry analysts suggested Friday that the bank was still a good company and a wise investment. Meanwhile, Silicon Valley Bank executives were trying to raise capital and find additional investors. However, trading in the bank's shares was halted before stock market's opening bell due to extreme volatility.

Shortly before noon, the FDIC moved to shutter the bank. Notably, the agency did not wait until the close of business, which is the typical approach. The FDIC could not immediately find a buyer for the bank's assets, signaling how fast depositors cashed out.

The White House said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was "watching closely." The administration sought to reassure the public that the banking system is much healthier than during the Great Recession.

"Our banking system is in a fundamentally different place than it was, you know, a decade ago," said Cecilia Rouse, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers. "The reforms that were put in place back then really provide the kind of resilience that we'd like to see."

In 2007, the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression rippled across the globe after mortgage-backed securities tied to ill-advised housing loans collapsed in value. The panic on Wall Street led to the demise of Lehman Brothers, a firm founded in 1847. Because major banks had extensive exposure to one another, the crisis led to a cascading breakdown in the global financial system, putting millions out of work.

At the time of its failure, Silicon Valley Bank, which is based in Santa Clara, California, had \$209 billion in total assets, the FDIC said. It was unclear how many of its deposits were above the \$250,000 insurance limit, but previous regulatory reports showed that lots of accounts exceeded that amount.

The bank announced plans Thursday to raise up to \$1.75 billion in order to strengthen its capital position. That sent investors scurrying and shares plunged 60%. They tumbled lower still Friday before the opening of the Nasdaq, where the bank's shares were traded.

As its name implied, Silicon Valley Bank was a major financial conduit between the technology sector, startups and tech workers. It was seen as good business sense to develop a relationship with the bank if a startup founder wanted to find new investors or go public.

Conceived in 1983 by co-founders Bill Biggerstaff and Robert Medearis during a poker game, the bank leveraged its Silicon Valley roots to become a financial cornerstone in the tech industry.

Bill Tyler, the CEO of TWG Supply in Grapevine, Texas, said he first realized something was wrong when his employees texted him at 6:30 a.m. Friday to complain that they did not receive their paychecks.

TWG, which has just 18 employees, had already sent the money for the checks to a payroll services provider that used Silicon Valley Bank. Tyler was scrambling to figure out how to pay his workers.

"We're waiting on roughly \$27,000," he said. "It's already not a timely payment. It's already an uncomfortable position. I don't want to ask any employees, to say, 'Hey, can you wait until mid-next week to get paid?'"

Silicon Valley Bank's ties to the tech sector added to its troubles. Technology stocks have been hit hard in the past 18 months after a growth surge during the pandemic, and layoffs have spread throughout the industry. Venture capital funding has also been declining.

At the same time, the bank was hit hard by the Federal Reserve's fight against inflation and an aggressive series of interest rate hikes to cool the economy.

As the Fed raises its benchmark interest rate, the value of generally stable bonds starts to fall. That is not typically a problem, but when depositors grow anxious and begin withdrawing their money, banks sometimes have to sell those bonds before they mature to cover the exodus.

That is exactly what happened to Silicon Valley Bank, which had to sell \$21 billion in highly liquid assets to cover the sudden withdrawals. It took a \$1.8 billion loss on that sale.

Ashley Tyrner, CEO of FarmboxRx, said she had spoken to several friends whose businesses are backed by venture capital. She described them as being "beside themselves" over the bank's failure. Tyrner's chief



operating officer tried to withdraw her company's funds on Thursday but failed to do so in time.

"One friend said they couldn't make payroll today and cried when they had to inform 200 employees because of this issue," Tyrner said.

### **3 women missing in Mexico after crossing from Texas on trip**

PEÑITAS, Texas (AP) — Two sisters from Texas and a friend are missing in Mexico after they crossed the border last month to sell clothes at a flea market, U.S. authorities said Friday.

The abduction of four Americans in Mexico that was caught on video last week received an avalanche of attention and was resolved in a matter of days. But the fate of the three women, who haven't been heard from in about two weeks, remains a mystery and has garnered relatively little publicity.

The FBI said Friday it is aware that two sisters from Peñitas, a small border city in Texas near McAllen, and their friend have gone missing. Peñitas Police Chief Roel Bermea said their families have been in touch with Mexican authorities, who are investigating their disappearance.

Beyond that, officials in the U.S. and Mexico haven't said much about their pursuit of Maritza Trinidad Perez Rios, 47; Marina Perez Rios, 48; and their friend, Dora Alicia Cervantes Saenz, 53.

The episode stands in stark contrast to the government and media frenzy over the abduction of four Americans on a road trip to Mexico for plastic surgery. They were caught in a drug cartel shootout in the border city of Matamoros, and video showed them being hauled off in a pickup truck. The two survivors were found Tuesday in a wooden shack near the Gulf coast.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection says the three women crossed into Mexico on Feb. 24, a Friday, according to Bermea. Peñitas is just a few hundred feet from the Rio Grande River.

The husband of one of the women spoke to her by phone while she was traveling in Mexico, the police chief said, but grew concerned when he couldn't reach her afterward.

"Since he couldn't make contact over that weekend, he came in that Monday and reported it to us," Bermea said. The three women haven't been heard from since.

Bermea said the women were traveling in a green mid-1990s Chevy Silverado to a flea market in the city of Montemorelos, in Nuevo Leon state. It's about a three-hour drive from the border. Officials at the state prosecutor's office said they have been investigating the women's disappearance since Monday.

This week's massive search for the four kidnapped Americans involved squads of Mexican soldiers and National Guard troops. But for most of the 112,000 Mexicans missing nationwide, the only ones looking for them are their desperate relatives.

Authorities also lack manpower, equipment and training — things are so bad that authorities aren't even able to identify tens of thousands of bodies that have been found.

### **The New York hush-money probe of Donald Trump explained**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In the final weeks of the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump's lawyer tried to buy the silence of a porn actress who said she had a sexual encounter with the Republican during his days as a reality TV star.

More than six years later, New York prosecutors appear to be close to deciding whether Trump should face charges in connection with that payoff, in what could become the first criminal case ever brought against a former president.

Thursday's news that the Manhattan district attorney invited Trump to testify before a grand jury next week suggested prosecutors were serious about bringing charges in a probe that looked like yesterday's news just a few months ago.

Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen, now a key prosecution witness, is scheduled to testify before the grand jury on Monday, according to two people familiar with the matter. The people were not authorized to speak publicly about grand jury proceedings and did so on condition of anonymity.

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Trump has denied wrongdoing and that he had any extramarital affairs, and he blasted the probe in a Truth Social post as a "political Witch-Hunt, trying to take down the leading candidate, by far, in the Republican Party"

Here's a refresher on how things got to this point:

## WHAT IS THIS CASE ABOUT?

The investigation centers on hush-money payments made in 2016 to two women who alleged that they had extramarital encounters with Trump, who has denied their accounts of his infidelity.

Specifically, District Attorney Alvin Bragg's team appears to be looking at whether Trump or anyone committed crimes in arranging the payments, or in the way they accounted for them internally at the Trump Organization.

## HOW WERE THE PAYMENTS MADE?

Cohen paid porn actress Stormy Daniels \$130,000 through a shell company Cohen set up. He was then reimbursed by Trump, whose company logged the reimbursements as legal expenses.

Earlier in 2016, Cohen also arranged for former Playboy model Karen McDougal to be paid \$150,000 by the publisher of the supermarket tabloid the National Enquirer, which squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch-and-kill."

Trump's company, the Trump Organization, "grossed up" Cohen's reimbursement for the Daniels payment for "tax purposes," according to federal prosecutors who filed criminal charges against the lawyer in connection with the payments in 2018.

Cohen got \$360,000 plus a \$60,000 bonus, for a total of \$420,000.

Cohen pleaded guilty to violating federal campaign finance law in connection with the payments. Federal prosecutors say the payments amounted to illegal, unreported assistance to Trump's campaign. But they declined to file charges against Trump himself.

## WHAT IS TRUMP'S INVOLVEMENT?

Cohen says Trump directed him to arrange the Daniels payment.

Cohen also made recordings of a conversation in which he and Trump spoke about the arrangement to pay McDougal through the National Enquirer.

At one point in the recording, Cohen told Trump, "I need to open up a company for the transfer of all of that info regarding our friend, David," a reference to David Pecker, who ran the Enquirer's parent company at the time.

Cohen said he had already spoken with the Trump Organization's longtime finance chief, Allen Weisselberg, on "how to set the whole thing up."

Trump then said: "What do we got to pay for this? One-fifty?"

Today, Trump characterizes the attempts to get him to pay money to the women to keep them quiet as "extortion."

## WHAT CRIMES ARE PROSECUTORS LOOKING AT?

Legal experts say a case could be made that Trump falsified business records by logging Cohen's reimbursement for the Daniels payment as legal fees. But that's only a misdemeanor under New York law — unless prosecutors could prove he falsified records to conceal another crime.

Mark Pomerantz, who led the investigation under then-District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., wrote in his recent book "People vs. Donald Trump: An Inside Account" that in 2021, he looked into whether Trump could be charged with money laundering or if Trump had been somehow extorted.

David Shapiro, a fraud risk and financial crimes specialist and former FBI special agent, said a potential case against Trump could be "especially difficult" when it comes to proving his intent and knowledge of wrongdoing.

"He's loud, he's brash, so proving that he had specific intent to fraud, one is almost left with the idea that, 'well, if he has that specific intent of fraud, he has it all of the time, because that's his personality,'" said Shapiro, a lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The Manhattan district attorney's office has declined to comment on the investigation.

## HAVEN'T WE BEEN HERE BEFORE?

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Yes. Several times.

Federal prosecutors entered into a non-prosecution agreement with the National Enquirer's owner, which admitted paying McDougal to help Trump, but they declined to seek a criminal charge against the then-sitting president.

The Manhattan district attorney's office opened its own investigation into the payments in 2019 and has revisited it several times since while expanding the probe into Trump's business dealings and other topics.

So far, the only charges have been against Weisselberg, who pleaded guilty, and the Trump Organization, which was convicted in December of an unrelated offense: scheming to dodge taxes on company-paid perks such as free apartments and cars for executives.

WHAT ABOUT THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS?

The hush-money payments and Cohen's reimbursements happened more than six years ago. New York's statute of limitations for most felonies is five years. For misdemeanors, it's just two years.

Does that mean prosecutors have run out of time? Trump thinks so. In social media posts, he insists that the statute of limitations "long ago expired," calling the matter "old news."

But that's not always how the law works. In New York, the clock can stop on the statute of limitations when a potential defendant is continuously outside the state. Trump visited New York rarely over the four years of his presidency and now lives mostly in Florida and New Jersey.

Practically speaking, though, the passage of time could affect the case in other ways. Memories fade, and evidence and records get lost or destroyed.

"The power of the case — the surprise factor, the shock value," also fades, Shapiro said, meaning a jury might be less impressed by allegations that have been public for so long.

WHO ARE PROSECUTORS SPEAKING WITH?

Members of Trump's inner circle, including his former political adviser Kellyanne Conway and former spokesperson Hope Hicks, have met with prosecutors in recent weeks. Cohen, now estranged from Trump, has made several visits to prepare for his expected grand jury testimony.

Among others: Pecker, the former National Enquirer publisher, was spotted going into the building where the grand jury is meeting, as well as Trump Organization insiders including the company's senior vice president and controller Jeffrey McConney.

Prosecutors are still interested in Weisselberg's insider knowledge about the hush-money arrangements. The 75-year-old ex-CFO is due to be released from a five-month jail sentence on April 19. There's no indication that he's keen to cooperate against his former boss.

Trump himself is probably highly unlikely to testify before the grand jury or meet with prosecutors.

WHAT OTHER LEGAL TROUBLE IS TRUMP FACING?

The hush-money case is one of several potential criminal cases the Republican faces as he mounts a comeback run for the White House in 2024, along with an investigation into election interference in Georgia, the probe of storage of classified documents at his Florida home, and other matters.

## DeSantis visits Iowa as interest in likely Trump rival rises

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Ahead of a widely expected presidential campaign, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis introduced himself to eager audiences of Iowa Republicans on Friday with a message that leaned into the antagonism toward the left that has made him a popular figure among conservatives.

"We will never surrender to the woke mob," DeSantis told an audience of more than 1,000 at the Rhythm City Casino Resort in the eastern Iowa city of Davenport, his first Iowa stop as he moves toward seeking the 2024 GOP presidential nomination. "Our state is where woke goes to die."

With the Iowa caucuses less than a year away, Republicans in the state are taking a harder look at DeSantis, who is emerging as a leading rival to Donald Trump. The former president, who is mounting his third bid for the White House, will be in Davenport on Monday as early signs warn that some Republicans may be looking for someone else to lead the party into the future.

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Trump mocked DeSantis' trip on social media, asking "why would people show up?"

And White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre took issue with the Florida governor's threatening language that criticized young transgender people and their parents.

"When ... these MAGA Republicans don't agree with an issue or with policy, they don't bring forth something that's either going to have a good faith conversation. They go to this conversation of 'woke.' ... What that turns into is hate; what that turns into is despicable policy."

But show up they did, including more than 1,000 Friday evening in the capital city, Des Moines, where DeSantis ignited his biggest ovation by accusing schools of seeking to impose a leftist agenda on students on issues of gender and race.

"I think we really have done a great job of drawing a line in the sand and saying the purpose of our schools is to educate kids, not indoctrinate them," DeSantis said in the auditorium on the Iowa state fairgrounds. "Parents should be able to send their kids to school without having somebody's agenda shoved down their throat."

DeSantis appeared alongside Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds in Davenport and Des Moines and met with a small contingent of GOP lawmakers in the capital city. He was also promoting his newly released book, "The Courage to be Free."

The visit is an early test of DeSantis' support in the state that will kick off the contest for the Republican nomination next year. Trump remains widely popular among Iowa Republicans, though positive views of the former president have slipped somewhat since he left the White House. Now, 80% say they have a favorable rating of him, down slightly from 91% in September 2021, according to a Des Moines Register/Mediacom Iowa Poll released Friday. Eighteen percent have unfavorable views of Trump.

The poll's movement suggests Iowa Republicans are not singularly committed to Trump for 2024 and are open to considering other candidates. Though slightly behind the well-known Trump, DeSantis gets a rosy review from Iowa Republicans — 74% favorable rating. Notably, DeSantis has high name recognition in a state over 1,000 miles away from his own; just 20% say they aren't sure how to rate him.

Sandy Bodine said she was impressed with DeSantis as the ballroom emptied out after Friday's morning event.

"He's very articulate, uses common sense it seems in governing," the retired human resources worker for 3M Co. said.

Bodine would consider attending the 2024 caucuses and supporting DeSantis, though she is registered to neither major political party and has never caucused before. Regardless, Trump is out of the running for Bodine, who is from nearby Clinton.

"I don't like Trump," she said. She "unfortunately" voted for Biden in 2020, she said. "He's not a statesman and we need a statesman. I can see DeSantis as a statesman."

But others in the crowd suggested they would stick with the former president. Retiree Al Greenfield, of Davenport, said he came out of curiosity but "I don't particularly care for" the Florida governor. "He doesn't have the experience," said Greenfield, who's 70. "He doesn't know the swamp."

Greenfield is ardently for Trump and plans to caucus for him next year.

Nearby stood Diana Otterman, of Bettendorf, who was still considering her options.

"Gov. DeSantis is a wonderful man. I'm for DeSantis, but I'm also for Trump. I haven't decided yet," the 70-year-old retiree said. "So we'll see how God works it out and how the people vote."

While DeSantis was making his presence known in Iowa, several prominent former Trump supporters called on him to take the next step and announce he's running.

"More than ever our country needs strong leadership, someone that gets things done & isn't afraid to stand up for what's right," tweeted former Pennsylvania Rep. and Republican gubernatorial candidate Lou Barletta. "Come on, Ron, your country needs you!"

Barletta had accused Trump of disloyalty after the former president endorsed a rival in his gubernatorial primary.

DeSantis' visit coincided with a trip to the state by former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who

announced her 2024 candidacy last month. Trump's stop on Monday will be his first visit to the state since launching his latest presidential bid.

In recent weeks, DeSantis' team has begun holding conversations with a handful of prospective campaign staffers in key states. Late last month, he gathered privately with donors, elected officials and national conservative activists to discuss his views, which include limiting how race and sexuality are taught in schools.

DeSantis is expected to announce his candidacy in late spring or early summer, after the conclusion of the Florida legislative session in mid-May.

The anticipation is reminiscent, to an extent, of the support in Iowa for George W. Bush ahead of the 2000 election, though with significant differences, said veteran Iowa GOP activist David Oman.

DeSantis is seen, as Bush was, as a next-generation, big-state Republican governor who won reelection resoundingly, said Oman, who was among Iowa Republicans who helped recruit Bush to run.

Bush swooped into Iowa amid fanfare in June 1999 and sailed to victory in the Iowa caucuses the following year en route to the 2000 GOP nomination and the White House. Not insignificantly, Bush enjoyed the hands-on campaign outreach in Iowa of his father, former President George H. W. Bush, who had built lasting relationships during his 1980 and 1988 Iowa caucus campaigns.

"There's another former president in this cycle. Only he is not interested in helping a first time candidate," Oman said, referring to Trump. "W was the overwhelming favorite in Iowa. I believe there is not an overwhelming favorite this time."

## Ex-Alabama player Miles indicted on capital murder charges

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Former Alabama basketball player Darius Miles and another man have been indicted by a grand jury on capital murder charges for the January shooting death of a 23-year-old woman near campus, defense lawyers confirmed to The Associated Press on Friday.

Miles was charged with capital murder in the shooting death of Jamea Harris, his defense lawyer Mary Turner told the AP. Michael Davis, who police investigators said was the triggerman, was also indicted, his lawyer, John Charles Robbins, said.

Tuscaloosa County District Attorney Hays Webb told AL.com that the indictments against Miles and Davis, who've been held without bond since their arrest, were issued on Wednesday.

Harris was sitting in a car when she was struck by a bullet. A police investigator testified last month that Miles provided the handgun Davis allegedly used in the shooting.

During a court hearing last month, Turner suggested Miles was in a defensive posture when he told Davis where the gun was located.

But prosecutors maintained there was ample evidence to pursue charges in the shooting, which happened early Jan. 15 on "The Strip," a district of bars and restaurants near the Tuscaloosa campus. Testimony at the hearing last month indicated there had been some type of verbal altercation before the shooting.

The Turner Law Group, which is representing Miles, issued a statement Friday, saying they were disappointed by the decision to pursue capital murder charges "considering the evidence uncovered during our investigation and the obvious weaknesses in the government's case brought to light during the preliminary hearing."

Davis maintains he is innocent, Robbins, his attorney, said. "I look forward to the opportunity to vigorously defend Michael at trial and to defend his right to protect himself when somebody points a gun at him and shoots him," Robbins said.

Miles was a reserve on the Crimson Tide, but an ankle injury sidelined him for the rest of the season. After he was charged in January, Alabama said he was "removed from campus" and the team.

During the February court hearing, Tuscaloosa Police investigator Brandon Culpepper testified that Miles texted Tide freshman basketball star Brandon Miller to bring him his gun. Police have said another player, guard Jaden Bradley, also was at the scene.

Neither Miller nor Bradley have been charged with anything.

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"This whole situation is just really heartbreaking, but respectfully that's all I'm going to be able to say on that," Miller told reporters Wednesday in his first public comments about the case.

Both Miller and Bradley have continued to play as the No. 4-ranked team in the country makes its way through the Southeastern Conference Tournament ahead of the NCAA Tournament. Miller scored 18 points and had nine rebounds in Friday's SEC quarterfinal win over Mississippi State.

In the postgame news conference, Miller was asked his thoughts on the indictment. He said, "I can't — I'm not going to be able to say on that."

Coach Nate Oats was asked whether he has a weapons policy for his team, and said that "our players are required to follow the university policy on guns, which essentially bans them on campus."

He also was asked who was involved in deciding whether Miller and Bradley could continue to play.

"It's been a difficult situation, as you understand. I mean, we're dealing with a criminal matter," Oats said, adding that as the school received "facts from law enforcement as they do their investigation," "this was a decision made, based on all the facts we had, with, obviously, my boss, (Director of Athletics) Greg Byrne; his boss, (President) Dr. (Stuart) Bell; and the Board of Trustees.

"And everybody was comfortable, and based on the information we had, Brandon didn't break any school policy or team policy, so ... I was comfortable with the decision that was made."

Harris' mother told reporters last month that she is frustrated by the focus on basketball instead of her daughter's death. She said her daughter was a beautiful person who was trying to have a night out with friends when she was killed.

"She has a 5-year-old son that is still waiting for his mother to come home," DeCarla Heard told reporters. "I want justice for my grandson."

Oats was asked Friday whether he has spoken to Harris' family.

"Listen, this whole situation has been, obviously, as you know, hard to deal with, tragic, to have any involvement in a young woman losing her life. What you ask is a private matter. I'm not going to discuss publicly with everybody," he said. "A lot of this is just hard to deal with, to be honest with you. But it's a private matter."

## Ex-intern sues Idaho lawmakers for harassing her after rape

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A former Idaho legislative intern is suing a lawmaker who was convicted of raping her and one of his colleagues for publicly releasing the teen's identity and launching a campaign of harassment against her.

The young woman, who uses the pseudonym "Jane Doe" in the federal lawsuit, was just 19 when she reported that then-Rep. Aaron von Ehlinger raped her at his apartment after the two had dinner at a Boise restaurant in March 2021. The Associated Press generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted.

In the lawsuit, Doe says von Ehlinger and then Rep. Priscilla Giddings, both Republicans, retaliated by publicly releasing her name, encouraging media outlets to publicize it, and lying about her. She is seeking unspecified monetary damages, according to her lawsuit.

"Because of the release of Ms. Doe's identity, Ms. Doe has continually suffered public humiliation and harassment on social media and at public events," Doe's attorneys, Erika Birch and Guy Hallam, wrote in the lawsuit.

Giddings did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It is not clear if von Ehlinger has an attorney to represent him in the lawsuit; his criminal public defender did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Since 2017, at least 120 state lawmakers in 41 states have faced public allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment, according to an Associated Press tally. Of those, 48 have resigned or been expelled, including a Pennsylvania lawmaker accused of sexual harassment who submitted his resignation this week. Of the others who have been publicly accused, 45 have faced some sort of repercussion such as the loss

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of a committee chair or party leadership position. Most of the allegations were brought forth after the #MeToo movement sparked a public reckoning for people in power accused of sexual wrongdoing.

In the Idaho case, Doe contends Giddings and von Ehlinger conspired to violate her rights, invade her privacy and inflict emotional distress against her. The lawsuit also includes defamation claims against Giddings, who said disparaging things about Doe, as well as claims of assault and battery against von Ehlinger.

The efforts by Giddings and von Ehlinger caused injuries including "extreme and ongoing emotional distress," Doe's attorneys wrote in the lawsuit.

Some of von Ehlinger's supporters have continued to disparage Doe on social media and at public events in recent months. One man has repeatedly attended public and political events dressed in drag as a beauty queen as a way to mock Doe, wearing a sash bearing the young woman's real name and the phrase "Miss Idaho Capitol."

The investigation into von Ehlinger began March 11, 2021, after Doe reported the assault to her supervisor at the Idaho Statehouse and to Boise police. Her report triggered an ethics investigation into von Ehlinger, who resigned before the full House could vote on whether to remove him from office. It also triggered a criminal investigation and in 2022 von Ehlinger was convicted of rape and sentenced to up to 20 years in prison, though he could be eligible for parole as soon as 2030. During the investigation and trial, von Ehlinger maintained he and Doe had consensual sexual contact.

Giddings was also censured by the Legislature's ethics committee after her actions in the wake of Doe's rape report came to light. She served out the remainder of her term and ran for lieutenant governor, losing in the 2022 Republican primary.

On April 16, 2021, Von Ehlinger and his attorney David Leroy were asked to keep Doe's name secret by Doe's lawyers and by the ethics committee, according to the lawsuit. Giddings, who apparently helped von Ehlinger craft a news release about the ethics investigation, also spoke with both Leroy and von Ehlinger that day, according to the lawsuit.

Just after 3 p.m. that day, von Ehlinger sent several journalists a copy of von Ehlinger's formal response to the ethics investigation without redacting Doe's name. Giddings then reached out to one newspaper reporter to see if he planned to write about the statement.

Before the end of the business day, a far-right news website published a post with Doe's real name, a photo of her as a younger teen and personal details about her life. Giddings then posted a link to the post on her Facebook account, along with the image of Doe as a minor. Giddings publicized the information again the following day, sending it out as part of a "Legislative Update" email to her constituents, referring to Doe using a derogatory term.

Another far-right website also published Doe's name by printing a picture of the unredacted response that had been sent out by von Ehlinger's attorney.

Doe is asking a judge to award her monetary damages in an unspecified amount, as well as interest, attorney's fees and other court costs.

Neither Giddings nor von Ehlinger have filed a response to the lawsuit.

## Ukraine rebounds from Russian barrage, restores power supply

By KARL RITTER and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's capital had most of its power supply restored Friday, officials said, as the country again responded swiftly and defiantly to the latest Russian missile and drone barrage targeting critical infrastructure.

In what has become a familiar Russian tactic since early October, the Kremlin's forces struck Ukraine from afar Thursday while the ground battles in the country's east largely remained mired in a grinding stalemate.

The apparent aim of attacking power stations and other infrastructure is to weaken Ukraine's resolve and compel the Ukrainian government to negotiate peace on Moscow's terms.

Ukrainian authorities scrambled to counter the consequences of the latest bombardment, part of a

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recurring cycle of urban smash-and-repair that has brought little change in the course of the war, which recently entered its second year.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said in an assessment that "these missile strikes will not undermine Ukraine's will or improve Russia's positions on the front lines."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said the Russians are striking civilian infrastructure, because they can't efficiently target Ukrainian military assets.

"The Russians lack data about the location of Ukrainian troops and weapons, so they are targeting civilian infrastructure and using the same old methods of attacking civilians to sow fear and panic in the society," he said. "Ukraine has survived the winter and Russia's strikes on the energy system in the spring hardly make any sense."

Power and water were restored in Kyiv, said Serhii Popko, the head of the city's military administration. Popko said that about 30% of consumers in the capital remained without heating and that repair work was ongoing.

Power supplies were fully restored in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, private provider DTEK said Friday afternoon.

Around 60% of households in the city of Kharkiv that were knocked off grid by Russia's missile strikes on Thursday were also back online, authorities said, though significant damage remained in the Zhytomyr and Kharkiv regions in Ukraine's northwest and northeast.

In another sign of normality quickly returning, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin made an unannounced visit to Kyiv on Friday.

Marin accompanied President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and senior military officers at the funeral of one of Ukraine's best-known fighters and commanders who was killed in fighting near the devastated eastern city of Bakhmut.

The service for Dmytro Kotsiubailo, killed a few days earlier at the age of 27, was held at the cathedral of Kyiv's St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery. Many of the thousands of mourners clutched flowers, and the crowd knelt in silence as Kotsiubailo's coffin was carried out of the church toward Maidan Square.

Zelenskyy and Marin also laid flowers at a nearby memorial to fallen Ukrainian soldiers.

The prime minister echoed other Western leaders who have accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine and said Russian soldiers and leaders would be held accountable in a courtroom.

"Putin knows he will have to answer for his crime of aggression," the Finnish leader said during a news conference. "The future tribunal must bring justice efficiently and answer Ukrainians' rightful demands."

On the battlefield Friday, Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar said the fighting in Bakhmut had "escalated," with another push by Russian forces to break through Ukrainian defense lines that have largely held firm for the past six months.

Just west of Bakhmut, shelling and missile strikes hit the Ukrainian-held city of Kostiantynivka. The regional prosecutor's office said eight people were injured and more than a dozen homes were damaged or destroyed in the attacks.

AP journalists in the city saw at least four injured people taken to a local hospital. Police said Russian forces attacked the town with S-300 missiles and cluster munitions.

Thursday's Russian onslaught, much of which took place before dawn, was the largest such attack in three weeks, deploying more than 80 Russian missiles and exploding drones.

The barrage, which also damaged residential buildings, killed six people and left hundreds of thousands without heat or running water. The salvo was noteworthy for the range of munitions the Kremlin's forces used, including hypersonic Kinzhal cruise missiles that are among the most sophisticated weapons in Russian's arsenal.

Even so, the bombardments on energy infrastructure that gathered pace last fall have become less frequent.

"The interval between waves of strikes is probably growing, because Russia now needs to stockpile a critical mass of newly produced missiles directly from industry," the U.K. Ministry of Defense said in an



assessment Friday.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the strikes were in retaliation for a recent incursion into the Bryansk region of western Russia by what Moscow claimed were Ukrainian saboteurs. Ukraine denied the claim and warned that Moscow could use the allegations to justify stepping up its own assaults.

## Here's how the 4 Americans abducted in Mexico were found

By ALFREDO PEÑA, HILARY POWELL and JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

CIUDAD VICTORIA, Mexico (AP) — The anonymous tip that led Mexican authorities to a remote shack where four abducted Americans were held described armed men, people wearing blindfolds and plenty of activity around a ranch.

Authorities headed for the rural area east of Matamoros on Tuesday morning, leaving the highway and driving remote dirt roads looking for the described location, according to Mexican investigative documents viewed Friday by The Associated Press.

Finally, they saw the wooden shack far from any homes or businesses, surrounded by brush, and a white pickup parked outside that matched the one the Americans had been loaded into last Friday. Then they began to hear someone shouting, "Help!"

Inside the shack, the documents said, Latavia "Tay" McGee and Eric Williams were blindfolded. Beside them were the bodies of Shaeed Woodard and Zindell Brown, wrapped in blankets and plastic bags. When authorities arrived, McGee and Williams shouted desperately to them in English.

A guard who tried to escape out a back door was quickly apprehended, the documents said. He was wearing a tactical vest, but there is no mention of him being armed.

The four Americans had crossed into Matamoros from Texas so that McGee could have cosmetic surgery. About midday, they were fired on in downtown Matamoros and then loaded into the pickup truck. Another friend, who remained in Brownsville, called police after being unable to reach the group that crossed the border. A Mexican woman, Areli Pablo Servando, 33, was also killed, apparently by a stray bullet.

In the letter obtained by The Associated Press through a Tamaulipas state law enforcement official Thursday, the Scorpions faction of the Gulf cartel apologized to the residents of Matamoros where the Americans were kidnapped, Servando, and the four Americans and their families.

But relatives of the abducted Americans said that the purported apology has done little to dull the pain of their loved ones being killed or wounded.

Woodard's father said he was speechless upon hearing that the cartel had apologized for the violent abduction captured in video that spread quickly online.

"I've just been trying to make sense out of it for a whole week. Just restless, couldn't sleep, couldn't eat. It's just crazy to see your own child taken from you in such a way, in a violent way like that. He didn't deserve it," James Woodard told reporters Thursday, referring to his son's death.

The cousin of Williams, who was shot in the left leg during the kidnapping, said his family feels "great" knowing he's alive but does not accept any apologies from the cartel.

"It ain't gonna change nothing about the suffering that we went through," Jerry Wallace told the AP on Thursday. Wallace, 62, called for the American and Mexican governments to better address cartel violence.

U.S. Ambassador Ken Salazar told reporters Friday that U.S. officials had contacted President Andrés Manuel López Obrador directly over the weekend to ask for help in locating the missing Americans in Matamoros. He said the cartel there "must be dismantled."

The letter attributed to the cartel condemned last week's violence and said the gang turned over to authorities its own members who were responsible.

"We have decided to turn over those who were directly involved and responsible in the events, who at all times acted under their own decision-making and lack of discipline," the letter reads, adding that those individuals had gone against the cartel's rules, which include "respecting the life and well-being of the innocent."

A photograph of five bound men face-down on the pavement accompanied the letter, which was shared with The Associated Press by the official on condition that they remain anonymous because they were

not authorized to share the document.

A separate state security official said that five men had been found tied up inside one of the vehicles that authorities had been searching for, along with the letter. That official also spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the case.

On Friday, Tamaulipas state prosecutor Irving Barrios said via Twitter that five people related to the violence had been arrested on charges of aggravated kidnapping and homicide. He said only one other person had been arrested in recent days.

## The view from above the Oscars: The slap, the snafu, Spike

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — I was the man in the box at the Oscars for The Associated Press.

I would stand in an opera-style balcony near the stage at the Dolby Theatre that provides a great view of the show but an even better view of the audience. I'd peer down with binoculars to provide what journalists call "color," sprinkled into our stories as we seek to give readers a behind-the-scenes glimpse.

Hours before the telecast, an academy official with a black-belt-level credential would take me on a labyrinthine walk down hallways, through black curtains and over velvet ropes, past the Foot Locker and Sephora that make parts of the complex indistinguishable from a suburban mall, and into the box that I shared with the show's technical crew members.

This year, the ceremony's logistical layout will force me to work outside the box: in the media room, with the rest of the Oscars press corps. The food will be better than the nothing I normally get, but I'll miss the box — where else could I have seen the following moments?

### A DISASTROUS DEBUT

The fiasco came in my first year.

It was 2017, my first time inside the Academy Awards. I was gazing down on the audience. Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway had just announced "La La Land" as best picture.

The alleged winners' celebration soon turned to murmurs of confusion. I'm not sure anyone had ever seen as many stunned famous faces as I was suddenly looking down on after the true victory of "Moonlight" was revealed. The mouths of Meryl Streep, Matt Damon and Michelle Williams were all varying degrees of agape. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson had on a crooked expression that, in his wrestling days, he called "the people's eyebrow."

"I will never see anything this crazy again if I do this for 20 years," I thought to myself. Turned out it only took five.

### BIG LITTLE DETAILS

Big moments are not generally my job. I deal in details.

From the box, I got to see who the first famous folks seated are: generally, older actors with either no need or no desire to be part of the red carpet scrum. One year it was Jane Fonda, amid a sea of empty seats. I saw an 88-year-old Christopher Plummer, the oldest-ever nominee at that point in 2018, take his spot over an hour before the last-minute scramble that accompanies the telecast's start.

I got to see how truly long the walk from the theater's back is for the non-famous. One year, I could hear the shouts of glee from the proud mother of a victorious sound editor, though I could barely see her even through binoculars.

Trips to the bathroom, which require the accompaniment of a show staffer and a climb past a guy who runs a big crane camera, are their own adventure, with hopes — sometimes realized — that I might end up standing silently next to the likes of Denzel Washington.

In 2017, I saw Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel passing a flask to the people in their row, clearly having the best time in the room. When Timberlake gave his show-opening performance of "Can't Stop the Feeling," Javier Bardem was the only one wholeheartedly dancing the entire time.

### A SPIKE STORM

The crowd at the Oscars does an excellent job of playing the role of "audience." They hit every unspoken applause cue. They rise in surprising synchrony for standing ovations. They know to stay quiet. They get

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back to their seats before the cameras roll.

The best audience member to watch, from my perspective, is Spike Lee. For one, he always dresses distinctively, making him easy to spot in a sea of black tuxedos that — from my perch — can make it hard to immediately tell a Brad from a Leo. And he is just as animated as when he sits courtside at New York Knicks games.

In 2019, Lee — clad in a purple suit — won his first competitive Oscar, for writing “Black KKKlansman.” His movie was also up for best picture, against the late-surging “Green Book,” a film that to Lee and many others had an archaic, simplistic take on race relations.

When “Green Book” was announced as the winner, Lee gave the kind of “the hell with this” gesture with his arms he often gives NBA referees, stormed out of his seat and headed for the back doors. With all eyes on the stage, and few others with my view, it went unnoticed by almost all others. It was the closest thing to a scoop the box has given me, and my tweet describing it was my most popular ever, by a mile.

## THE SLAP AND THE SHOUTS

Five years in came the slap. Full disclosure: I did not see, with my naked eyes, Will Smith strike Chris Rock.

Tasked with pounding out a quick story, I was sitting down typing when I saw, on one of the crew monitors, Smith stride up on stage and take his swing.

In retrospect, this was a huge moment — but when it happened, few could tell it wasn’t a planned bit. The audience laughter was nervous, but laughter there was. Still, I leapt up and paid attention. The titters remained even after Smith shouted for Rock to keep Jada Pinkett Smith’s name out of his mouth.

It was only the second time Smith said it, louder and emphasizing each word — “MY. WIFE’S. NAME.” — that it became clear this was no joke. A stunned silence fell. It reminded me of being in a classroom when the students realize that the fun teacher really is mad this time.

The Academy recently apologized for not taking swifter action with Smith. They weren’t alone in not knowing how to respond. We journalists had to decide how to treat it. Was this a side story, or THE story? There was no template.

Two other AP reporters were in regular audience seats and I was glad. The vibes were too heavy for one person to weigh. A surreal pall hung over the rest of the night, with most assuming that Smith was likely to soon win best actor.

I kept my binoculars on the front row, where Smith sat. Bradley Cooper and Tyler Perry came up to Smith during breaks, as if counseling him. Both hugged him. So did Denzel Washington, who kept him in a long embrace, whispering to him throughout.

During his tear-streaked acceptance speech minutes later, Smith said Washington had told him: “At your highest moment, be careful, that’s when the devil comes for you.”

I’m hoping I can return to my own high point in the theater next year. I’ll keep an eye out for the devil.

## New this week: ‘Ted Lasso,’ U2 and ‘The Boston Strangler’

By The Associated Press undefined

Here’s a collection curated by The Associated Press’ entertainment journalists of what’s arriving on TV, streaming services and music and video game platforms this week.

### MOVIES

— Keira Knightley and Carrie Coon play the Boston Record American reporters Loretta McLaughlin and Jean Cole, who connected several Boston-area murders in the early 1960s to a single suspect who they dubbed the Boston Strangler. The serial killer sexually assaulted and killed at least 11 women between 1962 and 1964. The case has been the subject of many books and movies over the years, but writer-director Matt Ruskin’s is the first to focus on the reporters. “The Boston Strangler” debuts on Hulu on Friday, March 17.

— A new documentary on Netflix, “Money Shot: The Pornhub Story” arriving Wednesday, takes a look at the phenomenon of Pornhub and the accusations that the pornographic website hosted and profited from videos of rape and underage sex. The filmmakers speaks to lawyers, Pornhub employees who were

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told that “nothing was wrong” and sex workers to delve into the complex topic. “Our hope is that this film generates important conversations about sex and consent, both on the internet and out in the world,” director Suzanne Hillinger said.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

## MUSIC

— Appropriate for St. Patrick’s Day, a whole lot of U2 is in the works. “Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman” is set to premiere globally on Disney+ on Friday, March 17, the same day U2 drops “Songs Of Surrender,” a collection of 40 seminal U2 songs from across the Irish band’s catalog, re-recorded and reimagined. The Edge has said the project “started as an experiment” but quickly became an “obsession as so many early U2 songs yielded to a new interpretation.” “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For,” gets a cowboy vibe and unexpected honky-tonk electricity. “Desire” has Bono high in his falsetto against a strummy dulcimer and the effect is hypnotic.

— Maybe some old-fashioned rock is more your speed? Look no further than hard-hitting, riff-heavy Theory of a Deadman, whose new album is “Dinosaur.” It was produced by Martin Terefe and recorded in Sweden at Atlantis Studios, made famous by ABBA. The 10-track collection from the quartet of Tyler Connolly, Dave Brenner, Dean Back and Joey Dandeneau includes the rocking title tune, the party song “Ambulance” — with the lyrics “cheap drinks/sticky floors/in my safe place” — and a reworking of the classic song “Just the Two of Us” with a darker hue called “Two Of Us (Stuck).”

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

## TELEVISION

— “Ted Lasso” returns Wednesday to Apple TV+ with all the heart, one-liners, and pop culture references viewers have adored from its first two seasons. The Emmy-winning series starring Jason Sudeikis, Brett Goldstein, Hannah Waddingham and Juno Temple picks up a few months following where season two ended. Sudeikis, who is a co-creator of the series, has said season three is the end of this story but has not provided a clear answer as to whether the show could take a new direction, launch a spinoff or return for another season down the road.

— Elvis Presley famously loved comic books and now the late singer is the star of his very own animated series coming to Netflix. In “Agent Elvis,” Presley — voiced by Matthew McConaughey — is still the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll but also moonlights as a government spy by night. Kaitlin Olson, Johnny Knoxville, Niecy Nash and Don Cheadle also voice characters. Priscilla Presley, who is a co-creator and executive producer, plays herself. “Agent Elvis,” premiering Friday, March 17, is the first adult animated project from the studio behind “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.” The show is violent, profane and features a NSFW chimpanzee, so definitely not suitable for kids.

— A new re-telling of “Marie Antoinette” comes to Masterpiece PBS on Sunday, March 19. This version stars Emilia Schüle, as a teenage Antoinette who is sent to Versailles to marry the future King of France, played by Louis Cunningham. PBS says this “Marie Antoinette” tells the story from a more modern lens, focusing on how the young woman navigated the politics of the French court, pressure to deliver an heir and made her mark on Versailles and history. James Purefoy plays Louis XV.

— Alicia Rancilio

## VIDEO GAMES

— Platinum Games wrapped up its Bayonetta trilogy just a few months ago. But no video-game series ever really ends, and the studio is already back with a prequel, Bayonetta Origins: Cereza and the Lost Demon. Cereza is a young, outcast witch who summons a demon named Cheshire that possesses her favorite stuffed toy. Can Cereza help Cheshire find its way home? Will this adorable girl really turn into the flamboyant fighter fans know and love? Can Platinum actually deliver a family-friendly version of this hyperviolent franchise? Find out Friday, March 17, on Nintendo Switch.

— John Cena is back in the ring for WWE 2K23, the latest edition of 2K Sports’ long-running pro wrestling series. The “Peacemaker” actor is featured in this year’s Showcase mode, which puts you in the trunks of the big lug during the biggest matches of his career. You can also choose from dozens of other WWE

stars, from legends like Hulk Hogan to current headliners like Roman Reigns, or create your own rookie brawler from scratch. The 2023 model also introduces WarGames, a fan favorite in which teams of three or four compete in two rings covered by a steel cage. Chaos ensues Friday, March 17, on PlayStation 5/4, Xbox X/S/One and PC.

## Why would Russia use hypersonic missile to strike Ukraine?

By The Associated Press undefined

The latest Russian missile barrage against Ukraine's civilian infrastructure has marked one of the largest such attacks in months.

On Thursday, Russia fired over 80 missiles in a massive effort to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses and cripple the country's energy system.

Russia has been regularly launching similar strikes since October in a bid to demoralize the population and force the Ukrainian government to bow to the Kremlin's demands.

Thursday's strikes differed from earlier attacks, though, by including a larger number of sophisticated hypersonic missiles that are the most advanced weapons in the Russian arsenal. But just like previous such barrages it has failed to cause lasting damage to the country's energy network, with repair crews quickly restoring power supplies to most regions.

Here is a look at the latest Russian missile attack and the weapons involved.

### WHAT DID UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN OFFICIALS SAY?

Ukraine's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, said that Russia launched 81 missiles and eight exploding Iranian-made Shahed drones in a barrage early Thursday, and Ukraine's air defenses downed 34 missiles and four drones.

According to Zaluzhnyi, those missiles included six hypersonic Kinzhal missiles, the most advanced weapons in the Russian arsenal. Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat emphasized that Ukraine lacks assets to intercept the Kinzhal and the older Kh-22 missiles that were also used in Thursday's strikes.

Russia's Defense Ministry described the barrage as a "strike of retribution" in retaliation for what Moscow described as a cross-border raid by Ukrainian saboteurs who attacked two villages in the Bryansk region in western Russia last week. A group of self-exiled Russians fighting alongside Ukrainian forces claimed responsibility for the attack, while Ukraine denied involvement. Moscow didn't say how many missiles were fired, but claimed they hit the designated targets.

### HOW DID THE LATEST BARRAGE DIFFER FROM EARLIER RUSSIAN ATTACKS?

Military analysts noted that the number of Kinzhal missiles used in Thursday's barrage was significantly higher compared to previous strikes, which have typically involved no more than a couple of such weapons.

The Kinzhal is one of the latest and most advanced Russian weapons. The Russian military says the air-launched ballistic missile has a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and flies at 10 times the speed of sound, making it hard to intercept. A combination of hypersonic speed and a heavy warhead allows the Kinzhal to destroy heavily fortified targets, like underground bunkers or mountain tunnels.

Russia has used the Kinzhal to strike targets in Ukraine starting from the early days of the invasion, but it has used the expensive weapon sparingly and against priority targets, apparently reflecting the small number of Kinzhals available.

The precise targets for Russian strikes and the resulting damage remain unclear as Ukrainian authorities have maintained a tight lid of secrecy on such information to avoid giving Russia a clue for planning future attacks. It's also unclear what missiles Russia has used to hit which targeted facilities, although Western officials and military analysts have argued that Russia has faced an increasing shortage of state-of-the-art weapons, with new production far too slow to compensate for the amount already spent.

The British Defense Ministry noted Friday that the intervals between Russian missile strikes have grown bigger, probably "because Russia now needs to stockpile a critical mass of newly produced missiles directly from industry before it can resource a strike big enough to credibly overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses."

The Kinzhal is carried by MiG-31 fighter jets, some of which are based in Belarus. Russia has used the

territory of its ally as a staging ground for the invasion and maintained its troops and weapons there.

WHAT OTHER WEAPONS DID RUSSIA USE?

The Ukrainian military said that Thursday's barrage also included six older Kh-22 missiles, which are launched by Tu-22M heavy bombers and fly at more than three times the speed of sound.

The massive weapon, which has a range of 600 kilometers (370 miles) and dates back to the 1970s, was designed by the Soviet Union to strike U.S. aircraft carriers and other warships. It packs a big punch thanks to its supersonic speed and a heavy load of 630 kilograms (nearly 1,400 pounds) of explosives, but its outdated guidance system could make it highly inaccurate against ground targets, raising the probability of collateral damage.

Like in previous strikes, Russia also fired the modern Kh-101 cruise missiles carried by strategic bombers and the Kalibr cruise missiles that are launched by warships. The long-range, high-precision missiles are subsonic and the Ukrainian military has said it has successfully engaged them.

Another fixture in the Russian strikes were S-300 air defense missiles that Russia uses against ground targets at a comparatively smaller distance from the front line. While its relatively small warhead lacks the punch of bigger weapons designed to hit ground targets, Russia appears to have a big stock of such missiles and Ukraine can't intercept them.

Russia has also used some shorter-range air-launched missiles carried by fighter jets and the Iranian exploding drones. Ukrainian officials have said that the military has become increasingly successful in tackling them, downing the bulk of drones launched in each strike.

Ukrainian officials and experts say that by using numerous types of missiles as well as drones in one massive attack Russia tries to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses.

"It's much more difficult for the Ukrainian air defenses to deal with an attack when they launch a motley collection of ballistic and ordinary missiles along with drones," Zhdanov said. "Russia has been searching for weak spots in Ukrainian air defenses and it has partially succeeded."

## **Theranos exec Sunny Balwani loses bid to delay prison term**

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

A federal judge has rejected former Theranos executive Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani's bid to remain free while he appeals his conviction for crimes he committed during a blood-testing scam he orchestrated with his former boss and lover, Elizabeth Holmes.

The 17-page ruling issued late Thursday pushes Balwani, 57, a step closer to having to begin a nearly 13-year prison sentence he received after a jury convicted him of 12 counts of fraud and conspiracy last year.

Balwani is scheduled to report to prison March 16 unless he can win a reprieve from a federal appeals court in a motion his lawyers say they plan to file. He had been scheduled to report March 15, but was granted an additional day of freedom in another order issued late Thursday by U.S. District Judge Edward Davila.

Unless the appeals court rules he can remain free, Balwani has been ordered to report to an Atlanta federal prison, according to court documents. The 121-year-old prison has been plagued by misconduct and other abuses described by whistleblowers during a congressional hearing last year.

Davila, who sentenced Balwani and denied his request to remain free on appeal, had recommended he serve his time in a Lompoc prison. That facility is located about 250 miles (400 kilometers) from the San Jose, California, courtroom where his trial unfolded last year.

The judge's denial of Balwani's request to remain free on appeal may not bode well for Holmes, Theranos' CEO and founder. Her lawyers are also pushing Davila to allow her to stay out of prison during an appeal of her conviction on four felony counts of investor fraud and conspiracy. A March 17 hearing has been scheduled for Holmes' lawyers to try to persuade Davila to allow her to remain free until the appeals case is resolved.

Holmes, 39, is scheduled to start a sentence of more than 11 years on April 27. That will separate her from a 1-year-old son she had shortly before her trial began in September 2021 and a recently born child

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she was carrying at her November sentencing.

Although they had separate trials, Holmes and Balwani were accused of essentially the same crimes centered on a ruse touting Theranos' blood-testing system as a revolutionary breakthrough in health care. The claims helped the company become a Silicon Valley sensation that raised nearly \$1 billion from investors.

But its technology never came close to working like Holmes and Balwani boasted, resulting in Theranos' scandalous collapse and a criminal case that shined a bright light on Silicon Valley greed and hubris.

Davila hasn't yet decided on how much money Holmes and Balwani each should have to pay for their crimes. Federal prosecutors are seeking restitution of nearly \$900 million.

In a hearing last month on Balwani's bid to remain free, his attorneys alleged federal prosecutors had distorted and misrepresented trial evidence in a manner that makes it likely Balwani will prevail in his appeal of the convictions. The lawyers also pointed to Balwani's non-violent history and past charity work in India as justification for him remaining free, asserting that he poses no danger to the community.

Although Davila agreed Balwani is neither a flight risk nor dangerous, he concluded that still wasn't enough to allow him to delay his time in prison. Davila wrote that he didn't find evidence raising "substantial question of law or fact" during Balwani's four-month trial that would merit overturning the jury's verdict.

## Standard time giving way to daylight saving in most of US

WASHINGTON (AP) — Standard time comes to an end in most parts of the United States this weekend. You'll lose an hour of sleep for one night but gain more daylight in the evening in the months ahead.

The transition to daylight saving time is official at 2 a.m. local time Sunday across much of the country. Then on March 20, winter sunsets and spring is sprung.

Until daylight saving time ends in the wee hours of Nov. 5, the sun will rise later in the morning than than it has during standard time but it will stay light for longer until the evening.

It's a good idea to set clocks an hour ahead before bed Saturday night.

No time change is observed in Hawaii, most of Arizona, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Marianas.

A poll conducted in October 2021 found that most people in the United States want to avoid switching between daylight saving and standard time, though there is no consensus behind which should be used all year.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found only 25% of those questioned said they preferred to switch back and forth between standard and daylight saving time. Forty-three percent said they would like to see standard time used during the entire year. Thirty-two percent said they would prefer that daylight saving time be used all year.

## 'Cocaine cat' escaped owner, will now live at Cincinnati Zoo

By BEATRICE DUPUY Associated Press

An African serval cat that was found with cocaine in its system after an escape at a traffic stop now calls the Cincinnati Zoo home, much to the delight of social media users still amused by the recent release of the movie "Cocaine Bear."

The wild cat's story has trended online, where users relished in the absurdity of the horror comedy, which riffs off the true story of a 175-pound black bear that was found dead near a duffle bag and some \$2 million worth of cocaine. Social media users have predictably dubbed the serval "cocaine cat."

The slender feline made its escape after its owner was pulled over by police on Jan. 28, according to local animal control officials. It leapt from the car into a tree.

Ray Anderson of Cincinnati Animal CARE said that local animal control, Hamilton County Dog Wardens, were called around 2 a.m. in the residential Oakley neighborhood.

In Ohio, it is illegal to own the animals, which can weigh up to 40 pounds. During the rescue mission, the cat named Amiry broke its leg and became more agitated.

Once Amiry was taken in for medical care by Cincinnati Animal CARE, the team ran a drug test in which

they determined that Amiry had cocaine in his system.

It's not the first time that Cincinnati Animal CARE, which has been operating as the county animal shelter, has had a wild animal test positive for drugs. In 2022, the group took in a capuchin monkey, named Neo, that had methamphetamine in its system.

Since that case, it has become standard procedure for the shelter to test exotic animals that arrive at the shelter for drugs, Anderson said.

Anderson confirmed that the owner of Amiry relinquished custody of the cat to Cincinnati Animal CARE before it was taken into the care of the Cincinnati Zoo.

Servals have grown in popularity with some showing up in TikTok videos as pets. Julie Sheldon, clinical assistant professor of zoo medicine at the University of Tennessee, said a serval is a major responsibility that requires a balanced diet and specialized care beyond a house cat.

"There are way better options for pets that are way more safe, economically smart and sustainable," she said.

The Cincinnati Animal CARE receives about 8,000 animals a year, said Anderson.

Instead of trying to keep a wild animal as a pet, Anderson said, "You could save a whole lot of money and get a really awesome house cat at your local animal shelter."

## Death penalty phase begins in trial of NYC bike path killer

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jurors began hearing testimony Monday to help them decide whether an Islamic extremist who killed eight people on a New York City bike path should get a death sentence, an extraordinarily rare penalty in a state that hasn't had an execution in 60 years.

Sayfullo Saipov, 35, was convicted last month in the attack. He intentionally drove a truck at high speed down a path along the Hudson River in 2017, running over bicyclists on a sunny morning just hours before the city's Halloween celebrations.

The same jurors who found Saipov guilty returned to work after a two-week break to hear from additional witnesses in the trial's penalty phase. Anything less than a unanimous vote for death will mean Saipov will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Houle said Saipov remains proud, defiant and unrepentant for the lives he ruined and that he remains dangerous, even behind bars. She said he once smashed his prison cell door while screaming about slitting the throats of guards.

She told jurors that Saipov smiled when he described his attack to investigators hours afterward because his massacre "made him happy."

"He had no remorse then," Houle said. "And the evidence will show he has continued to have no remorse."

Defense attorney David Stern told jurors to let Saipov spend the rest of his life in a prison cell the size of a parking space in a high-security supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

"Sayfullo Saipov did a terrible, terrible thing, and whatever you decide, he'll pay a terrible price," Stern said, referencing the attack that killed five friends from Argentina, a woman from Belgium and two Americans.

He said Saipov's family will describe what a kind person Saipov was before he fell under the spell of propaganda from the Islamic State group.

Stern told jurors to "not be like him" and think death is the solution to the pain they witness.

Saipov's lawyers achieved a legal victory Monday when Judge Vernon S. Broderick ruled that a prisoner at the Colorado supermax facility, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, can testify from the prison instead of the Manhattan courtroom.

Stern said Mohamed, 49, will testify in the penalty phase about what life is like under such strict prison conditions.

Mohamed and another man were the last two defendants to face a death penalty phase in Manhattan federal court. A jury in 2001 voted against death after the men were convicted in the 1998 synchronized bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa that killed 224 people, including a dozen Americans, and wounded



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thousands of others.

Stern represented Mohamed at the trial, where prosecutors said Mohamed helped build a bomb that exploded at the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania.

New York does not have capital punishment and hasn't executed anyone since 1963, but Saipov's trial is in federal court, where a death sentence is still an option. The last time a person was executed for a federal crime in New York was in 1954.

After Joe Biden became president, his attorney general, Merrick Garland, announced a moratorium on federal executions, though he has allowed U.S. prosecutors to continue advocating for capital punishment in cases inherited from previous administrations.

Saipov's lawyers have argued it is unconstitutional for prosecutors to seek his execution when the government has stopped seeking death in so many other cases, including some with defendants who killed more people.

"There is no rhyme, reason, or predictability as to why the government chooses to seek death in some murder cases but not in others," they wrote in one recent court filing.

They noted that then-President Donald Trump quickly urged a death sentence, tweeting a day after the attack that Saipov "SHOULD GET DEATH PENALTY!" The lawyers said it was Trump's way of furthering "his anti-immigrant agenda."

"There is a legitimate concern that the death penalty sometimes (and impermissibly) turns on the defendant's race, ethnicity, national origin, and religious beliefs," they wrote.

Broderick rejected the argument Monday before opening statements in the penalty phase began.

Houle told jurors that more victims will describe their pain during the penalty phase. In the first phase of the trial, jurors heard from survivors who described the horror and sorrow at losing loved ones and the pain they continue to suffer from injuries.

Stern acknowledged that Saipov has been unrepentant since he was shot after emerging from his truck and waving pellet and paintball guns at a police officer. Later, in a hospital bed, the Uzbekistan citizen smiled as he requested that a flag of the Islamic State group that inspired his rampage be put on his room's wall, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors plan to introduce evidence intended to show jurors that, if kept alive, Saipov may still be able to communicate with sympathizers.

Saipov's lawyers said before trial that he would be willing to plead guilty and consent to life in prison if death was not sought.

Any death sentence rendered by the jury would likely be subject to years of appeals.

New York's last federal death penalty case involved a man who murdered two police officers in 2003. Federal juries in Brooklyn twice imposed a death sentence, first in 2007 and again in 2013, but each time that sentence was ultimately overturned on appeal.

## **NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week**

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Posts misrepresent rioter's actions in Jan. 6 Capitol attack

CLAIM: Footage from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol shows that Jacob Chansley, who participated in the riot sporting face paint, no shirt and a fur hat with horns, was "led through the Capitol by police the entire time he was in the building."

THE FACTS: Court documents and video footage from the attack on the Capitol make clear that Chansley, who is widely known as the "QAnon Shaman" and is one of the most recognizable Jan. 6 rioters, entered the Capitol without permission, was repeatedly asked to leave the building and was not accompanied at

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all times. After Fox News host Tucker Carlson broadcast previously unseen Jan. 6 security footage on his Monday night primetime show, social media users began sharing segments from his program that misrepresented Chansley's involvement in the riot. "BREAKING: Never before seen video of January 6 shows Jacob Chansley, the QAnon Shaman, being led through the Capitol by police the entire time that he was in the building," reads a tweet that includes a clip from Carlson's show. But the footage leaves out important context about Chansley's time in the Capitol that day. A statement prepared by the Department of Justice, which was signed by Chansley and his attorney, provides a timeline of the rioter's movement in the Capitol. For example, the statement explains that Chansley entered the Capitol through a broken door as part of a crowd that "was not lawfully authorized to enter or remain in the building" and that he was one of the first 30 rioters inside. It goes on to note that although officers asked Chansley and others multiple times to leave the Capitol, he did not comply and actively riled up his fellow rioters. The statement describes Chansley's interactions with officers, but also points out that he "entered the Gallery of the Senate alone." Chansley pleaded guilty in September 2021 to a felony charge of obstructing an official proceeding. He was sentenced in November 2021 to 41 months in prison. Asked about claims that protesters were led through the building, a Capitol Police spokesperson pointed The Associated Press to an HBO documentary about the riot, "Four Hours at the Capitol," in which an officer describes his encounter with Chansley, including how he asked the rioter and others to leave the Senate wing. Footage from the interaction appears in the documentary. "Any chance I can get you guys to leave the Senate wing?" the officer says as Chansley sits in the presiding officer's chair on the Senate Dais. A video of Chansley walking into the Capitol through the broken door is publicly available on the website of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. U.S. Capitol Police Chief J. Thomas Manger lambasted Carlson's segment on the Jan. 6 footage in an internal memo Tuesday. "Last night an opinion program aired commentary that was filled with offensive and misleading conclusions about the January 6 attack," Manger wrote. "One false allegation is that our officers helped the rioters and acted as 'tour guides.' This is outrageous and false."

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report.

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No, the military hasn't recorded a 500% increase in HIV cases

CLAIM: The U.S. military has recorded a 500% increase in new HIV infections since COVID-19 vaccines were introduced.

THE FACTS: The U.S. military has not recorded any such increase, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Defense. Conservative commentators are baselessly claiming that rates of HIV in the military have skyrocketed since COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out to sow suspicion about the shot. "The Armed Forces of the United States recorded a five hundred percent (500%) increase in AIDS after administering the COVID-19 Vaccine to US Troops. The COVID-19 Vaccine is implicated," wrote Hal Turner, a right-wing radio host, on his website last week. Turner gave no evidence for his claims. He did not respond to a request for comment. But figures from the Defense Department and the Congressional Research Service show that the 500% figure is massively exaggerated. Further, medical experts have repeatedly emphasized that COVID-19 vaccination has not been linked to developing HIV, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, which is caused by HIV. Nor does a condition called "VAIDS" — vaccine acquired immunodeficiency syndrome — exist. A total of 1,581 service members, including those in the National Guard and Reserves have been diagnosed with HIV infections since 2017, said Cmdr. Nicole Schwegman, a spokesperson for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Three-hundred and seventeen service members were diagnosed with HIV in 2017; 280 in 2018; 314 in 2019; 237 in 2020; 309 in 2021; and 124 in 2022. These rates are consistent with figures that were cited in a 2019 Congressional Research Service report. That report cited estimates from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center showing that approximately 350 service members are diagnosed with HIV annually. COVID-19 vaccinations first became available to the public in December 2020. In 2021, 72 more cases of HIV were diagnosed compared to 2020, constituting a 30% increase — but nowhere near the 500% claimed. And in 2022, when the vaccine rollout was well underway, 185 fewer new HIV cases were diagnosed, marking a 60% drop from 2021. Though Turner did not give the source of his

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data, it matches claims spread about other illnesses purportedly linked to COVID-19 vaccination among military members that have been shared in the past. In those cases, the numbers stemmed from what the bloggers and social media users said was “leaked” data from Defense Medical Epidemiology Database, or DMED, an internal database that documents medical experiences of service members throughout their careers. It is only accessible by military medical providers, epidemiologists, medical researchers and clinical support staff. However, Schwegman told the AP that the claims citing this database were flawed due to an error in the data for the years 2016 to 2020. The Defense Health Agency’s Armed Forces Surveillance Division reviewed the data in the system, comparing it to the source data, and found that the total number of medical diagnoses from 2016 to 2020 that were accessible in DMED “represented only a small fraction of actual medical diagnoses for those years,” said Schwegman. In contrast, the total number of medical diagnoses for the year 2021 were accurate, which temporarily made it appear that there was a disproportionate increase in medical conditions between the 2016 to 2020 figures and those reported in 2021. She said that the Armed Forces Surveillance Division has since corrected the data corruption.

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in New York contributed this report.

Hospital COVID payments tied to patient treatment, not deaths

CLAIM: U.S. hospitals are earning a \$48,000 government subsidy for every patient that dies from COVID-19 in their care.

THE FACTS: Hospital industry officials and public health experts confirm the federal government provides hospitals with enhanced payments for treating COVID-19 patients, but the payments are only currently applicable to those on Medicare and aren’t contingent on a patient’s death. Social media users are claiming American hospitals have a financial incentive to let people with coronavirus die under their watch. But hospitals have never been compensated by the federal government based on a patient dying of COVID-19 in one of their facilities, say industry officials and public health experts. During the pandemic, hospitals have received additional money for treating COVID-19 patients as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES, the 2020 law meant to address the economic fallout of the pandemic. But those increased payments don’t apply to every COVID-19 patient treated in a hospital, just the ones under Medicare, which is the federal healthcare program serving people 65 and over. Colin Milligan, a spokesperson for the American Hospital Association, confirmed that hospitals are currently eligible to receive a 20% increase in Medicare payments for caring for COVID-19 patients. “These patients are often very costly and time and labor-intensive for hospitals to treat,” he explained in an email Wednesday. And despite what the social media posts claim, the enhanced COVID-19 payments aren’t based on whether the patient lives or dies, experts said. In general, Medicare payments are based on the severity of the patient’s condition and the types of treatments provided, said Juliette Cubanski, deputy director of Medicare policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. The average cost of a COVID-19 hospitalization for a Medicare patient is about \$24,000, she said, citing claims data from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. But the reimbursement for more severely ill patients — such as those placed on a ventilator for multiple days — is roughly \$40,000, according to KFF’s analysis. Social media posts citing a \$48,000 subsidy for COVID-19 deaths appear to be taking that \$40,000 average cost for treating the sickest COVID-19 patients and factoring in the special 20% reimbursement rate increase. But Cubanski argued that’s not a fair assessment of the potential payout to hospitals. “My understanding of the estimates from CMS is that they already include the 20% payment increase in the stated amount,” she wrote in an email. “So the payment for an extreme case would be \$40k including the 20% increase, not \$40k plus 20%.” Spokespersons for CMS and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the agency, didn’t respond to emails seeking comment this week. But President Joe Biden has announced the federal government’s declaration of a public health emergency for COVID-19 will end on May 11. That means the enhanced Medicare payments — along with other measures the federal government enacted to weather the pandemic — will soon be a thing of the past.

— Associated Press writer Philip Marcelo in New York contributed this report. \_\_\_\_

Florida blogger bill falsely tied to DeSantis

CLAIM: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis wants bloggers to register with the state or face fines.

THE FACTS: A bill filed in the Florida Senate — that DeSantis says he does not support — would require bloggers to register with the state and submit periodic reports if they are paid for posts about elected officials. Social media users have erroneously claimed in recent days that DeSantis is in favor of the bill, which was filed last week and introduced to the Senate on Tuesday. But it was Republican Florida Sen. Jason Brodeur who filed the bill and DeSantis has not publicly supported the legislation since it was filed. DeSantis clarified his position on Tuesday at a press conference following his State of the State address. "I see these people filing bills and then there's articles with my face on the article saying that oh, they're going to have to — bloggers are going to have to register for the state," he said. "And then it's like, attributing it to me. And I'm like, ok, that's not anything that I've ever supported, I don't support." Brodeur's bill would require bloggers to register with the state of Florida if they are paid for posts about its governor, lieutenant governor, cabinet members or legislative officials. They would also have to file periodic reports with the state disclosing information such as who paid them and how much. Failure to file a report would result in fines of \$25 a day, up to \$2,500. The legislation states that it would not apply to content "on the website of a newspaper or other similar publication." Bryan Griffin, the governor's press secretary, confirmed to the AP in an email that DeSantis "does not support the bill." However, Griffin also explained that "the governor will ALWAYS consider every bill on its merits in final form if and when a bill passes the legislature and reaches his desk" before making a decision. The AP previously reported that DeSantis' office was not aware of the blogger registration legislation until it was filed. First amendment groups have argued that the proposal violates press freedoms.

## German gunman kills 6 at Hamburg Jehovah's Witness hall

By PIETRO DE CRISTOFARO, GEIR MOULSON and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

HAMBURG, Germany (AP) — A gunman stormed a service at his former Jehovah's Witness hall in Germany, killing six people before taking his own life after police arrived, authorities in the port city of Hamburg said Friday.

Police gave no motive for Thursday night's attack. But they acknowledged recently receiving an anonymous tip that claimed the man identified as the shooter showed anger toward Jehovah's Witnesses and might be psychologically unfit to own a gun.

Eight people were wounded, including a woman who was 28 weeks pregnant and lost the baby. Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the death toll could rise.

Officers apparently arrived at the hall while the attack was ongoing and heard one more shot, according to witnesses and authorities. They did not fire their weapons, but officials said their intervention likely prevented further loss of life at the boxy building next to an auto repair shop a few kilometers (miles) from downtown.

Scholz, a former Hamburg mayor, said the city was "speechless in view of this violence" and "mourning those whose lives were taken so brutally."

All of the victims were German citizens apart from two wounded women, one with Ugandan citizenship and one with Ukrainian.

Officials said the suspected assailant was a 35-year-old German man identified only as Philipp F., in line with the country's privacy rules. Police said he had left the congregation "voluntarily, but apparently not on good terms," about a year and a half ago.

A website registered in the name of someone who fits the police description says that he grew up in the Bavarian town of Kempten in "a strict religious evangelical household."

The website, which is filled with business jargon, also links to a self-published book about "God, Jesus Christ and Satan."

Philipp F. legally owned a semi-automatic Heckler & Koch Pistolet P30 handgun, according to police. He fired more than 100 shots during the attack, and the head of the Hamburg prosecutors office, Ralf Peter Anders, said hundreds more rounds were found in a search of the man's apartment.

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Germany's gun laws are more restrictive than those in the United States but permissive compared with some European neighbors, and shootings are not unheard of.

Last year, an 18-year-old man opened fire in a packed lecture at Heidelberg University, killing one person and wounding three others before killing himself. In 2020, the nation saw two high-profile shootings, one that killed six people and another that took nine lives.

In the most recent shooting involving a site of worship, a far-right extremist attempted to force his way into a synagogue in Halle on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur in 2019. After failing to gain entry, he shot two people to death nearby.

The German government announced plans last year to crack down on gun ownership by suspected extremists and to tighten background checks. Currently, anyone who wants to acquire a firearm must show that they are fit to do so, including by proving that they require a gun. Reasons can include being part of a sports shooting club or being a hunter.

Hamburg Police Chief Ralf Martin Meyer said the man was visited by officers after they received an anonymous tip in January, claiming that he had "particular anger toward religious believers, in particular toward Jehovah's Witnesses and his former employer."

Officers said the man was cooperative and found no grounds to take away his weapon, according to Meyer. "The bottom line is that an anonymous tip in which someone says they're worried a person might have a psychological illness isn't in itself a basis for (such) measures," he said.

Germany's top security official laid a wreath of flowers outside the hall to commemorate the victims and thanked police before taking questions from reporters.

Asked whether the attack could have been prevented, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said it was necessary to wait for the investigation to conclude, but she acknowledged that changes were needed in the way background checks are conducted and information is exchanged between authorities.

She said a bill now making its way through the legislative process would require gun owners to undergo psychological tests.

On Friday morning, forensic investigators in protective white suits could be seen outside the hall. As a light snow fell, officers placed yellow cones on the ground and windowsills to mark evidence.

A special operations unit that happened to be near the hall arrived just minutes after receiving the first emergency call at 9:04 p.m., Hamburg's top security official said. The officers were able to separate the gunman from the congregation.

"We can assume that they saved many people's lives this way," Hamburg state Interior Minister Andy Grote told reporters.

Upon arrival, officers found people with apparent gunshot wounds on the ground floor and then heard a shot from an upper floor, where they found a fatally wounded person believed to be the shooter, according to police spokesman Holger Vehren.

Gregor Miebach, who lives within sight of the building, heard shots and filmed a figure entering the building through a window. In his footage, shots can then be heard from inside. The figure later apparently emerges from the hall, is seen in the courtyard and then fires more shots through a first floor window before the lights in the room go out.

Miebach told German television news agency NonstopNews that he heard at least 25 shots. After police arrived, one last shot followed, he said.

His mother, Dorte Miebach, said she was shocked by the shooting. "It's really 50 meters (yards) from our house and many people died," she said. "This is still incomprehensible."

Jehovah's Witnesses are part of an international church founded in the United States in the 19th century and headquartered in Warwick, New York. The church claims a worldwide membership of about 8.7 million, with about 170,000 in Germany.

Members are known for their evangelistic efforts that include knocking on doors and distributing literature in public squares. The denomination's practices include a refusal to bear arms, receive blood transfusions, salute a national flag or participate in secular government.

David Semonian, a U.S.-based spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses, said in an emailed statement Friday

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that members "worldwide grieve for the victims of this traumatic event."

\_\_\_ Moulson and Jordans reported from Berlin. Associated Press journalist David Rising in Bangkok contributed to this report.

## It's almost Oscars time. Here's everything you need to know

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Hollywood is gearing up for the 95th Academy Awards, where "Everything Everywhere All at Once" comes in the lead nominee and the film industry will hope to move past "the slap" of last year's ceremony. Here's everything you need to know about the 2023 Oscars, including when they are, where to watch the live show and this year's controversies.

### WHEN ARE THE OSCARS?

The Oscars will be held Sunday, March 12, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The ceremony is set to begin at 8 p.m. EDT and be broadcast live on ABC.

### CAN YOU STREAM THE OSCARS?

The broadcast can be streamed with a subscription to Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV, AT&T TV and Fubo TV. Some of these services offer brief free trials. You can also stream the show on ABC.com and on the ABC app by authenticating your provider.

### WHO'S HOSTING?

Jimmy Kimmel will host for the third time and his first time since 2018. That was also the last Oscars to feature a solo host. The show went hostless for several years after Kimmel's last outing. Last year, Regina Hall, Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes hosted as a trio. In an ad for this year's show styled after "Top Gun: Maverick," Kimmel made his humble case for being the right person for the job while noting that he can't get slapped because "I cry a lot."

### WHAT'S NOMINATED FOR BEST PICTURE AT THE 2023 OSCARS?

The 10 movies competing for best picture are: "All Quiet on the Western Front," "Avatar: The Way of Water," "The Banshees of Inisherin," "Elvis," "Everything Everywhere All at Once," "The Fabelmans," "Tár," "Top Gun: Maverick," "Triangle of Sadness," "Women Talking." Here's a guide to how you can watch them.

### WHO'S PRESENTING?

Presenters include: Halle Bailey, Antonio Banderas, Elizabeth Banks, Jessica Chastain, John Cho, Andrew Garfield, Hugh Grant, Danai Gurira, Salma Hayek Pinault, Nicole Kidman, Florence Pugh and Sigourney Weaver. They join a previously announced group including: Riz Ahmed, Emily Blunt, Glenn Close, Jennifer Connelly, Ariana DeBose, Samuel L. Jackson, Dwayne Johnson, Michael B. Jordan, Troy Kotsur, Jonathan Majors, Melissa McCarthy, Janelle Monáe, Deepika Padukone, Questlove, Zoe Saldaña and Donnie Yen. A third wave was announced Thursday: Halle Berry, Paul Dano, Cara Delevingne, Harrison Ford, Kate Hudson, Mindy Kaling, Eva Longoria, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Andie MacDowell, Elizabeth Olsen, Pedro Pascal and John Travolta.

### WHAT ELSE IS IN STORE FOR THE SHOW?

The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences has said that winners to all categories will be announced live on the show. (Last year, some categories were taped in a pre-show, something that caused an uproar among academy members.) All signs point to a full slate of musical performances, with Rihanna performing "Lift Me Up" from "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" and Rahul Sipligunj and Kaala Bhairava singing Chandrabose and M.M. Keeravaani's "Naatu Naatu" from "RRR." Nominee Lady Gaga, on the other hand, will not sing "Hold My Hand," from "Top Gun: Maverick," during the show. On Monday, show producers announced that Lenny Kravitz will deliver the "In Memoriam" performance.

### WHO ARE THE FAVORITES?

Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's indie sci-fi hit "Everything Everywhere All at Once" comes in with a leading 11 nominations. Close on its heels, though, is the Irish friends-falling-out dark comedy "The Banshees of Inisherin," with nine nods, a total matched by Netflix's WWI film "All Quiet on the Western Front." Michelle Yeoh ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") may have a slight edge on Cate Blanchett

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("Tár") for best actress. Best actor is harder to call, with Brendan Fraser ("The Whale") and Austin Butler ("Elvis") in the mix. In the supporting categories, Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") and Ke Huy Quan ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") are the frontrunners, though Jamie Lee Curtis' Screen Actors Guild Awards win may have thrown a wrench into the supporting actress category. Steven Spielberg ("The Fabelmans") may win his third best director Oscar, though the Daniels may have emerged as the frontrunners. AP Film Writers Lindsey Bahr and Jake Coyle are predicting a big haul for "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

## WHAT'S BEEN CONTROVERSIAL THIS YEAR?

Aside from the usual snubs and surprises, this year's biggest to-do has been the debate surrounding Andrea Riseborough's unexpected nomination for best actress. Riseborough was nominated for the little-seen, Texas-set drama "To Leslie" after many A-list stars rallied around her performance. When two other best-actress contenders — Danielle Deadwyler ("Till") and Viola Davis ("Woman King") — were snubbed, some saw that as a reflection of racial bias in the film industry. The academy launched an inquiry into the star-studded, grassroots campaign for Riseborough but found no reason to rescind her nomination.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

Just the reading of the title to one of this year's short film nominees should prompt a wave of giggles. John Williams ("The Fabelmans"), up for best score, is the oldest nominee ever, at 90 years old. After historic back-to-back best-director wins by Chloé Zhao ("Nomadland") and Jane Campion ("The Power of the Dog"), no women were nominated this year for best director. Also don't expect to see Will Smith at the Oscars anytime soon. After striking Chris Rock at last year's ceremony, Smith was banned by the film academy from attending for 10 years. In a live Netflix special on Saturday, Rock finally punched back at Smith with a blistering stand-up set about the incident.

## **Pandemic 3 years later: Has the COVID-19 virus won?**

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

On the third anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus is still spreading and the death toll is nearing 7 million worldwide. Yet most people have resumed their normal lives, thanks to a wall of immunity built from infections and vaccines.

The virus appears here to stay, along with the threat of a more dangerous version sweeping the planet.

"New variants emerging anywhere threaten us everywhere," said virus researcher Thomas Friedrich of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Maybe that will help people to understand how connected we are."

With information sources drying up, it has become harder to keep tabs on the pandemic. Johns Hopkins University on Friday shut down its trusted tracker, which it started soon after the virus emerged in China and spread worldwide.

Saturday marks three years since the World Health Organization first called the outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and the United Nations health organization says it's not yet ready to say the emergency has ended.

A look at where we stand:

### THE VIRUS ENDURES

With the pandemic still killing 900 to 1,000 people a day worldwide, the stealthy virus behind COVID-19 hasn't lost its punch. It spreads easily from person to person, riding respiratory droplets in the air, killing some victims but leaving most to bounce back without much harm.

"Whatever the virus is doing today, it's still working on finding another winning path," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of Scripps Research Translational Institute in California.

We've become numb to the daily death toll, Topol says, but we should view it as too high. Consider that in the United States, daily hospitalizations and deaths, while lower than at the worst peaks, have not yet dropped to the low levels reached during summer 2021 before the delta variant wave.

At any moment, the virus could change to become more transmissible, more able to sidestep the immune system or more deadly. Topol said we're not ready for that. Trust has eroded in public health agencies,

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furthering an exodus of public health workers. Resistance to stay-at-home orders and vaccine mandates may be the pandemic's legacy.

"I wish we united against the enemy — the virus — instead of against each other," Topol said.

## FIGHTING BACK

There's another way to look at it. Humans unlocked the virus' genetic code and rapidly developed vaccines that work remarkably well. We built mathematical models to get ready for worst-case scenarios. We continue to monitor how the virus is changing by looking for it in wastewater.

"The pandemic really catalyzed some amazing science," said Friedrich.

The achievements add up to a new normal where COVID-19 "doesn't need to be at the forefront of people's minds," said Natalie Dean, an assistant professor of biostatistics at Emory University. "That, at least, is a victory."

Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins, said the current omicron variants have about 100 genetic differences from the original coronavirus strain. That means about 1% of the virus' genome is different from its starting point. Many of those changes have made it more contagious, but the worst is likely over because of population immunity.

Matthew Binnicker, an expert in viral infections at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, said the world is in "a very different situation today than we were three years ago — where there was, in essence, zero existing immunity to the original virus."

That extreme vulnerability forced measures aimed at "flattening the curve." Businesses and schools closed, weddings and funerals were postponed. Masks and "social distancing" later gave way to showing proof of vaccination. Now, such precautions are rare.

"We're not likely to go back to where we were because there's so much of the virus that our immune systems can recognize," Ray said. Our immunity should protect us "from the worst of what we saw before."

## REAL-TIME DATA LACKING

On Friday, Johns Hopkins did its final update to its free coronavirus dashboard and hot-spot map with the death count standing at more than 6.8 million worldwide. Its government sources for real-time tallies had drastically declined. In the U.S., only New York, Arkansas and Puerto Rico still publish case and death counts daily.

"We rely so heavily on public data and it's just not there," said Beth Blauer, data lead for the project.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still collects a variety of information from states, hospitals and testing labs, including cases, hospitalizations, deaths and what strains of the coronavirus are being detected. But for many counts, there's less data available now and it's been less timely.

"People have expected to receive data from us that we will no longer be able to produce," said the CDC's director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky.

Internationally, the WHO's tracking of COVID-19 relies on individual countries reporting. Global health officials have been voicing concern that their numbers severely underestimate what's actually happening and they do not have a true picture of the outbreak.

For more than year, CDC has been moving away from case counts and testing results, partly because of the rise in home tests that aren't reported. The agency focuses on hospitalizations, which are still reported daily, although that may change. Death reporting continues, though it has become less reliant on daily reports and more on death certificates — which can take days or weeks to come in.

U.S. officials say they are adjusting to the circumstances, and trying to move to a tracking system somewhat akin to how CDC monitors the flu.

## THEN AND NOW

"I wish we could go back to before COVID," said Kelly Forrester, 52, of Shakopee, Minnesota, who lost her father to the disease in May 2020, survived her own bout in December and blames misinformation for ruining a longtime friendship. "I hate it. I actually hate it."

The disease feels random to her. "You don't know who will survive, who will have long COVID or a mild cold. And then other people, they'll end up in the hospital dying."



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Forrester's father, 80-year-old Virgil Michlitsch, a retired meat packer, deliveryman and elementary school custodian, died in a nursing home with his wife, daughters and granddaughters keeping vigil outside the building in lawn chairs.

Not being at his bedside "was the hardest thing," Forrester said.

Inspired by the pandemic's toll, her 24-year-old daughter is now getting a master's in public health.

"My dad would have been really proud of her," Forrester said. "I'm so glad that she believed in it, that she wanted to do that and make things better for people."

## In a first since 1961, the Oscars carpet will not be red

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Many things about the Academy Awards have changed over the years, but for the past six decades there has been at least one constant: The red carpet. The hues have varied over the years, but it has always been some shade of red. Until this year.

On Wednesday outside the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, workers unspooled a champagne-colored carpet as Jimmy Kimmel, who is hosting the 95th Oscars on Sunday, presided over the occasion.

"I think the decision to go with a champagne carpet over a red carpet shows how confident we are that no blood will be shed," Kimmel said.

The decision to change the color came from creative consultants Lisa Love, a longtime Vogue contributor, and Raúl Ávila, the creative director for the glamorous Met Gala in New York.

This year the carpet will be covered, in part to protect the stars and cameras from the weather, but also to help turn the arrivals into an evening event. For Love, there has always been a disconnect between the elegant black tie dress code and the fact that it's mid-afternoon when people arrive to be photographed in the daylight. With a covered carpet, they could change that.

"We turned a day event into night," Love told The Associated Press. "It's evening, even though it's still 3:00."

The Oscars red carpet dates back to 1961, the 33rd Academy Awards held at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, when Billy Wilder's "The Apartment" won best picture, Burt Lancaster and Elizabeth Taylor won the lead acting prizes, and there was still a "juvenile award," which went to Hayley Mills for "Pollyanna." It was the first televised ceremony, broadcast on ABC and hosted by Bob Hope. The general public wouldn't see the red carpet in all its glory on television until 1966, when the Oscars were first broadcast in color.

There wasn't any debate over the change, Love said. They just knew they had the freedom to break from tradition. They tried some other colors too but they seemed too dark with the covered tent. "We chose this beautiful sienna, saffron color that evokes the sunset, because this is the sunset before the golden hour," Love said.

Instead they went lighter and Academy CEO Bill Kramer approved.

They weren't especially worried about upsetting Oscars traditionalists either.

"Somebody's always got a way to find something wrong with something," Love said. "This is just a lightness and hopefully people like it. It doesn't mean that it's always going to be a champagne colored carpet."

As for what we should call it? Love said "champagne" and "sand" are apt descriptions, but that there's no reason to not default to "red carpet" either. It's more metonym for the glamorous arrivals than a literal description of what everyone is walking on.

The 95th Oscars "red carpet" opens Sunday at 3:30 p.m. Eastern. The ceremony is set to begin at 8 p.m. and will be broadcast live on ABC.

## Oscars vs. 'The Last of Us': What are you watching Sunday?

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

Will Joel and Ellie finally reach the doctors in "The Last of Us"? Will Michelle Yeoh take home the Oscar for best actress?

Both questions will be answered this Sunday, but viewers may have to make a choice about which answer

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they want in real time. The season finale of the HBO hit is up against the live telecast of the Oscars on ABC.

Of course, there's an opportunity to see both. The Oscars begin at 8 p.m. Eastern; "The Last of Us" airs at 9 p.m. Viewers could begin their night watching the Oscars, click over to "The Last of Us," and return for the ceremony's last hour. That's when the biggest categories are usually handed out, but that plan comes with the risk of missing any buzzy, unscripted moments. And if you choose to stick with the Oscars throughout? You risk spoilers on the fate of Bella Ramsey and Pedro Pascal's characters.

The debate essentially boils down to zeitgeist, says Robert Thompson, a professor at Syracuse University specializing in media and director for the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture.

"Watching television isn't just about watching a show. ... It's about talking about it and putting your two cents in," Thompson said. "I suspect a lot of people are going to want to talk about 'The Last of Us,' and get on their keyboards and talk to others, and all of that kind of thing."

Thompson says the Oscars have "more to lose" in the match up against the apocalyptic, mushroom-infected zombie video game adaptation.

Last year's telecast reached an estimated 15.36 million viewers, an improvement from the record low 9.85 million who tuned in to watch in 2021. The Oscars have advertising dollars at stake, which is not something that the premium cable channel HBO has to worry about (although "The Last of Us" did attract a series high of 8.1 million viewers for its penultimate episode).

"The Oscars really is a live event, which you really need to watch live to register the ratings for the broadcast. That's the audience that they're counting," Thompson said. "If people choose to watch 'The Last of Us,' that's going to eat into the Oscars ratings. If people choose to watch the Oscars, they've got lots of other times to watch 'The Last of Us.'"

Interestingly, HBO did concede to the ratings behemoth that is the Super Bowl, dropping the fifth episode of "The Last of Us" on HBO Max and HBO On Demand early last month, on the Friday before the big game. The channel aired the episode as the Philadelphia Eagles played against the Kansas City Chiefs (for the record: The Chiefs were victorious and that Super Bowl was the third most-watched TV show in history, with an average of 113.1 million people watching, per Nielsen).

The network has no official explanation for that programming move and a publicist for the network said they have "nothing to contribute" on their decision to keep the schedule as is during the Oscars.

Pascal, however, gets the best of both worlds on Sunday. "The Last of Us" star will also present at the Academy Awards. It's unclear when in the three-hour telecast he'll appear.

So which channel will you watch the internet's favorite dad on? ABC or HBO?

## Mikaela Shiffrin gets her record 86th World Cup victory

ARE, Sweden (AP) — Moments after winning her record-tying 86th World Cup race, Mikaela Shiffrin was asked by a Swedish broadcaster to directly address Ingemar Stenmark, the skiing standout who had promised to watch at home on television.

From one great to another, the 27-year-old American spoke to the 66-year-old Swede of her respect for him and the historic mark he set in 1989 that was long thought to be beyond reach.

"No matter what I do, it doesn't ever compare to what you achieved," Shiffrin said into the TV6 camera from the lakeside resort. "Maybe I get the 87th victory, maybe not. But for me the biggest dream is to be mentioned in the same sentence as you."

Shiffrin matched the Swede's mark by winning a giant slalom on Friday. She can break the record on Saturday in a slalom race. Those are her specialties, just as they were for Stenmark in the 1970s and 80s.

The reverence between the two goes both ways. Stenmark told The Associated Press in an interview last month that Shiffrin is "much better than I was."

She was certainly good Friday, especially in a standout first run that was the platform for yet another dominating win in her storied career. Her time in the morning sunshine was more than one second faster than her highest-ranked rivals and eventually left her with a lead of 0.58 seconds to defend in second run.

Clearly pleased with her skiing in the opening run, Shiffrin smiled and said "yeah" to herself after seeing

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her time in the finish area.

"It's one of the few runs in my life where, while I was skiing it, I was thinking, 'This is good,'" Shiffrin told TV6.

Shiffrin went out more cautiously under the floodlights in the fast-darkening afternoon, tapping her ski poles together four times in the start hut before setting out with 1.04 seconds in hand over then-leader Federica Brignone.

The lead was cut to 0.57 seconds midway down the slope before Shiffrin skied cleanly in sections where Brignone's aggressive pushing had led to mistakes. The winning margin was 0.64 seconds.

Shiffrin crossed the finish line and put her hands to her helmet, then to her face and shook her head slowly while taking in the enormity of her achievement.

"This is just a spectacular day. Oh my goodness," she said in a course-side interview.

It was Shiffrin's fourth straight wire-to-wire win in World Cup giant slaloms since January. In that time, she also took gold in the event at last month's world championships in Meribel, France.

"When I was little I would never have believed some day I would be in this position," Shiffrin later told Swiss broadcaster SRF. "The whole day I was trying not to focus on that."

Shiffrin's 86th victory came in her 245th World Cup race, and on the fifth attempt to equal Stenmark's record since she won her 85th race in January.

"It's been on my mind. It's been quite tough to focus the last few weeks," said Shiffrin, who hugged her mother and coach, Eileen, in the finish area.

Brignone made a theatrical bow toward Shiffrin in the finish-area ceremony. The podium included Olympic champion Sara Hector of Sweden, who finished 0.92 seconds behind in third.

Shiffrin also clinched the season-long World Cup giant slalom title to secure her 15th career crystal globe trophy. She already won her fifth overall World Cup title and the slalom title this season.

Making even more World Cup history Friday, Shiffrin's 20th career victory in the giant slalom — six of them this season — matched the all-time women's mark held by Vreni Schneider.

Schneider got her wins between 1984 and 1992. The Swiss racer, like Shiffrin, also has Olympic and world championship gold medals in both giant slalom and slalom.

Shiffrin won her first World Cup race in Are, a slalom in December 2012, and then earned two gold medals at the 2019 worlds at the Swedish resort. It was also where she was due to race again in March 2020 after the death of her father the previous month, but the races were called off because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I've had a quite a few different experiences here," Shiffrin said after her first run on Friday. "I have felt everything you can feel here so it's special to be back."

## Many kids need tutoring help. Only a small fraction get it

By PATRICK WALL and AMELIA PAK-HARVEY of Chalkbeat and COLLIN BINKLEY of The Associated Press

David Daniel knows his son needs help.

The 8-year-old spent first grade in remote learning and several weeks of second grade in quarantine. The best way to catch him up, research suggests, is to tutor him several times a week during school.

But his Indianapolis school offers Saturday or after-school tutoring — programs that don't work for Daniel, a single father. The upshot is his son, now in third grade, isn't getting the tutoring he needs.

"I want him to have the help," Daniel said. Without it, "next year is going to be really hard on him."

As America's schools confront dramatic learning setbacks caused by the pandemic, experts have held up intensive tutoring as the single best antidote. Yet even as schools wield billions of dollars in federal COVID relief, a small fraction of students have received school tutoring, according to a survey of the nation's largest districts by the nonprofit news organization Chalkbeat and The Associated Press.

In eight of 12 school systems that provided data, less than 10% of students received any type of district tutoring this fall. To compare, in a federal survey, school officials said half of all U.S. students started this

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school year behind grade level in at least one subject.

A new tutoring corps in Chicago has served about 3% of students, officials said. The figure was less than 1% in three districts: Georgia's Gwinnett County, Florida's Miami-Dade County, and Philadelphia, where the district reported only about 800 students were tutored. In those three systems alone, there were more than 600,000 students who spent no time in a district tutoring program this fall.

The startlingly low tutoring figures point to several problems. Some parents said they didn't know tutoring was available or didn't think their children needed it. Some school systems have struggled to hire tutors. Other school systems said the small tutoring programs were intentional, part of an effort to focus on students with the greatest needs.

Whatever the reason, the impact is clear: At a crucial time for students' recovery, millions of children have not received the academic equivalent of powerful medication.

"It works, it's effective, it gets students to improve in their learning and catch up," said Amie Rapaport, a University of Southern California researcher who has analyzed students' access to intensive tutoring. "So why isn't it reaching them?"

The Indianapolis school district last year launched two tutoring programs that connect students with certified teachers over video. One is available to all students after school, while the other is offered during the day at certain low-performing schools.

District officials say a trial run boosted student test scores. Parents give it high marks.

"The progress that he made in just a couple months last semester working with his tutor was kind of far beyond what he was grasping and doing at school," said Jessica Blalack, whose 7-year-old, Phoenix, opted in to after-school tutoring.

Still, the two programs combined served only about 3,200 students last fall, or roughly 17% of students in district-run schools. Two additional tutoring programs operate at a handful of schools.

Only 35% of the students who registered for after-school tutoring last fall attended more than one session, according to district data.

Indianapolis Public Schools spokesperson Marc Ransford said the district is working to improve attendance and hopes to enroll more students in tutoring next school year. It's also trying to accelerate student learning in other ways, including with a new curriculum and summer school.

Nationwide, schools report that about 10% of students are receiving "high-dosage" tutoring multiple days a week, according to a federal survey from December. The real number could be even lower: Just 2% of U.S. households say their children are getting that kind of intensive tutoring, according to the USC analysis of a different nationally representative survey.

Schools trying to ramp up tutoring have run into roadblocks, including staffing and scheduling. Experts say tutoring is most effective when provided three times a week for at least 30 minutes during school hours. Offering after-school or weekend tutoring is simpler, but turnout is often low.

Harrison Tran, a 10th grader in Savannah, Georgia, struggled to make sense of algebra during remote learning. Last year, his high school offered after-school help. But that wasn't feasible for Harrison, who lives 30 minutes from school and couldn't afford to miss his ride home.

Without tutoring help, he started this school year with gaps in his learning.

"When I got into my Algebra II class, I was entirely lost," he said.

Relatively low family interest has been another challenge. Though test scores plunged during the pandemic, many parents do not believe their children experienced learning loss, or simply are unaware. The disconnect makes it more important to offer tutoring during school, experts say.

"Parents just aren't as concerned as we need them to be," said USC education professor Morgan Polikoff, "if we're going to have to rely on parents opting their kids into interventions."

Even when students want help, some have been let down.

In Maryland's Montgomery County, 12th grader Talia Bradley recently sought calculus help from a virtual tutoring company hired by the district. But the problem she was struggling with also stumped the tutor. After an hour trying to sort it out, Talia walked away frustrated.

"My daughter was no farther along," said Leah Bradley, her mother. "Having an option for online tutoring

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makes sense, but it can't be the primary option if you're looking for good results."

Repeated in-person tutoring tends to be more effective than on-demand online help, but it's also harder to manage. District rules add complexity, with safeguards like tutor background checks and vendor bidding rules slowing the process.

In Wake County, North Carolina, the school district began planning a reading tutoring program last summer. The program did not launch until November, and district officials last month said volunteers are tutoring fewer than 140 students — far fewer than the 1,000 students the program was designed to reach.

"We're always looking to serve more students," said Amy Mattingly, director of K-12 programs at Helps Education Fund, the nonprofit managing that program and another serving about 400 students. But, she added, it's important to "see what's working and make tweaks before trying to scale up."

Some districts defended their participation numbers, saying tutoring is most effective when targeted.

In Georgia's Fulton County, 3% of the district's 90,000 students participated in tutoring programs this fall. Most of the tutoring was offered by paraprofessionals during the school day, with one hired to give intense support in each elementary school.

The district says time and staffing limit how many students can get frequent, intensive tutoring.

"We don't want to water it down, because then you don't get the impact that the research says is beneficial for kids," said Cliff Jones, chief academic officer for the system.

Others worry too few are getting the help they need even as programs continue to grow.

This school year, about 3,500 students are getting reading tutoring from the North Carolina Education Corps. Meanwhile, in fourth grade alone, more than 41,000 students statewide scored in the bottom level on a national reading test last year.

"Who we are serving," said Laura Bilbro-Berry, the program's senior director, "is just a drop in the bucket."

## UK has new Duke of Edinburgh as king gives his brother title

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III has made his youngest brother the Duke of Edinburgh, passing on a title held by their late father, Prince Philip.

Buckingham Palace said the title was conferred on Prince Edward on Friday, his 59th birthday.

Edward is the youngest of the four children of Philip and the late Queen Elizabeth II. His wife Sophie will now be known as the Duchess of Edinburgh, and their 15-year-old son James becomes Earl of Wessex, the title Edward previously held.

Prince Philip was made Duke of Edinburgh when he married the then Princess Elizabeth in 1947, and he held the title until his death in 2021 at the age of 99. It had been Philip's wish that Edward should get the dukedom after he and the queen had both died. Elizabeth died in September at age 96.

One of Philip's legacies is the Duke of Edinburgh awards, a popular youth activities program set up in 1956.

The palace said that "the new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh are proud to continue Prince Philip's legacy of promoting opportunities for young people of all backgrounds to reach their full potential."

The announcement comes after another title change this week when Prince Harry and Meghan began officially using the titles Prince and Princess for their children Archie and Lilibet.

## Today in History: MARCH 11, Earthquake and tsunami in Japan

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 11, the 70th day of 2023. There are 295 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 11, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Bill, providing war supplies to countries fighting the Axis.

On this date:

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln removed Gen. George B. McClellan as general-in-chief of the Union armies, leaving him in command of the Army of the Potomac, a post McClellan also

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ended up losing.

In 1918, what were believed to be the first confirmed U.S. cases of a deadly global flu pandemic were reported among U.S. Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas; 46 soldiers would die. (The worldwide outbreak of influenza claimed an estimated 20 to 40 million lives.)

In 1942, as Japanese forces continued to advance in the Pacific during World War II, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur left the Philippines for Australia, where he vowed on March 20, "I shall return" — a promise he kept more than 2 1/2 years later.

In 1954, the U.S. Army charged that Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., and his subcommittee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, had exerted pressure to obtain favored treatment for Pvt. G. David Schine, a former consultant to the subcommittee. (The confrontation culminated in the famous Senate Army-McCarthy hearings.)

In 1985, Mikhail S. Gorbachev was chosen to succeed the late Konstantin U. Chernenko as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

In 1997, rock star Paul McCartney was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

In 2002, two columns of light soared skyward from Ground Zero in New York as a temporary memorial to the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks six months earlier.

In 2004, ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

In 2006, former Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic (sloh-BOH'-dahn mee-LOH'-shuh-vich) was found dead of a heart attack in his prison cell in the Netherlands, abruptly ending his four-year U.N. war crimes trial; he was 64.

In 2010, a federal appeals court in San Francisco upheld the use of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency.

In 2011, a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station.

In 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. Former Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced in New York to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual abuse.

Ten years ago: Former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick (D) was convicted of a raft of crimes, including racketeering conspiracy (he was later sentenced to 28 years in prison). North Korea said it was no longer bound by the 1953 armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War, following days of increased tensions over its latest nuclear test. (A U.N. spokesman said that North Korea could not unilaterally dissolve the armistice.)

Five years ago: The White House pledged to help states pay for firearms training for teachers, and renewed its call for an improved background check system, as part of a new plan to prevent school shootings like the one that left 17 people dead at a Florida high school four weeks earlier; the plan did not include a push to boost the minimum age for purchasing assault weapons to 21. Lawmakers in China abolished presidential term limits that had been in place for more than 35 years, opening up the possibility of Xi Jinping (shee jihn-peeng) holding power for life.

One year ago: Russia widened its offensive in Ukraine, striking airfields in the west and a major industrial city in the east, while the huge armored column that had been stalled for over a week outside Kyiv went on the move again. A grand jury declined to indict Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson following a police investigation sparked by lawsuits filed by 22 women who accused him of harassment and sexual assault. Officials said actor and singer Jussie Smollett began a 150-day jail sentence for lying to police about a racist and homophobic attack that he staged himself.

Today's birthdays: Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is 92. Former ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson is 89. Musician Flaco Jimenez (FLAH'-koh hee-MEH'-nez) is 84. Actor Tricia O'Neil is 78. Actor Mark Metcalf is 77. Rock singer-musician Mark Stein (Vanilla Fudge) is 76. Singer Bobby McFerrin is 73. Movie director Jerry Zucker is 73. Singer Cheryl Lynn is 72. Actor Susan Richardson is 71. Recording executive Jimmy Iovine (eye-VEEN') is 70. Singer Nina Hagen is 68. Country singer Jimmy Fortune (The Statler Brothers) is 68. Actor Elias Koteas (ee-LY'-uhs koh-TAY'-uhs) is 62. Actor-director Peter Berg is 61. Singer Mary Gauthier

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(GOH'-shay) is 61. Actor Jeffrey Nordling is 61. Actor Alex Kingston is 60. Actor Wallace Langham is 58. Former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., is 58. Actor John Barrowman is 56. Singer Lisa Loeb is 55. Neo-soul musician Al Gamble (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 54. Singer Pete Droge is 54. Actor Terrence Howard is 54. Rock musician Rami Jaffee is 54. Actor Johnny Knoxville is 52. Rock singer-musicians Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte; The Madden Brothers) are 44. Actor David Anders is 42. Singer LeToya Luckett is 42. Actor Thora Birch is 41. TV personality Melissa Rycroft is 40. Actor Rob Brown is 39. Actor Jodie Comer is 30.