

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 13, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 248 ~ 1 of 69

**Due to the road conditions,  
the Groton Area School District  
will be opening 2 hours late  
on Monday, March 13, 2023.**

**OST will be opening at 7:00 AM.  
Buses will travel on plowed roads only.**

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- GDILIVE.COM: Baumgarn Funeral](#)
- [2- GDILIVE.COM: School Board Meeting](#)
- [3- 2023 South Dakota Wrestling Coaches Association's Region 2 Tournament Results](#)
- [4- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [5- That's Life by Tony Bender](#)
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## Groton Community Calendar

### Monday, March 13

Senior Menu: Goulash, corn, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, waffle fries.

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Lent Bible Study with Pastor Brandon, 7 p.m.; PEO Meeting, 7 p.m. (outside group)

1 p.m.: Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center.

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

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

“Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.”

GOLDA MEIR



### Tuesday, March 14

Senior Menu: Ham, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, tropical fruit, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Enchiladas, Spanish rice.

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

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

Middle School Talent Show, GHS Gym.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 7 p.m.

### Wednesday, March 15

Senior Menu: Breaded cod, parsley buttered potatoes, green beans, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Hashbrown pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken Alfredo vegetable blend.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lent Service, 7 p.m.

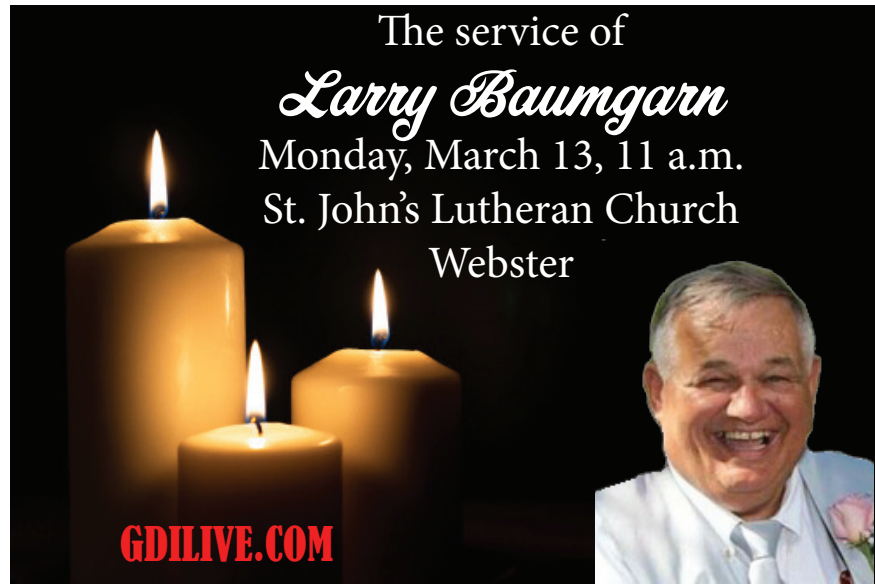
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; Soup Supper, 6 p.m. (Emmanuel Men serve), League, 6:15 p.m.; Worship, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Book Study with Lindsey Tietz, 4 p.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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The service of  
*Larry Baumgarn*  
Monday, March 13, 11 a.m.  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
Webster



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## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

**March 13, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room**

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3 CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of February 13, 2023 school board meeting.
2. Approval of February 2023 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of February 2023 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of February 2023 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of February 2023 School Transportation Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Consider amendments to 2022-2023 school calendar regarding make-up snow days.
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve resignation from Jordan Kjellsen, MS Mathematics Teacher/JH Track Coach, at the end of the 2022-23 school year.
2. Approve resignation from Amanda Tarpein, Food Service Staff, effective immediately.
3. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel and SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations.

ADJOURN

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## 2023 South Dakota Wrestling Coaches Association's Region 2 Tournament Results

The Region 2 Tournament was held Saturday in Pierre with Groton having 20 youth wrestlers qualifying for the state tournament to be held March 25-26 in Aberdeen. Groton's region results are as follows:

Tots 37: Laiken Neigel – 5th  
Tots 37: Brooks Sombke – Champion – state qualifier  
Tots 40: Ryker Herron – 2nd - state qualifier  
Tots 46: Landry Johnson – 3rd – state qualifier  
Bantam 50: Bennett Iverson – 3rd – state qualifier  
Bantam 70: Kroy Khali – 4th  
Bantam 76: Braxten Sombke – Champion – state qualifier  
Midgets 63: Henry Pharis – Champion – state qualifier  
Midgets 72: Huntley Overacker – 3rd – state qualifier  
Midgets 96: Keenan Moody - 2nd – state qualifier  
Midgets 134: Hank Flihs – Champion – state qualifier  
Novice 68: Bentley Ehresmann – 2nd – state qualifier  
Novice 77: Preston Hinkelman – 4th  
Novice 87: Keegan Kucker - 3rd – state qualifier  
Novice 93: Kyson Kucker – 3rd – state qualifier  
Schoolboy 85: Luke Gauer – Champion – state qualifier  
Schoolboy 90: Wyatt Hagen – 4th – state qualifier  
Schoolboy 110: Donovan Block – Champion – state qualifier  
Schoolboy 180: Layne Johnson – 3rd – state qualifier  
Girls A (Grades PreK-2) 50: Alex Clark – 6th  
Girls A (Grades PreK-2) 75: Elsy Hagen – 2nd – state qualifier  
Girls B (Grades 3-5) 82: Rosalyn Block – 2nd – state qualifier  
Girls C (Grades 6-8) 110: Liza Krueger – Champion – state qualifier  
Cadets 220: Gavin Englund – 2nd – state qualifier

Other participants:

Tots 43: Andy Clark  
Bantam 70: Samuel Flihs  
Midgets 77: Adam Flihs

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**X SERIES** | *Cub Cadet*

## PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE



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

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

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

MSRP  
**\$1,999\***



### **3X** 26" TRAC

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

- Track Drive ideal for slopes, inclines and gravel driveways
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- Heated hand grips
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- 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
- Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
- LED light bar on auger housing
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- 16"x6.5" X-Trac tires
- High-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty

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

■ Indicates step-up feature



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

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

\* Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

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

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**EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING OFFERS AVAILABLE!**



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## Things have changed

Years ago, a friend gave me a vintage class photo. The Ashley second grade class was so large back then we had two teachers—mine and the unforgettable Jane Haas. She wore cat-eye glasses. Sitting cross-legged in the front row was the kid that was me. A crewcut in a buttoned-up plaid shirt.

I met Jane again in 1998, returning as the new owner of the Ashley Tribune. When I learned that she was retiring after decades as an English teacher and librarian, I sent the fledgling editor I'd inherited out to get the story. She came back with her tail between her legs. Jane had refused.

Any reporter that's worked for me knows that's unacceptable. You don't come back without the story. I marched up to the school myself. We'd see about this.

No, Jane told me firmly, because the paper hadn't seen fit to profile other worthy past retirees.

Ah, so this was a protest.

"Well, Jane, there's a new sheriff in town," I said, vowing to do better than my predecessors. Under that coerced contract, I got the interview.

"So what are you going to after you retire?" I asked when we were done.

"I'm going to work for you as a proofreader."

"I don't need a proofreader."

"Oh, yes you do."

That's where it began.

I've been blessed with two inspirational English teachers in my life. In high school it was Bernice Rollo, 100 years old now and still going strong, and Jane Haas, who sat beside me for years and schooled me on rules of grammar that Mrs. Rollo hadn't gotten through my thick skull. Four years wasn't enough.

When we bought the building next door and moved the office, the cost was dear; we couldn't afford new desks, so we painted those army surplus monstrosities in gaudy colors—red, blue, purple, and lime green. "I'll take any one except the green one," she said.

I parked her in that green desk beside mine.

That desk was just the beginning of the demands I put upon her. I wanted her to write, but for all her accomplishments, she wasn't confident in her writing. Real writing requires soul and heart, and she had that, but to lower the shield, to expose yourself, ah, that's the trick.

We edited each other mercilessly. We both got better. I got better, anyway; she blossomed.

She was a natural newspaperwoman who knew what needed to be done and did it. The curse of that was that I demanded more because she could do more. One day, I rattled off an impossible list of assignments as she stared at her screen. As the list grew, her jaw clenched, a fearsome thing.

I reached into my desk and pulled out that class photo. She glanced over. Glared, really, that steely Jane Haas gaze. "Things sure have changed, haven't they," I said. "Look who's in charge now."

Truthfully, it wasn't me. It was Jane and my bookkeeper, Frances Lehr, who'd known me since I was in diapers. For a boss, I sure got bossed around a lot. Verbally by Frances, in the undertow by Jane.

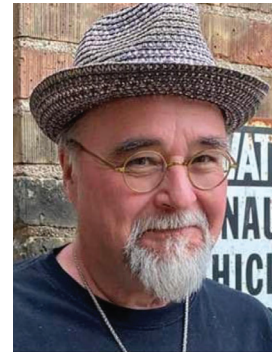
Any publisher worth a damn knows that a great newspaper needs a diversity of voices, different perspectives, people who recognize stories where others don't. For all the bossing that goes on in a newspaper, it's the most democratic business in town.

Jane profiled long-ignored organizations, women's groups that were a mystery to me. Story after story of the underserved and underappreciated rolled in. Stories I wouldn't have written because I didn't see them.

She may have thought she was getting away with something. After editing yet another one of her features, I said, "You know, Jane, I know what you're doing." Steering.

She didn't crack a smile but inside she was smirking. We had an understanding. An extraordinary friendship. We balanced each other. She came in too-buttoned up and I needed buttoning.

Mike Carlson, the funeral director, came to me when Jane was fading in the hospital. Lung cancer. "Jane



## That's Life

by Tony Bender

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wants you to do her eulogy." I went silent. We both wondered if I could.

I paced for hours before the funeral. I couldn't let her down but feared I would, that'd I'd freeze or become a blubbering mess. And that wasn't Jane's style.

I did good. I mean well.

You see, she recognized in me as I did in her, strengths we didn't recognize in ourselves. Today, my grammar's better, still wanting, sure, but she made a dent. I see more stories now. I see more of the world around me.

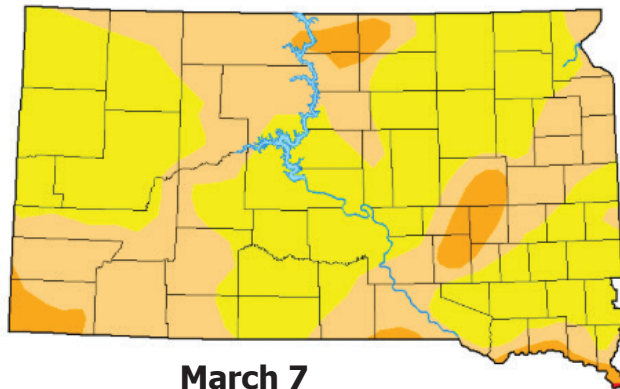
No one sits beside me at that lime-green desk anymore, but I refrain from junking it up like I do my own. She'd hate that. Sometimes it feels like she's still there.

© Tony Bender, 2023

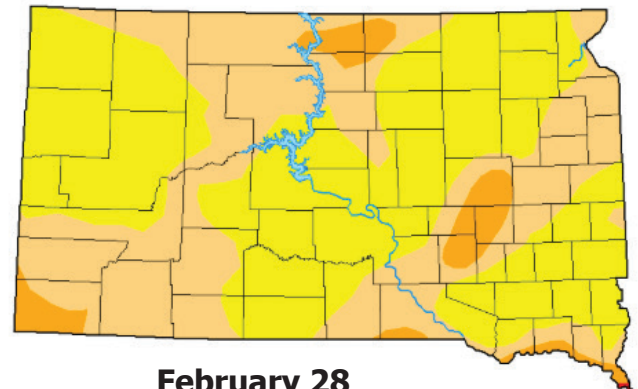
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



March 7



February 28

Much of the High Plains remains in long-term drought, with the central High Plains seeing some expansion of moderate drought (D1) from southeast Nebraska to northeastern Kansas based on continued lack of recent precipitation, low streamflows and soil moisture. In the Colorado Rockies, abnormal dryness (D0) was slightly expanded based on below-normal precipitation. In south-central Colorado, abnormal dryness (D0) was expanded because of continued lack of precipitation and low soil moisture. However, southeast Kansas received heavy rain from severe storms that extended from the South and Southeast into the Great Lakes regions. The northern High Plains also saw improvements in north-central/northeastern Nebraska and southeastern North Dakota in response to the season's heavy snows. Soils are still frozen, so the full benefits of the season's precipitation will not be realized until the soils thaw and the snow meltwater soaks into the ground. Wyoming also saw improvements to moderate drought (D1) where precipitation deficits have recovered.

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## Humanities and the Physician

After 40 years as a doctor interacting with patients, in the last two and a half years the tables turned, and I've become the patient. Although most are good, I've found some doctors are detached, some are too quick, some would rather be somewhere else, some are even angry; but, when a physician who cares walks into the room, and I'm not exaggerating, the day becomes better, the pain becomes less, and hope fills my heart. Scientific knowledge is important, but the ability to convey honest concern, human thoughtfulness and compassion is equal in importance in this healing profession. So, how do we select pre-med students for that, or teach compassion in medical school?



Based on Science, Built on Trust



**the late Richard P. Holm, MD**

There are studies that show those interested in humanities or taught disciplines that explore how people tick, do better in the compassion department. These disciplines include history, literature, religion, ethics, anthropology, psychology, cultural studies and the arts of theater, film, painting and poetry. Some explain that the humanities give us the very reason to learn science and mathematics.

Several studies support the value of humanities in medicine. Seven hundred medical students were surveyed about their lifetime exposure to the humanities and the results indicated that those who had more humanities knowledge had more empathy, tolerance to ambiguity, resourcefulness, emotional intelligence and less burnout. Another study found that a med student's ability to recognize diagnostic clues increased by more than 35 percent after taking a visual arts class. Another study found practicing improv theater helped med students learn to prepare for unexpected questions and conversations. A fourth study showed how writing exercises helped med students have foresight into what a patient may be experiencing. Clearly, an exposure to the humanities makes a better doctor.

I believe that care providers who have had a well-rounded humanities education have a better chance of understanding about how it feels to face pain, nausea, loss of bodily functions or even a cancer diagnosis. Those steeped in good literature or art have a better opportunity to tap creative juices to problem solve and tolerate a life that can be ambiguous and unpredictable. Those who are knowledgeable of history, ethics, cultural ways will find it easier to know when it is time to stop aggressive care and move toward comfort.

This is a call for all students to become readers, to find time to enjoy the humanities, to exercise your caring and compassion muscles; so, when you come into the room of a person suffering, it makes their pain less and day better.

Richard P. Holm, MD, passed away in March of 2020 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. He was founder of The Prairie Doc® and author of "Life's Final Season, A Guide for Aging and Dying with Grace" available on Amazon. Dr. Holm's legacy lives on through his Prairie Doc® organization. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook, featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. Central.

*We the People*

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

## Court Finally Ends Race Discrimination in Public Accommodations

Racial discrimination in southern hotels and restaurants throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Congress determined in 1964 through hearings and studies, had created for Black Americans great challenges and difficulties in their desire to travel from state to state. The Supreme Court had held a century before that Americans enjoyed a constitutional right to travel, but how could Blacks realistically exercise that right without access to lodgings and places to eat?

Congress sought in 1964, in the context of the historic civil rights movement, a legislative remedy against the widespread racism throughout the South, but where in the Constitution could they find the necessary assistance? The Court, after all, in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, had declared unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act of 1875, by which Congress, acting under the 14th Amendment, had attempted to prohibit discrimination by private businesses, including hotels, restaurants, carriage services, and theaters. The Court ruled that Congress possessed authority to regulate state action but lacked power to prevent private acts of race discrimination.

In the post-World War II years, as the Court rolled back discrimination in public schools, parks, and other public accommodations, legal scholars felt increasingly optimistic that the High Bench might overturn its decision in the Civil Rights Cases, paving the way for Congress to prohibit private discrimination. But members of Congress, sitting in committee in 1964, feared the possibility that the Court might uphold its 19th Century ruling, which many regarded as punitive, thus stifling the efforts of the national legislature to expand civil rights.

What to do? Congress, behind the leadership of President Lyndon Johnson, enacted the 1964 Civil Rights Act which, in Title II of the landmark legislation, declared that "all persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment" of public accommodations, without "discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin."

Given the Court's ruling in the 1883 Civil Rights Cases, what constitutional ground could Congress invoke to justify the 1964 Civil Rights Act? Answer: the authority to regulate interstate commerce under Article I, Section 8, Clause 3.

By the end of the year, in a pair of cases—Heart of Atlanta Hotel v. United States and Katzenbach v. McClung—the Court unanimously upheld Title 2 of the Civil Rights Act as a lawful exercise of congressional control over interstate commerce. Justice Tom Clark delivered the opinions for the Court, declaring that the "record is replete with evidence of the burdens that discrimination by race or color places upon interstate commerce." Clark noted the increased mobility of Americans in the post-war era and observed that Blacks were particularly affected by the discrimination, "having to travel great distances to secure" lodgings, "and often they have been unable to obtain accommodations and have to call upon friends to put them up overnight."

The Heart of Atlanta Hotel, like Ollie's Barbecue, the subject of Katzenbach v. McClung, maintained that it was of a "purely local character" and thus subject to state control and not congressional regulation under the interstate commerce power. Justice Clark, writing for the Court, said, "assuming this to be true, if it is interstate commerce that feels the pinch, it does not matter how local the operation which applies the squeeze." To the Court, the "squeeze" was obvious. Denial of hotel accommodations would deter Blacks from traveling from state to state and region to state. In the case of Ollie's Barbecue, some of the products



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that it served were purchased from other states, a clear example of interstate commerce.

Congress utilized the Commerce Clause to respond to the pervasive practice of race discrimination, one of the nation's most serious moral concerns. Heart of Atlanta and Katzenbach were not the first cases in American history that involved use of the commerce power to address social justice issues. Congress, for example, has at various times invoked the Commerce Clause to discourage practices which it deems evil, dangerous or unwise, including the interstate sale of lottery tickets, white slave trafficking, the transportation of intoxicating liquors, and child labor.

The purposes and rationales behind the exercise of the commerce power, the Court has said, are beyond judicial contemplation. In *United States v. Darby* (1941), Justice Harlan Fiske Stone spoke for generations of Justices: "The motive and purpose of a regulation of interstate commerce are matters for the legislative judgment upon the exercise of which the Constitution places no restriction and over which the courts are given no control."

1964 was a pivotal year in the history of the American civil rights movement. It represented one of the few years in which all three branches of government pulled on the same oar to promote human dignity and civil rights. We could use more governmental synergy in addressing the great challenges in our time.

## Weekly Vikings Recap

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

This past week for the Minnesota Vikings was a tough one, to say the least. With free agency approaching and the Vikings needing to get under the salary cap, the Vikings had to make several tough roster decisions.

### Vikings Cut Star Players

On Monday morning, the Vikings released former all-pro linebacker, Eric Kendricks. Kendricks, who played eight seasons as the Vikings' starting middle linebacker, had lost a step this past season so his release was not a shock to many. It was also evident that Kendricks knew throughout the season that this was likely his last with the Vikings. He got emotional multiple times during interviews and even discussed that he was "taking it all in" this season. Even though Kendricks was no longer the player he used to be, his leadership on the defense will surely be missed next season.

Kendricks' release was just the start for the Vikings' general manager, Kwesi Adofo-Mensah. Later in the week, news came out that the Vikings released cornerback Cam Dantzler. Dantzler, who showed promise at times, was never able to fully reach his potential in his time with the Vikings. It was likely Dantzler's lack of speed that was too much for him to overcome.

Then, the big news dropped on Friday that the Vikings released hometown hero and future Vikings' ring of honor member, Adam Thielen. Like Kendricks, Thielen had slowed down athletically this past season. His inability to separate from defensive backs was evident and is the main reason that TJ Hockenson became the second option behind Justin Jefferson in the Vikings' offense. Nonetheless, Thielen will always hold a special spot in the Vikings' fans' hearts given his true Minnesota roots.

Based on reports from several insiders, it does not seem like this is the end of the Vikings' releasing their star players. It sounds like Za'Darius Smith wants the Vikings to release him, and Harrison Smith could possibly be released if he is unwilling to take a pay cut. Although the Vikings are going to look a lot different next year, I think it's exciting to watch Kwesi Adofo-Mensah and Kevin O'Connell start to build the Vikings the way they want to.

### Passing of Bud Grant

The other tough Vikings news that came out this week was the news that legendary head coach, Bud Grant, passed away at 95 years old. Grant is probably the most important person in the history of the Vikings as he led the Vikings to all four of its Super Bowl appearances and put the Vikings' franchise on a level of success that it has not seen since. It was no surprise when the Vikings built the new facility that they awarded Grant his own office, despite him not having coached the Vikings in over 30 years. If the Vikings ever decide to build statues of all the Vikings' greats outside US Bank Stadium, Bud Grant will be the first statue built. His wisdom and leadership will be missed.

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## Sunshine on Government in South Dakota requires work

By David Bordewyk

This week is Sunshine Week – a national observance of the importance of open government and the public's right to know.

As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said more than a century ago: "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants." It is a proverb often cited by journalists and others when making a case for why transparency in government is important.

Transparency about the workings of government proves effective in preventing corruption and misuse or abuse of tax dollars.

In South Dakota, that sunlight on government often comes in three forms: open meetings, open records and public notices.

Open meetings refer to the state laws that guide public boards such as school boards and city councils on when and how to promote and conduct their meetings in public.

Open records refer to the laws that dictate on how government officials make available upon request to the public information kept in file cabinets, computer drives and in cyberspace.

Public notices refer to the laws about what government – especially local governments – must publish in a local newspaper. Items such as meeting minutes, bid notices and proposed budgets.

However, this three-legged stool for open government – open meetings, open records and public notices – is not without its weaknesses and faults, especially when it comes to open meetings and open records laws.

The open meetings laws include provisions for when a public board may meet behind closed doors to discuss certain topics such as the conduct or performance of an employee or an ongoing lawsuit involving the public entity. Sometimes, the use of executive session by public boards is abused, either unwittingly or knowingly.

The open records laws include a laundry list of exceptions for when public officials may deny someone's request for information held by government. My experience has been government officials readily pick and choose from that laundry list of exceptions if they are not interested in complying with someone's request for government information.

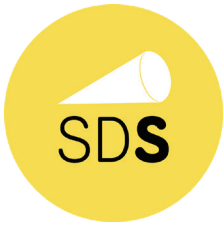
To be fair, there are legitimate reasons why government officials should discuss certain topics behind closed doors or not release certain government records. Allowing a school board to meet in executive session to discuss its negotiating strategy for purchasing land for a new school building can serve to protect taxpayers from paying too much for the land. Personally identifiable information such as Social Security numbers and credit card information absolutely must be protected from public view when kept by government.

Still, the weaknesses in our current open government laws cannot be overlooked. Executive sessions provisions in the open meetings laws are vague and ripe for abuse. The exceptions in the open records laws are too plentiful and too expansive.

Work is needed to better educate public officials about these laws and to improve them through legislation – all easier said than done. Over the years we have seen improvements in our open government laws, but much more work is needed. We need more advocates and champions for open government in elected office, both locally and at the state level. We need you to be involved as well.

Why? Because the sunshine Louis Brandeis was talking about does not come naturally.

*David Bordewyk is executive director for the South Dakota Newspaper Association, which represents the state's weekly and daily newspapers.*



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **COMMENTARY**

## **Where the sun doesn't shine in local government**

### **'Executive sessions' threaten the public's right to know**

**Dana Hess**

Across the country, March 12 through March 18 is Sunshine Week, a time for shedding a light on open government. In South Dakota, the sun doesn't shine through too clearly. Here it's, at best, partly cloudy.

Sunshine Week was started in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors. According to its website, the purpose of Sunshine week is to "promote open government and shine light into the dark recesses of government secrecy."

That bit about "government secrecy" might conjure a picture of smoke-filled rooms where federal deals are cut. There's plenty of government secrecy to go around, however, at your city government building or county courthouse.

It's fitting that it was a group of news editors that created Sunshine Week, since it's usually reporters who make the most noise about being cut out of government information. Often that noise comes from local government meetings like the city council, the school board and the county commission where reporters may think that local elected officials are playing fast and loose with the laws governing executive session.

To measure the openness of a local government board or commission, check a few month's worth of its agendas. At the end of the agenda is the place where most boards schedule their executive session. If those agendas don't have any or just a few executive sessions, that board is doing the people's business in public. Boards that habitually schedule an executive session — a more fitting term would be "secret" or "closed" session — are likely conducting some of the people's business behind closed doors.

The South Dakota law on executive sessions, one of the flimsiest in the country, says that local government boards and commissions can go into closed session for consulting with a lawyer, discussing personnel matters and contract negotiations. School boards may discuss student discipline in a closed session. There are also recently added public safety provisions for closed sessions.

A violation of the executive session law is a Class 2 misdemeanor. No one in this state has ever been prosecuted for misusing executive session. There is no honor among thieves and, likewise, no appetite among elected officials to prosecute each other. If a county commission misuses executive session, it would be incumbent on the state's attorney, who works with that commission regularly, to prosecute the case. That's never happened here.

The best we can do in South Dakota is a panel of state's attorneys who handle allegations of mismanagement of executive sessions. They decide if a violation has been made and the best that can happen from that decision is that the elected officials may feel ashamed. There are no charges filed, only an acknowledgment by the panel of state's attorneys that mistakes were made. The offending officials don't even have to say they're sorry or take a timeout.

The vast majority of school boards, city councils and county commissions are likely playing by the rules and using executive session in the right way. Of course, that's just an educated guess, because there is no way to know once the door closes. They may be, as they claim, consulting with their attorney about pending litigation. Or they may be handing out contracts to relatives or comparing their kickbacks. We just don't know.

The solution for this is to have executive sessions recorded. Local governments could keep an archive of the recordings and, when a board's use of executive session is questioned, the recording could be played

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for a judge who would rule on the legality of the meeting.

This solution has been proposed before, to the howls of local government lobbyists who said it was too expensive or too onerous or too difficult for small town officials who might not be all that technically savvy. Many local governments already broadcast their meetings, and the pandemic made many of them familiar with Zoom. In this day and age, keeping a file of recorded executive sessions should not be a problem, even for the most technically challenged of our elected officials.

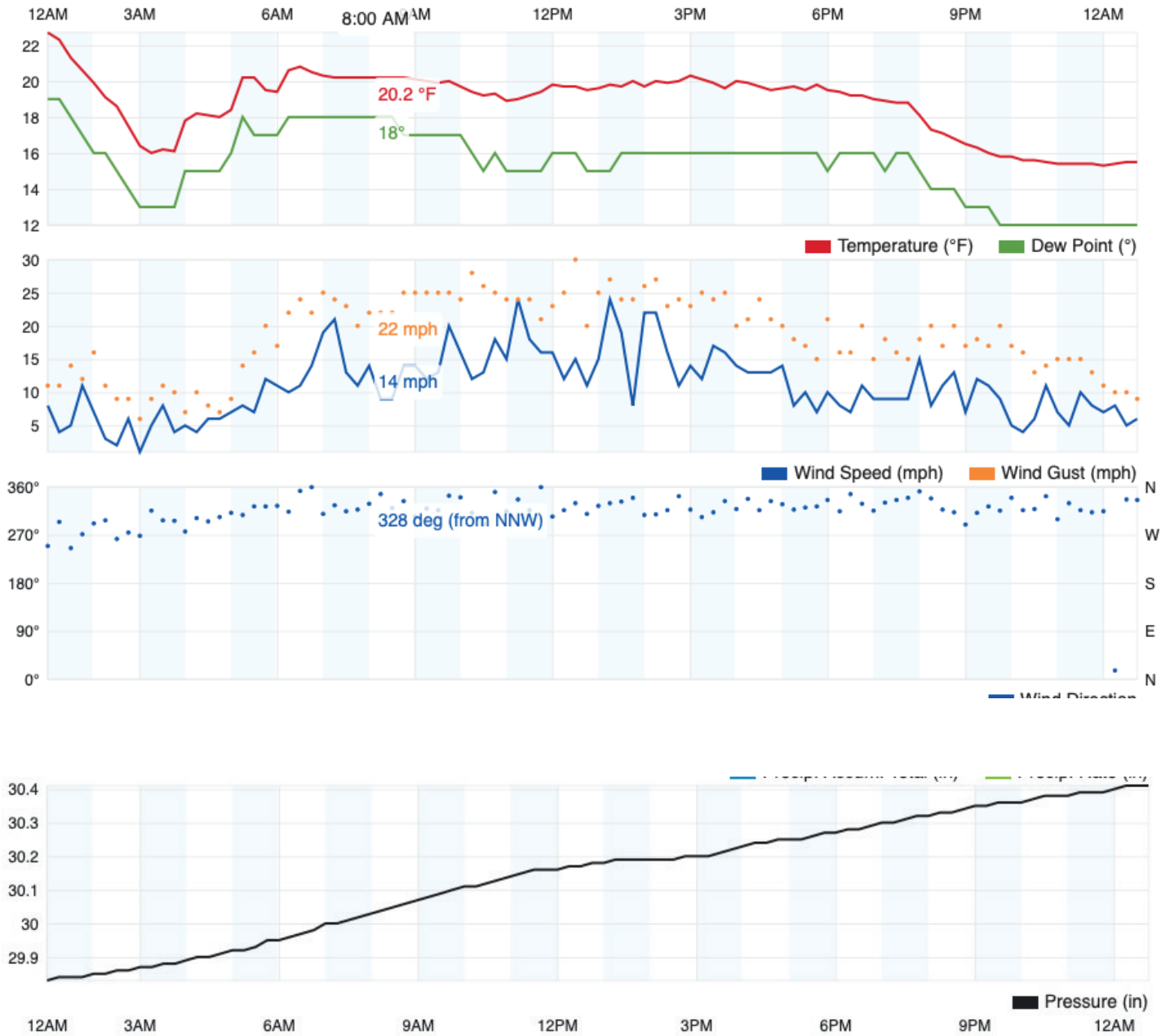
In South Dakota, it's too easy for elected officials to close the door on the public, it's nearly impossible to find out what they did in that meeting, and there's no chance that violators will face any sort of consequences. Executive sessions are one place the sun doesn't shine.

*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.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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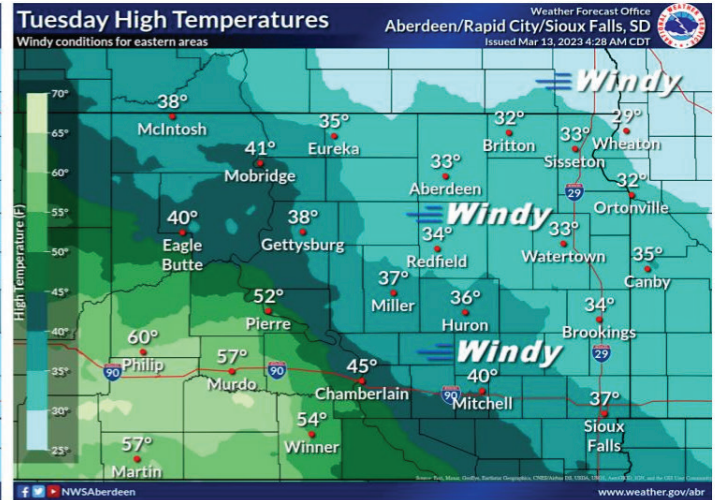
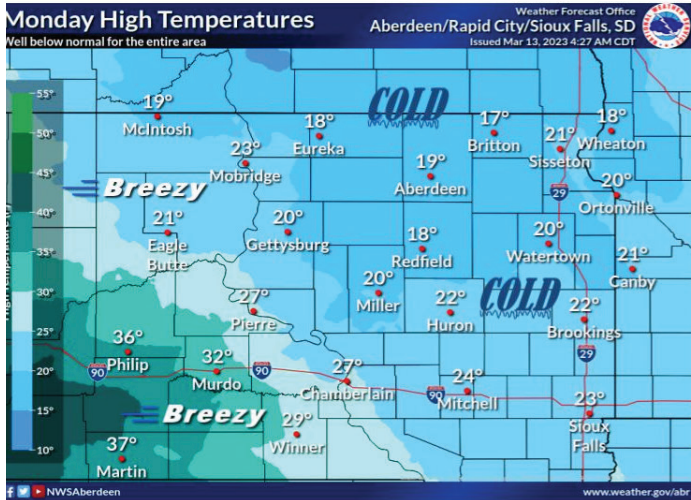
Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Chance Flurries	Mostly Cloudy	Patchy Blowing Snow and Breezy	Patchy Blowing Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Wintry Mix and Blustery	Chance Snow and Blustery
High: 19 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 27 °F



## Staying Cold Today, But Warming on Tuesday

March 13, 2023  
4:48 AM

- Light winds for eastern areas today.
- Remaining cold, with well below normal temperatures.
- Warming trend for Tuesday, but also becoming windy across the east.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Surface high pressure over the region today will keep cold temperatures in place, along with light winds for eastern portions of the area. Warmer air will enter the picture for Tuesday and Wednesday, although gusty south winds will develop for eastern areas on Tuesday.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 23 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 15 °F at 11:17 PM

Wind: 30 mph at 12:28 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 49 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 71 in 2012

Record Low: -28 in 1896

Average High: 40

Average Low: 18

Average Precip in March.: 0.32

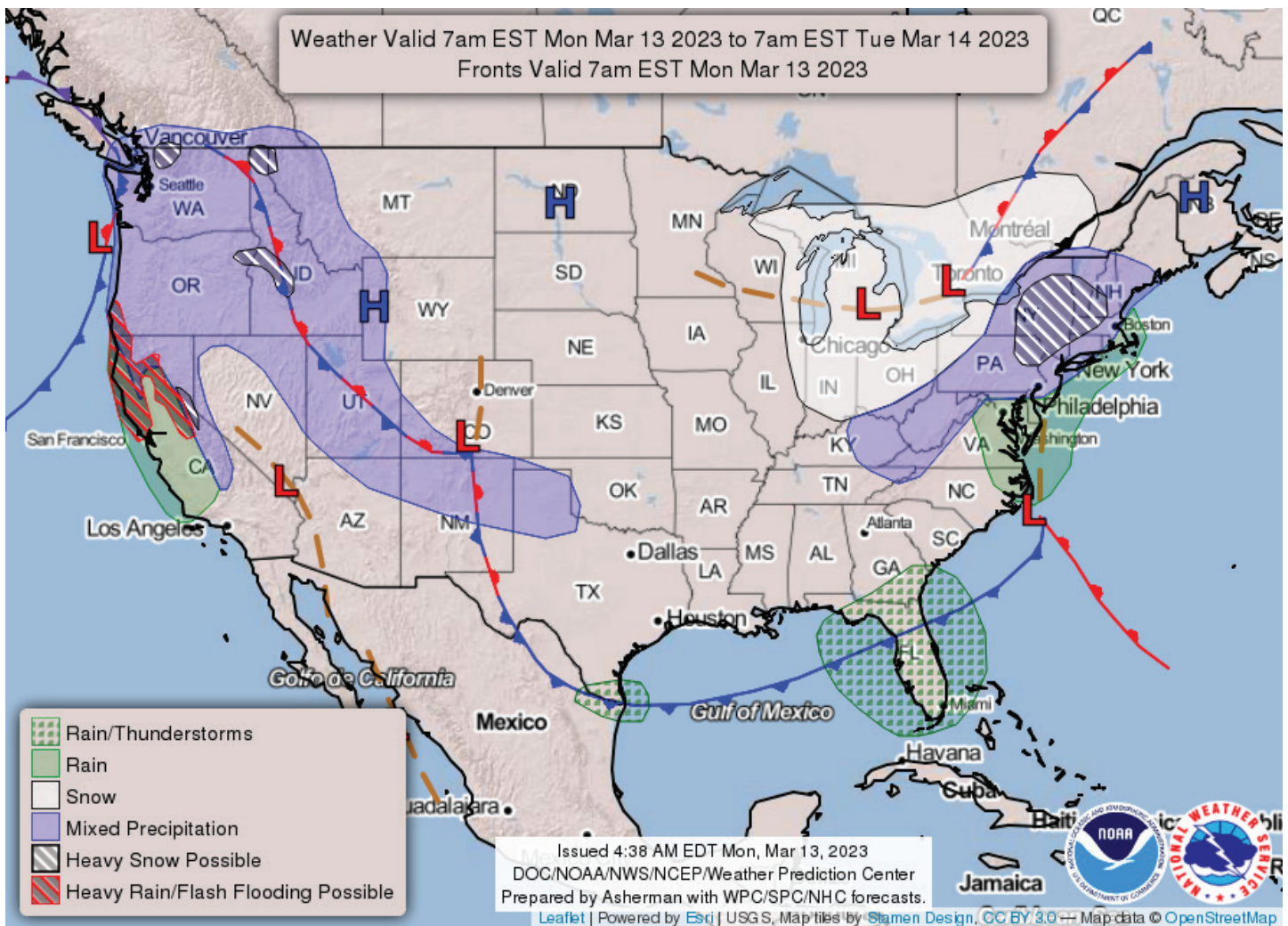
Precip to date in March.: 1.20

Average Precip to date: 1.49

Precip Year to Date: 2.78

Sunset Tonight: 7:36:43 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45:06 AM



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## Today in Weather History

March 13, 1971: During an evening thunderstorm in Moody County, South Dakota, lightning destroyed a transformer plant in Coleman. Damages were estimated at \$250,000.

March 13, 1997: A winter storm began with widespread freezing drizzle, creating icy roadways and walkways, before changing over to snow. Before the snow was over, 2 to 8 inches had fallen on an already expansive and deep snowpack. The winds accelerated to 20 to 40 mph, resulting in widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Many roads again became blocked by snowdrifts, and several were closed. Many area schools were still closed, adding to an already substantial total of days missed for the winter season. Some people were stranded and had to wait out the storm. Some airport flights were canceled. The icy roads and low visibilities resulted in several vehicle mishaps as well. There was a rollover accident west of Mobridge and an overturned van 7 miles west of Webster. On Interstate-29, there were several rollover accidents, including vehicles sliding off of the road. Some snowfall amounts included, 4 inches at Timber Lake, Mobridge, Eureka, Leola, Britton, and Clark, 5 inches at Leola, 6 inches at Waubay and Summit, and 8 inches at Pollock.

1907 - A storm produced a record 5.22 inches of rain in 24 hours at Cincinnati, OH. (12th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1951 - The state of Iowa experienced a record snowstorm. The storm buried Iowa City under 27 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1953: An F4 tornado cut an 18-mile path through Haskell and Knox counties in Texas. 17 people were killed, and an eight-block area of Knox City was leveled.

1977 - Baltimore, MD, received an inch of rain in eight minutes. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada Range of California, and the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada. Mount Rose NV received 18 inches of new snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed from the Plateau Region to the Appalachians. Chadron NE, recently buried 33 inches of snow, was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 19 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Residents of the southern U.S. viewed a once in a life-time display of the Northern Lights. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the southwestern U.S. The record high of 88 degrees at Tucson AZ was their seventh in a row. In southwest Texas, the temperature at Sanderson soared from 46 degrees at 8 AM to 90 degrees at 11 AM. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northwest Texas to Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska during the day, and into the night. Severe thunderstorms spawned 59 tornadoes, including twenty-six strong or violent tornadoes, and there were about two hundred reports of large hail or damaging winds. There were forty-eight tornadoes in Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, and some of the tornadoes in those three states were the strongest of record for so early in the season, and for so far northwest in the United States. The most powerful tornado of the day was one which tore through the central Kansas community of Hesston. The tornado killed two persons, injured sixty others, and caused 22 million dollars along its 67-mile path. The tornado had a life span of two hours. Another tornado tracked 124 miles across southeastern Nebraska injuring eight persons and causing more than five million dollars damage



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### UNSEEN POWER

A snowflake is a remarkable object in size and shape. Sometimes they appear as though they are floating through space. Other times they arrive in force and fury. Occasionally they fall on an eyelash and can be seen but not felt. They are weightless wonders until they are massed together. Then, they can provide a beautiful country scene or bring a city to a complete halt. Snowflakes give us a unique picture of the strength and power of numbers. What a lesson for the church!

From the very beginning God has intended for His followers to come together for strength and service, power and productivity. We find throughout Scripture that a community of believers can accomplish much more than an individual acting on his own behalf. God established the church and empowered it with the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel and provide healing and hope, energy and encouragement, to its members.

When a Christian feels lonely or deserted, afraid or abandoned, overwhelmed or overpowered, the church is to be a refuge for healing hearts and holding hands. God wants the church to provide protection and peace to all who seek His love, grace and mercy. Within the church, believers can link their lives together to offer protection from sin and work together as God's witness to the world.

Prayer: Lord, may Your church, even if only two or three are gathered in Your name, be faithful to fulfill Your purpose as they worship, work and witness together. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.10.23

9 20 59 60 63 5

MegaPlier: 2x

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 53  
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.11.23

33 39 41 45 48 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$39,630,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 53 Mins 7  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.12.23

9 27 32 37 43 1

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 23 Mins 6  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.11.23

6 15 17 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$88,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 53  
DRAW: Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.11.23

7 16 22 36 58 5

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins 6  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.11.23

11 20 33 43 58 24

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$52,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins 7  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Iran judiciary head: 22,000 arrested in protests pardoned**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The head of Iran's judiciary says 22,000 people arrested in the recent protests that swept the Islamic Republic have been pardoned.

The state-run IRNA news agency quoted Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejehi on Monday as announcing the figure. The Associated Press could not independently verify the statement.

State media previously suggested Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei could pardon that many swept up in the demonstrations ahead of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan.

The protests began in September over the death of a 22-year-old woman named Mahsa Amini after she was detained by the country's morality police.

### **Iran-Saudi Arabia deal casts China in unfamiliar global role**

BEIJING (AP) — An agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to re-establish diplomatic relations has cast China in a leading role in Middle Eastern politics — a part previously reserved for longtime global heavyweights like the U.S. and Russia. It's another sign that China's diplomatic clout is growing to match its economic footprint.

Under strongman leader Xi Jinping, Chinese diplomacy has become known for angry outbursts against the West, threats against Taiwan, aggressive moves in the South China Sea and a refusal to condemn Russia over Ukraine.

The deal reached in Beijing Friday, under which the sides agreed to re-open their embassies and exchange ambassadors after seven years of tensions, shows a different side of Chinese diplomacy. Xi appears to have played a direct part in the talks by hosting Iran's president in Beijing last month. He also visited the Saudi capital Riyadh in December for meetings with oil-rich Gulf Arab nations crucial to China's energy supplies.

The agreement was seen as a major diplomatic triumph for China, coming as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States as winding down its involvement in the Middle East.

"I think it is a sign that China is increasingly confident in taking a more assertive role in the Middle East," said Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, an Indonesian academic affiliated with the Washington-based Middle East Institute.

China's economic interests increasingly draw it into conflicts far from its shores. It's by far the biggest customer for Middle Eastern energy exports, while the U.S. has reduced its need for imports as the country shifts toward energy independence.

Chinese officials have long argued that Beijing should play a more active role in the region, said June Teufel Dreyer, a political scientist at the University of Miami specializing in Chinese politics.

Meanwhile, U.S.-Saudi frictions have created "a vacuum that Beijing was happy to step into," Dreyer said.

China has invested heavily in regional energy infrastructure. It also occasionally contributed naval ships to join anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, though the U.S. Navy has served as the main security guarantor for Mideast waters since the 1980s.

In a statement Saturday, China's Foreign Ministry quoted an unidentified spokesperson as saying Beijing "pursues no selfish interest whatsoever."

"China has no intention to and will not seek to fill so-called vacuum or put up exclusive blocs," it said, in an apparent reference to the U.S.

At the close of the ceremonial legislature's annual session Monday, leader Xi Jinping said China should "actively participate in the reform and construction of the global governance system" and promote "global security initiatives,"

The diplomatic victory comes as Washington has heavily criticized China for failing to condemn Russia's invasion and for accusing the U.S. and NATO of provoking the conflict.

However, many Middle Eastern governments view China as a neutral party, with strong ties to both

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Saudi Arabia, China's largest oil supplier, and Iran, which relies on China for 30% of its foreign trade and in which China has pledged to invest \$400 billion over 25 years. Iran, which has few export markets owing to sanctions over its nuclear program, sells oil to China at a steep discount.

The deal "boosts Beijing's ability to project an image of itself as a constructive actor for peace, which will be helpful for fending off accusations from the West that it is supporting Russia's invasion in Ukraine," said Amanda Hsiao, Taipei-based analyst for the International Crisis Group.

"It demonstrates that China is trying to conduct competition in foreign diplomacy with the U.S., and not only in its immediate neighborhood," said Wang Lian, an international relations professor at Beijing's prestigious Peking University. The successful negotiations show the two countries "placed their trust in China," Wang said.

China created the position of special envoy for the Middle East in 2002, focusing on Israel and the Palestinian Authority. While China sells drones and other weaponry to countries in the region, it does so nowhere on the scale of the United States and without political conditions.

Earlier, China moved aggressively to build ties in the South Pacific, signing a security agreement with the Solomon Islands that could see Chinese naval ships and security forces taking up a presence in the country. The U.S., Australia and others moved swiftly to shore up ties in the Pacific, and China's efforts to ink similar agreements with other island nations ultimately foundered.

Having secured a norm-breaking third five-year term in office, Xi appears more confrontational than ever toward the West, with his foreign minister warning just days earlier of future "conflict and confrontation" with the U.S.

However, that strain of tough-talking "wolf warrior" diplomacy is mainly reserved for developed nations seen as rivals, while China has been "admirably diplomatic" with others, said Miami's Dreyer. Having largely written off the democratic West, China has been willing to build close ties with authoritarian regimes from North Korea to Nicaragua.

Though China is active in U.N. peacekeeping operations, Beijing's previous efforts at third-party mediation have sagged under the weight of its political baggage. A recent Chinese proposal calling for a cease-fire and peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine went nowhere.

It's too soon to say whether the agreement will bring lasting improvements between the two longtime adversaries, much less greater Middle Eastern stability. None of their fundamental conflicts appear to have been discussed.

But for Saudi Arabia, the agreement may facilitate its quest for an off-ramp from its proxy war against Iran-backed Houthis rebels in Yemen. And for Iran, it could contribute to greater regional stability at a time of mounting domestic problems.

Not everyone happy about the agreement.

Under political pressure at home, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened military action against Iran's nuclear program as it enriches closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Riyadh seeking an accommodation with Tehran takes one potential ally for a strike off the table.

It was unclear what this development meant for Washington, whose Middle East presence has waned since the end of its withdrawal from Iraq and amid its growing energy independence.

However, the White House bristled at the notion that a Saudi-Iran agreement in Beijing suggests that Chinese influence could replace the U.S. in the Mideast. "I would stridently push back on this idea that we're stepping back in the Middle East — far from it," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

The fact that Saudi Arabia struck the agreement without Washington shows they are "seeking to diversify their bets on security and not rely wholly on the United States," Jon Alterman of the Center for Strategic & International Studies, wrote in a note on the deal.

"The U.S. government is of two minds on that; it wants the Saudis to take increasing responsibility for their own security, but it does not want Saudi Arabia freelancing and undermining U.S. security strategies," Alterman wrote.

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## US, UK try to stem fallout from Silicon Valley Bank collapse

By KEN SWEET, CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, CHRIS MEGERIAN and CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press NEW YORK (AP) — Governments in the UK and U.S. took extraordinary steps to stop a potential banking crisis after the historic failure of Silicon Valley Bank, even as another major bank was shut down.

The UK Treasury and the Bank of England announced early Monday that they had facilitated the sale of Silicon Valley Bank UK to HSBC, Europe's biggest bank, ensuring the security of 6.7 billion pounds (\$8.1 billion) of deposits.

British officials worked throughout the weekend to find a buyer for the UK subsidiary of the California-based bank. Its collapse was the second-largest bank failure in history.

U.S. regulators also worked all weekend to try to find a buyer. Those efforts appeared to have failed Sunday, but U.S. officials assured all depositors that they could access all their money quickly.

The announcement came amid fears that the factors that caused the Santa Clara, California-based bank to fail could spread.

In a sign of how fast the financial bleeding was occurring, regulators announced that New York-based Signature Bank had also failed and was being seized on Sunday. At more than \$110 billion in assets, Signature Bank is the third-largest bank failure in U.S. history.

The near-financial crisis left Asian markets jittery as trading began Monday. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 sank 1.6% in morning trading, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.3% and South Korea's Kospi shed 0.4%. But Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.4% and the Shanghai Composite increased 0.3%.

In an effort to shore up confidence in the banking system, the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve and FDIC said Sunday that all Silicon Valley Bank clients would be protected and able to access their money. They also announced steps that are intended to protect the bank's customers and prevent additional bank runs.

"This step will ensure that the U.S. banking system continues to perform its vital roles of protecting deposits and providing access to credit to households and businesses in a manner that promotes strong and sustainable economic growth," the agencies said in a joint statement.

Under the plan, depositors at Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, including those whose holdings exceed the \$250,000 insurance limit, will be able to access their money on Monday.

Also Sunday, another beleaguered bank, First Republic Bank, announced that it had bolstered its financial health by gaining access to funding from the Fed and JPMorgan Chase.

In a separate announcement, the Fed late Sunday announced an expansive emergency lending program that's intended to prevent a wave of bank runs that would threaten the stability of the banking system and the economy as a whole. Fed officials characterized the program as akin to what central banks have done for decades: Lend freely to the banking system so that customers would be confident that they could access their accounts whenever needed.

The lending facility will allow banks that need to raise cash to pay depositors to borrow that money from the Fed, rather than having to sell Treasuries and other securities to raise the money. Silicon Valley Bank had been forced to dump some of its Treasuries at a loss to fund its customers' withdrawals. Under the Fed's new program, banks can post those securities as collateral and borrow from the emergency facility.

The Treasury has set aside \$25 billion to offset any losses incurred under the Fed's emergency lending facility. Fed officials said, however, that they do not expect to have to use any of that money, given that the securities posted as collateral have a very low risk of default.

Analysts said the Fed's program should be enough to calm financial markets.

"Monday will surely be a stressful day for many in the regional banking sector, but today's action dramatically reduces the risk of further contagion," economists at Jefferies, an investment bank, said in a research note.

Though Sunday's steps marked the most extensive government intervention in the banking system since the 2008 financial crisis, its actions are relatively limited compared with what was done 15 years ago. The two failed banks themselves have not been rescued, and taxpayer money has not been provided to the

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banks.

President Joe Biden said Sunday evening as he boarded Air Force One back to Washington that he would speak about the bank situation on Monday. In a statement, Biden also said he was "firmly committed to holding those responsible for this mess fully accountable and to continuing our efforts to strengthen oversight and regulation of larger banks so that we are not in this position again."

Regulators had to rush to close Silicon Valley Bank, a financial institution with more than \$200 billion in assets, on Friday when it experienced a traditional run on the bank where depositors rushed to withdraw their funds all at once. It is the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history, behind only the 2008 failure of Washington Mutual.

Some prominent Silicon Valley executives feared that if Washington didn't rescue the failed bank, customers would make runs on other financial institutions in the coming days. Stock prices plunged over the last few days at other banks that cater to technology companies, including First Republic Bank and PacWest Bank.

Among the bank's customers are a range of companies from California's wine industry, where many wineries rely on Silicon Valley Bank for loans, and technology startups devoted to combating climate change. Sunrun, which sells and leases solar energy systems, had less than \$80 million of cash deposits with Silicon Valley. Stitchfix, the clothing retail website, disclosed recently that it had a credit line of up to \$100 million with Silicon Valley Bank and other lenders.

Tiffany Dufu, founder and CEO of The Cru, a New York-based career coaching platform and community for women, posted a video Sunday on LinkedIn from an airport bathroom, saying the bank crisis was testing her resiliency. Given that her money was tied up at Silicon Valley Bank, she had to pay her employees out of her personal bank account. With two teenagers to support who will be heading to college, she said she was relieved to hear that the government's intent is to make depositors whole.

"Small businesses and early-stage startups don't have a lot of access to leverage in a situation like this, and we're often in a very vulnerable position, particularly when we have to fight so hard to get the wires into your bank account to begin with, particularly for me, as a Black female founder," Dufu told The Associated Press.

Silicon Valley Bank began its slide into insolvency when its customers, largely technology companies that needed cash as they struggled to get financing, started withdrawing their deposits. The bank had to sell bonds at a loss to cover the withdrawals, leading to the largest failure of a U.S. financial institution since the height of the financial crisis.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen pointed to rising interest rates, which have been increased by the Federal Reserve to combat inflation, as the core problem for Silicon Valley Bank. Many of its assets, such as bonds or mortgage-backed securities, lost market value as rates climbed.

Sheila Bair, who was chairwoman of the FDIC during the 2008 financial crisis, recalled that with nearly all the bank failures then, "we sold a failed bank to a healthy bank. And usually, the healthy acquirer would also cover the uninsured because they wanted the franchise value of those large depositors so optimally, that's the best outcome."

But with Silicon Valley Bank, she told NBC's "Meet the Press," "this was a liquidity failure, it was a bank run, so they didn't have time to prepare to market the bank. So they're having to do that now, and playing catch-up."

## US government ponders the meaning of race and ethnicity

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Nyhiem Way is weary of people conflating African American and Black. Shalini Parekh wants a way for South Asian people to identify themselves differently than East Asians with roots in places like China or Japan. And Byron Haskins wants the U.S. to toss racial and ethnic labels altogether.

"When you set up categories that are used to place people in boxes, sometime you miss the truth of them," said Haskins, who describes himself as African American.



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Way, Parekh and Haskins' voices are among more than 4,300 comments pending before the Biden administration as it contemplates updating the nation's racial and ethnic categories for the first time since 1997. There's a lot to consider.

Some Black Americans want their ancestors' enslavement recognized in how they are identified. Some Jewish people believe their identity should be seen as its own ethnic category and not only a religion. The idea of revising categories for ethnic and racial identities, both in the census and in gathering demographic information between head counts, have fueled editorials and think-tank essays as well as thousands of written comments by individuals in what is almost a Rorschach test for how Americans identify themselves.

The White House's Office of Management and Budget is set to decide on new classifications next year and is hosting three virtual town halls on the subject this week.

Some conservatives question the process itself, saying the overarching premise that Americans need more ethnic categories will only accelerate Balkanization.

"By creating and deepening sub-national identities, the government further contributes to the decline of one national American identity," wrote Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation, in his personal comment posted on the OMB web page seeking public input.

That view contrasts sharply with those who say previous categories have overlooked nuances.

"This is certainly a singular moment and opportunity to greatly improve and enhance the accuracy and completeness of the data," Mario Beovides, director of policy and legislative affairs for the NALEO Educational Fund, said during a recent forum.

The proposed changes would create a new category for people of Middle Eastern and North African descent, also known by the acronym MENA, who are now classified as white but say they have been routinely undercounted.

The process also would combine the race and ethnic origin questions into a single query, because some advocates say the current method of asking about race and separately about ethnic origin often confuses Hispanic respondents. With the revisions, the government would try to get more detailed answers on race and ethnicity by asking about country of origin.

Another proposal recommends striking from federal government forms the words "Negro" and "Far East," now widely regarded as pejorative. The terms "majority" and "minority" would also be dropped because some officials say they fail to reflect the nation's complex racial and ethnic diversity.

Several Black Americans, like Way, whose ancestors were enslaved, said in public comments to the OMB that they would like to be identified in a category such as American Freedmen, Foundational Black Americans or American Descendants of Slavery to distinguish themselves from Black immigrants, or even white individuals born in Africa, as well as reflecting their ancestors' history in the U.S.

Way also recommended substituting the word "population group" for "race."

Conflating "African American" with "Black" has "blurred what it means to be an African American in this country," Way, who works for a pharmaceutical company in Athens, Georgia, said in a telephone interview.

Haskins, a retired government worker from Lansing, Michigan, suggested eliminating race categories like "white" and "Black" since they perpetuate "deeply rooted unjust socio-political constructs."

Instead, he said people should be able to self-identify as they wish. When his sociologist daughter points out the difficulty of aggregating such data into something useful to address inequalities in housing or voting, or tailoring health or education programs to the needs of communities, he tells her, "Go crazy at it. That's what you're being paid for."

"You need to search for the truth and not just stay with the old categories because someone decided, 'That is what we decided,'" Haskins said.

Parekh is asking the government to distinguish South Asians from East Asians.

"When these groups are assessed together, one loses a lot of important granularity that can help differentiate issues that are specific to one group and not another," Parekh said.

The MENA community appears to be having a related problem, based on several comments to OMB. Without its own category, the group's political power is diluted. People could benefit from cohesive rep-

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resentation, especially if identities were taken into account in drawing political districts, advocates said. It comes down to something even more personal for Houda Meroueh, who described herself to the Biden administration as a 73-year-old Arab American woman.

"When I go to the doctor's office I do not feel they have the information necessary to understand my medical history or my culture," she said. "For all these reasons I want to be counted as who I am. Not as white."

Jordan Steiner said ethnic categories should be expanded to include not only MENA, but other groups like Jews who often regard themselves not only as members of a religious group but an ethnic one too.

Jessica Aksoy commended the proposals to expand the categories, saying she often felt limited about which boxes to check as someone of Turkish, European and Jewish heritage.

"Recognizing our differences is honoring and celebrating the rich melting pot of America," Aksoy said. "The face of America is changing, and this initiative is for progress in recognizing that." \_\_\_\_\_

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP

## 8 dead after smuggling boats capsize off San Diego coast

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and GREGORY BULL Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — At least eight people were killed when two migrant smuggling boats capsized in shallow but treacherous surf amid heavy fog, authorities said Sunday, marking one of the deadliest maritime human smuggling operations ever off of U.S. shores.

A Spanish-speaking woman on one of the panga-style boats called 911 Saturday night to report the other vessel overturned in waves at Black's Beach, authorities said. She said there were 15 people on the capsized vessel and eight on hers.

Coast Guard and San Diego Fire-Rescue crews pulled bodies of eight adults from the water, but fog hampered the search for additional victims.

Recovery efforts resumed Sunday but no additional bodies were found. The Coast Guard announced on Twitter that the search was suspended at 3:30 p.m.

Survivors may have escaped on land, including the woman who called 911. Authorities did not know her whereabouts.

San Diego Lifeguard Chief James Gartland said rescuers found the two boats overturned in shallow waters when they arrived. Surf was modest, with swells around 3 feet (1 meter), but skies were foggy and black.

"That area is very hazardous, even in the daytime," Gartland said at a news conference. "It has a series of sandbars and in-shore rip currents, so you can think that you can land in some sand or get to waist-high, knee-high water and think that you're able to be safe to exit the water, but there's long, in-shore holes. If you step into those holes, those rip currents will pull you along the shore and back out to sea."

Black's Beach is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) north of downtown San Diego in a secluded area not far from the popular La Jolla Shores. Its reputation for some of the best breaks in Southern California draws many surfers.

Hundreds of maritime smuggling operations occur every year off California's coast and sometimes turn fatal. In May 2021, a packed boat carrying migrants capsized and broke apart in powerful surf along the rocky San Diego coast, killing three people and injuring more than two dozen others.

Smuggling off the California coast has ebbed and flowed over the years but has long been a risky alternative for migrants to avoid heavily guarded land borders. Pangas enter from Mexico in the dead of night, sometimes charting hundreds of miles north. Recreational boats try to mix in unnoticed with fishing and pleasure vessels during the day.

South of the U.S. border, there are many secluded, private beaches with gated entrances between high-rises with magnificent ocean views, some only partially built because funds dried up during construction. Poptla, a fishing hamlet where narrow streets are lined with vendors selling a wide variety of local catch, is favored among smugglers for its large, sandy beach and relatively gentle waves.

At least some of Saturday's victims were Mexican, according to the consulate in San Diego, but how

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many was unknown. Illegal crossings have soared under President Joe Biden, with many migrants turning themselves in to Border Patrol agents and being released in the United States to pursue their cases in immigration court.

A pandemic rule scheduled to end May 11 denies migrants a chance to seek asylum on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19 but enforcement has fallen disproportionately on Mexicans, Hondurans, Guatemalans and El Salvadorans because those have been the only nationalities that Mexico agreed to take back.

As a result, people of those four countries have been more likely to try to elude capture, knowing they are likely to be expelled under the public health rule, known as Title 42 authority. Mexico recently began taking back Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans under Title 42.

## Japan's Kenzaburo Oe, awarded Nobel for poetic fiction, dies

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe, whose darkly poetic novels were built from his childhood memories during Japan's postwar occupation and from being the parent of a disabled son, has died. He was 88.

Oe, who was also an outspoken anti-nuclear and peace activist, died on March 3, his publisher, Kodansha Ltd., said in a statement Monday. The publisher did not give further details about his death and said his funeral was held by his family.

Oe in 1994 became the second Japanese author awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.

The Swedish Academy cited the author for his works of fiction, in which "poetic force creates an imagined world where life and myth condense to form a disconcerting picture of the human predicament today."

His most searing works were influenced by the birth of Oe's mentally disabled son in 1963.

"A Personal Matter," published a year later, is the story of a father coming to terms through darkness and pain with the birth of a brain-damaged son. Several of his later works have a damaged or deformed child with symbolic significance, with the stories and characters evolving and maturing as Oe's son aged.

Hikari Oe had a cranial deformity at birth that caused mental disability. He has a limited ability to speak and read but has become a musical composer whose works have been performed and recorded on albums.

The only other Japanese to win a Nobel in literature was Yasunari Kawabata in 1968.

Despite the outpouring of national pride over Oe's win, his principal literary themes evoke deep unease here. A boy of 10 when World War II ended, Oe came of age during the American occupation.

"The humiliation took a firm grip on him and has colored much of his work. He himself describes his writing as a way of exorcising demons," the Swedish Academy said.

Childhood wartime memories strongly colored the story that marked Oe's literary debut, "The Catch," about a rural boy's experiences with an American pilot shot down over his village. Published in 1958, when Oe was still a university student, the story won Japan's prestigious Akutagawa prize for new writers.

He also wrote nonfiction books about Hiroshima's devastation and rise from the Aug. 6, 1945, U.S. atomic bombing, as well as about Okinawa and its postwar U.S. occupation.

Oe has campaigned for peace and anti-nuclear causes, particularly since the 2011 Fukushima crisis, and has often appeared in rallies.

In 2015, Oe criticized Japan's decision to restart nuclear reactors in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami-triggered meltdown at the Fukushima plant, calling it a risk that could lead to another disaster. He urged then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to follow Germany's example and phase out atomic energy.

"Japanese politicians are not trying to change the situation but only keeping the status quo even after this massive nuclear accident, and even if we all know that yet another accident would simply wipe out Japan's future," Oe said.

Oe, who was 80 then, said his life's final work is to strive for a nuclear-free world: "We must not leave the problem of nuclear plants for the younger generation."

The third of seven children, Oe was born on Jan. 31, 1935, in a village on Japan's southern island of

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Shikoku. At the University of Tokyo, he studied French literature and began writing plays.

The academy noted that Oe's work has been strongly influenced by Western writers, including Dante, Poe, Rabelais, Balzac, Eliot and Sartre.

But even with those influences, Oe brought an Asian sensibility to bear.

In 2021, thousands of pages of his handwritten manuscripts and other works were sent to be archived at the University of Tokyo.

## Russia's economy holds up, but growing challenges test Putin

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

Western sanctions have hit Russian banks, wealthy individuals and technology imports. But after a year of far-reaching restrictions aimed at degrading Moscow's war chest, economic life for ordinary Russians doesn't look all that different than it did before the invasion of Ukraine.

There's no mass unemployment, no plunging currency, no lines in front of failing banks. The assortment at the supermarket is little changed, with international brands still available or local substitutes taking their place.

Crowds might have thinned at some Moscow malls, but not drastically. Some foreign companies like McDonald's and Starbucks have been taken over by local owners who slapped different names on essentially the same menu.

"Economically, nothing has changed," said Vladimir Zharov, 53, who works in television. "I work as I used to work, I go shopping as I used to. Well, maybe the prices have risen a little bit, but not in such a way that it is very noticeable."

Russia's economy has weathered the West's unprecedented economic sanctions far better than expected. But with restrictions finally tightening on the Kremlin's chief moneymaker — oil — the months ahead will be an even tougher test of President Vladimir Putin's fortress economy.

Economists say sanctions on Russian fossil fuels only now taking full effect — such as a price cap on oil — should eat into earnings that fund the military's attacks on Ukraine. Some analysts predict signs of trouble — strained government finances or a sinking currency — could emerge in the coming months.

But other economists say the Kremlin has significant reserves of money that haven't been hit by sanctions, while links to new trade partners in Asia have quickly taken shape. They say Russia isn't likely to run out of money this year but instead will face a slow slide into years of economic stagnation.

"It will have enough money under any kind of reasonable scenario," Chris Weafer, CEO and Russian economy analyst at the consulting firm Macro-Advisory, said in a recent online discussion held by bne IntelliNews.

Russia will keep bringing in oil income, even at lower prices, so "there is no pressure on the Kremlin today to end this conflict because of economic pressures," he said.

As the economy teeters between sanctions and resilience, what everyday Russians can buy has stayed remarkably the same.

Apple has stopped selling products in Russia, but Wildberries, the country's biggest online retailer, offers the iPhone 14 for about the same price as in Europe. Online retailer Svaznoy lists Apple AirPods Pro.

Furniture and home goods remaining after IKEA exited Russia are being sold off on the Yandex website. Nespresso coffee capsules have run short after Swiss-based Nestle stopped shipping them, but knockoffs are available.

Labels on cans of Budweiser and Leffe beer on sale in Moscow indicate they were brewed by ABInBev's local partner — even though the company wrote off a stake in its Russian joint venture and put it up for sale. Coke bottled in Poland is still available; local "colas," too.

ABInBev says it's no longer getting money from the venture and that Leffe production has been halted. Wildberries and Svaznoy didn't answer emails asking about their sourcing.

But it's clear goods are skirting sanctions through imports from third countries that aren't penalizing Russia. For example, Armenia's exports to Russia jumped 49% in the first half of 2022. Chinese smartphones

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and vehicles are increasingly available.

The auto industry is facing bigger hurdles to adapt. Western automakers, including Renault, Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, have halted production, with sales plunging 63% and local entities taking over some factories and bidding for others.

Foreign cars are still available but far fewer of them and for higher prices, said Andrei Olkhovsky, CEO of Avtodom, which has 36 dealerships in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Krasnodar.

"Shipments of the Porsche brand, as for those of other manufacturers, aren't possible through official channels," he said. "Whatever is on the market is scattered offerings of cars that were imported by individual persons or through friendly countries by official channels."

Unlike European automakers, some corporations are far from bailing.

While 191 foreign companies have left Russia and 1,169 are working to do so, some 1,223 are staying and 496 are taking a wait-and-see approach, according to a database compiled by the Kyiv School of Economics.

Companies are facing public pressure from Kyiv and Washington, but some have found it's not so easy to line up a Russian buyer or say they're selling essentials like food.

Moscow residents, meanwhile, have downplayed the impact of sanctions.

"Maybe it hasn't affected me yet," 63-year-old retiree Alexander Yeryomenko said. "I think that we will endure everything."

Dmitry, a 33-year-old who declined to give his last name, said only clothing brands had changed.

"We have had even worse periods of time in history, and we coped," he said, but added that "we need to develop our own production and not to depend on the import of products."

One big reason for Russia's resilience: record fossil fuel earnings of \$325 billion last year as prices spiked. The surging costs stemmed from fears that the war would mean a severe loss of energy from the world's third-largest oil producer.

That revenue, coupled with a collapse in what Russia could import because of sanctions, pushed the country into a record trade surplus — meaning what Russia earned from sales to other countries far outweighed its purchases abroad.

The boon helped bolster the ruble after a temporary post-invasion crash and provided cash for government spending on pensions, salaries and — above all — the military.

The Kremlin already had taken steps to sanctions-proof the economy after facing some penalties for annexing Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014. Companies began sourcing parts and food at home and the government built up huge piles of cash from selling oil and natural gas. About half of that money has been frozen, however, because it was held overseas.

Those measures helped blunt predictions of a 11% to 15% collapse in economic output. The economy shrank 2.1% last year, Russia's statistics agency said. The International Monetary Fund predicts 0.3% growth this year — not great, but hardly disastrous.

The big change could come from new energy penalties. The Group of Seven major democracies had avoided wide-ranging sanctions against Russian oil for fear of sending energy prices higher and fueling inflation.

The solution was a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil heading to countries like China, India and Turkey, which took effect in December. Then came a similar cap and European embargo on Moscow's diesel fuel and other refined oil products last month.

Estimates differ on how hard those measures will hit. Experts at the Kyiv School of Economics say Russia's economy will face a "turning point" this year as oil and gas revenue falls by 50% and the trade surplus plunges to \$80 billion from \$257 billion last year.

They say it's already happening: Oil tax revenue fell 48% in January from a year earlier, according to the International Energy Agency.

Other economists are skeptical of a breaking point this year.

Moscow could likely weather even a short-term plunge in oil earnings, said Janis Kluge, a Russian economy

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expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Even cutting Russian oil revenue by a third "would be a severe hit to GDP, but it would not bankrupt the state and it would not lead to a crash," he said. "I think from now on, we are talking about gradual changes to the economy."

He said the real impact will be long term. The loss of Western technology such as advanced computer chips means an economy permanently stuck in low gear.

Russia may have successfully restarted factories after the Western exodus, "but the business case for producing something sophisticated in Russia is gone, and it's not coming back," Kluge said.

## 10 iconic moments in Pope Francis' first 10 years as pontiff

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis marks the 10th anniversary of his election as pope on Monday. During that decade, several historic occasions, as well as several unplanned events, helped define the contours and priorities of history's first Latin American pontiff. Visits with refugees in Italy and Greece, trips to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and the coronavirus pandemic and the death of his predecessor are some of the iconic moments that have shaped his papacy and influenced the direction of the Catholic Church at large.

— July 8, 2013: Francis travels to the southern Italian island of Lampedusa for his first pastoral visit outside Rome to denounce the "globalization of indifference" that greets migrants who risk their lives trying to reach Europe. The plight of refugees would go on to become a major concern of his pontificate, including when he returned from Greece in 2016 with 12 Syrian migrants aboard his plane.

July 29, 2013: During his first airborne press conference as pope, Francis is asked about a purportedly gay priest and replies, "Who am I to judge?" His comment while flying home from World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro signaled a more conciliatory, welcoming tone for LGBTQ Catholics who long felt marginalized by the church.

Nov. 29, 2015: Francis starts his yearlong Jubilee of Mercy by opening the holy door of the Bangui cathedral, bringing his message of peace to the conflict-wracked Central African Republic. His emphasis on the church being a merciful "field hospital" of welcome would long outlast the official jubilee year.

Feb. 13, 2016: "We are brothers," Francis says as he becomes the first pope to meet with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill. The historic meeting in Havana, Cuba, wouldn't be repeated, as hoped, following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Feb. 4, 2019: Francis signs a document pledging Christian-Muslim cooperation to work for peace with the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni learning, during the first-ever papal trip to the Arabian Peninsula. The "Human Fraternity" document would go onto become a cornerstone of the pope's effort to forge better relations with the Muslim world.

Oct. 21, 2019: Conservative Catholic activists steal three Amazonian Indigenous statues from a Vatican-area church and throw them in the Tiber River, claiming they were pagan idols. The so-called "Pachamama" stunt during Francis' synod on the Amazon epitomized the depth of conservative opposition to the pope, which only intensified after he launched a crackdown on the use of the old Latin Mass.

Nov. 24, 2019: Standing at the memorial to victims of the U.S. atomic bombing in Hiroshima, Japan, Francis declares that not only the use but the mere possession of nuclear weapons is "immoral." Francis' position modified the Catholic Church's position, which previously held that nuclear deterrence could be morally acceptable in the interim as long as it was used toward mutual, verifiable nuclear disarmament.

March 27, 2020: Francis prays in a hauntingly empty St. Peter's Square for an end to the coronavirus pandemic on the day that Italy recorded the biggest jump in COVID-19 deaths. "We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us now called to row together, each of us in need of comforting each other," he says.

July 26, 2022: On the grounds of a former residential school in Canada, Francis apologizes to Indigenous peoples for the "catastrophic" and "evil" policy of forcibly assimilating Native peoples into Christian soci-

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ety. His Canadian apology tour followed a 2015 mea culpa in Bolivia for the "sins, offenses and crimes" of Europe's colonial-era conquest of the Americas.

Jan. 5, 2023: Francis bids farewell to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, presiding over his funeral in St. Peter's Square and closing out an unprecedented chapter in the history of the 2,000-year-old Catholic Church. Benedict's 2013 resignation paved the way for Francis' election, and the two men lived side-by-side in the Vatican for a decade as a retired and reigning pope.

## Oscar Moments: Moms get special praise on feel-good night

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It was chaotic, messy, wild, creative, big-hearted and utterly unique. If it were a bagel, it would most certainly have been the "everything" kind.

But "Everything Everywhere All At Once" was a movie, not a bagel, and it ruled Sunday's Oscar ceremony, making for one feel-good moment after another — and making history, too, on a huge night for Asians and Asian Americans in Hollywood.

And as for The Slap? Well, this Oscar night felt more like a big hug, its heartwarming speeches a potent antidote to the uneasy memory of last year's Will Smith saga. They kept coming: There was Ke Huy Quan, bounding up the stairs to accept the supporting actor trophy, his teary joy infectious as he referred to his remarkable life story. From the same film there was Jamie Lee Curtis, speaking eloquently about acting as a collaborative endeavor, and the directing duo the Daniels, thanking public school teachers and the family members who nurtured their creativity.

Then there was leading lady Michelle Yeoh, putting an overdue cherry on top of her amazing career as she became the first Asian best actress winner. She spoke of many things, but perhaps most eloquently about mothers, whom she called "superheroes." And on this Oscar night in particular, many winners joined her in thanking their mothers poignantly, none more so than costume designer Ruth E. Carter, who saluted her 101-year-old mother, who she said had just died.

Also thanked, of course, were were children, fathers, husbands and wives. "I am your son, and I love you," Guillermo del Toro, winning for best animated film, said to his late parents. And perhaps the four most heart-rending words of the night came from a wife to a husband: "Stay strong, my love," said Yulia Navalnaya to her imprisoned husband, Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader.

Some of the evening's top moments:

SO, ABOUT LAST YEAR ...

Serving once again as host, Jimmy Kimmel was clearly going to have to bring up The Slap, as it shall forever be known. It took about seven minutes into his monologue before he did — a sarcastic crack about the bizarrely passive reaction last year to the moment Will Smith slapped Chris Rock over a joke directed at his wife. "We have strict policies in place," Kimmel said. "If anyone in this theater commits an act of violence at any point in this show, you will be awarded the Oscar for best actor and permitted to give a 19-minute long speech." Later, he made a reference to Smith's performance as Hitch, and at another point referenced one of his songs — all without mentioning his name.

QUAN GETS TEARS FLOWING EARLY, AND OFTEN

Emotions were running high from the second award, as the ebullient Quan won his supporting actor trophy — an outcome that was expected but no less exciting in the moment. In fact, presenter Ariana DeBose could barely utter his name — she was already crying.

"My journey started on a boat. I spent a year in a refugee camp," said Quan, 51, who is of Vietnamese descent. "Somehow, I ended up here on Hollywood's biggest stage. They say stories like this only happen in the movies. I cannot believe it's happening to me. This — THIS — is the American dream." He also thanked — of course — his mother, age 84, watching at home.

CURTIS: "I AM HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE"

Winning immediately after Quan, Curtis stepped onstage and made yet another terrific awards-season speech about collaborating in the industry. "I know it looks like I am standing up here myself, but I am

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not," she said. "I am hundreds of people."

She spoke to all the fans and colleagues who "supported the genre movies I have made all these years, the hundreds and thousands of people: We. Just. Won. An. Oscar. Together!" And Curtis, too, shouted out to her famous late parents, Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, whom she noted had been nominated in different categories. "I just won an Oscar!" she told them.

## STAY STRONG, MY LOVE

Navalny sits in solitary confinement in Russia. So it was left to his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, to speak for him — and to him, as well — when the documentary "Navalny" won an Oscar. "My husband is in prison just for telling the truth. My husband is in prison just for defending democracy," Navalnaya said. "Alexei, I am dreaming of the day when you will be free and our country will be free. Stay strong, my love."

Director Daniel Roher dedicated his Oscar to Navalny and all political prisoners around the world. "Alexei, the world has not forgotten your vital message to us all: We must not be afraid to oppose dictators and authoritarianism wherever it rears its head."

## GAGA GOES MINIMAL

No one knows how to step into the glamour better than Lady Gaga, and she appeared on the Oscar red (well, champagne-colored) carpet in dramatic makeup and a fabulous Versace gown from the designer's recent collection. But when she appeared onstage — in a surprise appearance — to sing a powerful rendition of "Hold My Hand" from "Top Gun: Maverick," the glamorous outfit was gone, replaced by a T-shirt and ripped jeans and a makeup-free face. It was yet another compelling Oscar performance for Gaga, who never fails to innovate and surprise.

## CARTER MAKES HISTORY, AGAIN

Four years ago, Carter took her first historic statuette, becoming the first Black woman to win for costume design for "Black Panther." On Sunday she again made history when she won the award for "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," becoming the first Black woman to win two Oscars. She dedicated the award to Mabel Carter, her mother, who she said died this past week at age 101. "This film prepared me for this moment," she said. "Chadwick, please take care of Mom" — referring to Chadwick Boseman, the beloved late star of the original film.

## THE DANIELS THANK THE TEACHERS – AND THE MOMMIES!

The Daniels — Scheinert and Kwan — had a number of opportunities to ascend the stage, collecting awards for best original screenplay and best director on the way to a best picture win for "Everything Everywhere." The first time, Scheinert quipped he was going to name all the teachers who put him and his brother in detention — then instead thanked the teachers, by name, who "educated me and inspired me and taught me to be less of a butthead."

Kwan thanked "my Mom who protected me as a child, protected my inner storyteller." Winning best director, they came back to thank, in Scheinert's words, "the mommies of the world .... specifically my mom and dad, thank you for not squashing my creativity when I was making really disturbing horror films or really perverted comedy films or dressing in drag as a kid, which is a threat to nobody!" The audience cheered.

## YEOH IS TAKING IT HOME TO MALAYSIA – AND MOM!

In "Everything Everywhere," one of Yeoh's most memorable scenes is a reconciliation of sorts with her young adult daughter (Stephanie Hsu), a scene that speaks to the very essence of parenthood, in all its trials and rewards.

So it was fitting that Yeoh, accepting her best actress award, would focus on motherhood as well. "I have to dedicate this to my mom, all the moms in the world because they are really the superheroes," she said, "and without them none of us would be here tonight." She added that her mom was watching in Malaysia with her family. "She's 84, and I'm taking this home to her." Yeoh, 60, also earned cheers for her plug for women as they age in Hollywood, telling them: "Don't let anybody tell you you're past your prime!"



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## China's Xi wants bigger global role after Saudi-Iran deal

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Xi Jinping called Monday for China to play a bigger role in managing global affairs after Beijing scored a diplomatic coup as the host of talks that produced an agreement by Saudi Arabia and Iran to reopen diplomatic relations.

Xi gave no details of the ruling Communist Party's plans in a speech to China's ceremonial legislature. But Beijing has been increasingly assertive since he took power in 2012 and called for changes in the International Monetary Fund and other entities it says fail to reflect the desires of developing countries.

China should "actively participate in the reform and construction of the global governance system" and promote "global security initiatives," said Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades.

That will add "positive energy to world peace and development," Xi said.

On Friday, Xi was named to another term in the ceremonial presidency after breaking with tradition in October and awarding himself a third-five year term as general secretary of the ruling party, putting himself on track to become leader for life.

The National People's Congress on Sunday cemented Xi's dominance by endorsing the appointment of his loyalists as premier and other government leaders in a once-a-decade change. Xi has sidelined potential rivals and loaded the top ranks of the ruling party with his supporters.

The new premier, Li Qiang, tried Monday to reassure entrepreneurs but gave no details of possible plans to improve conditions after Xi's government spent the past decade building up state companies that control banking, energy, steel, telecoms and other industries.

Li's comments echoed promises by other Chinese leaders over the past six months to support entrepreneurs who generate jobs and wealth. They have vowed to simplify regulations and taxes but have given no indication they plan to rein in state companies that entrepreneurs complain drain away their profits.

The ruling party will "treat enterprises of all types of ownership equally" and "support the development and growth of private enterprises," Li said.

"Our leading cadres at all levels must sincerely care about and serve private enterprises," he said.

Chinese officials earlier indicated anti-monopoly and data security crackdowns that knocked tens of billions of dollars off the stock market value of e-commerce giant Alibaba Group and other tech companies were ending. But entrepreneurs were rattled anew in February when a star banker who played a leading role in tech deals disappeared. Bao Fan's company said he was "cooperating in an investigation" but gave no details.

Li said Beijing will make a priority of job creation as it tries to revive economic growth that sank to 3% last year, the second-lowest level in decades. This year's official growth target is "around 5%."

The premier expressed confidence China can cope as its workforce shrinkage. The number of potential workers age 15 to 59 has fallen by more than 5% from its 2011 peak, an unusually abrupt decline for a middle-income country.

Li said that while China is losing its "demographic dividend" of young workers, better education means it is gaining a "talent dividend." He said some 15 million people still enter the workforce every year.

"Abundant human resources is still China's outstanding advantage," he said.

Abroad, Beijing also has built on China's growing heft as the second-largest economy to promote trade and construction initiatives that Washington, Tokyo, Moscow and New Delhi worry will expand its strategic influence at their expense.

Those include the multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative to construct ports, railways and other trade-related infrastructure across an arc of countries from the South Pacific through Asia to Africa and Europe. China also is promoting trade and security initiatives.

Xi's government rattled the United States and Australia in early 2022 when it signed an agreement with the Solomon Islands that would allow Chinese navy ships and security forces to be stationed in the South Pacific nation.

The foreign minister, Qin Gang, warned Washington last week of possible "conflict and confrontation"

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if the United States doesn't change course in relations that have been strained by conflicts over Taiwan, human rights, Hong Kong, security and technology.

Xi called Monday for faster technology development and more self-reliance in a speech loaded with nationalistic terms. He referred eight times to "national rejuvenation," or restoring China to its rightful place as an economic, cultural and political leader.

He said that before the ruling party took power in 1949, China was "reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country, subject to bullying by foreign countries."

"We have finally washed away the national humiliation, and Chinese people are the master of their own destiny," Xi said. "The Chinese nation has stood up, become rich and is becoming strong."

Xi also called for the country to "unswervingly achieve" the goal of "national reunification," a reference to Beijing's claim that Taiwan, the self-ruled island democracy, is part of its territory and is obliged to unite with China, by force if necessary.

## Michelle Yeoh's mom tearful, proud of 'little princess'

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Michelle Yeoh's mother cried for joy for her "little princess" when the Malaysian performer became the first Asian to win the best actress Oscar.

Yeoh's family and two Cabinet ministers were among the supporters roaring with joy at Yeoh's win during a special Academy Awards viewing party in Malaysia on Monday morning. Her trophy for her performance as a laundromat owner was one of seven Oscars for "Everything Everywhere All at Once," including best picture.

Janet Yeoh, 84, praised the actor as intelligent and hardworking and a filial daughter.

"I so love my daughter and she has made Malaysia proud," Yeoh told a news conference after the viewing at a cinema in Kuala Lumpur. "Malaysia Boleh (Malaysia Can)!"

Janet Yeoh said she was immensely proud of "my little princess," who wanted to be a ballerina before entering the movie world. Yeoh said she pushed her daughter out of her cocoon despite protests from her late husband, a lawyer whom she described as "old-fashioned."

In her acceptance speech, Yeoh dedicated her award to her mother and said "all the moms in the world" were the real superheroes.

"It was such a jaw-dropping moment. I was speechless, I cried," said Vicki Yeoh, Michelle Yeoh's niece, who was at the special viewing. "The nominees are really strong, but we had no doubt. We keep telling her that you will win...you will stand on the stage with the golden man."

Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh, who was at the viewing, immediately posted on social media: "Most inspiring quote for all of us aunties - "Ladies, don't let anybody ever tell you that you are past your prime" - Michelle Yeoh."

Lawmakers Sim Tze Sin and Wee Ka Siong thanked Michelle Yeoh for "breaking glass ceilings" for Asian and Malaysian women. They praised her for being an icon for resilience and perseverance.

Michelle Yeoh, 60, learned ballet before turning to acting. Her first major Hollywood role was playing a Chinese spy in the Bond film "Tomorrow Never Dies" in 1997 alongside Pierce Brosnan.

She gained renown for her role in the 2000 martial arts masterpiece "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," a best-picture nominee that won the Oscar for best foreign language film.

Yeoh had more recent success in the 2018 movie "Crazy Rich Asians" and Marvel's "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" in 2021.

"We are incredibly proud. We hope she goes to break more records and win more awards," her nephew Kelvin Yeoh said.

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## 'Everything' wins best picture, is everywhere at Oscars

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The metaphysical multiverse comedy "Everything Everywhere All at Once" wrapped its hot dog fingers around Hollywood's top prize Sunday, winning best picture at the 95th Academy Awards, along with awards for Michelle Yeoh, Ke Huy Quan and Jamie Lee Curtis.

Though worlds away from Oscar bait, Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's anarchic ballet of everything bagels, googly-eyed rocks and one messy tax audit emerged as an improbable Academy Awards heavyweight. The indie hit, A24's second best picture winner following "Moonlight," won seven Oscars in all. Only two other films in Oscar history — "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "Network" — won three acting Academy Awards.

Fifty years after "The Godfather" won at the Oscars, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" triumphed with a much different immigrant experience. Its eccentric tale about a Chinese immigrant family — just the second feature by the Daniels, as the filmmaking duo is known — blended science fiction and alternate realities in the story of an ordinary woman and laundromat owner.

"The world is changing rapidly and I fear our stories are not keeping that pace," said Kwan, who shared best director and best original screenplay with Scheinert. "Sometimes it's a little scary knowing that movies move at the rate of years and the world on the internet is moving at the rate of milliseconds. But I have great faith in our stories."

Yeoh became the first Asian woman to best actress, taking the award for her lauded performance in "Everything Everywhere All at Once." The 60-year-old Malaysian-born Yeoh won her first Oscar for a performance that relied as much on her comic and dramatic chops as it did her kung fu skills. It's the first best actress win for a non-white actress in 20 years.

"Ladies, don't let anyone ever tell you you're past your prime," said Yeoh, who received a raucous standing ovation.

"Everything Everywhere," released all the way back in March 2022, helped revive arthouse cinemas after two years of pandemic, racking up more than \$100 million in ticket sales with scant initial expectations of Oscar glory. In winning best director, the Daniels — both 35 years old — are just the third directing pair to win the award, following Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins ("West Side Story") and Joel and Ethan Coen ("No Country for Old Men"). Scheinert dedicated the award "to the moms of the world."

Best actor went to Brendan Fraser, culminating the former action star's return to center stage for his physical transformation as a 600-lb. reclusive professor in "The Whale." The best-actor race had been one of the closest contests of the night, but Fraser in the end edged out Austin Butler.

"So this is what the multiverse looks like," said a clearly moved Fraser, pointing to the "Everything Everywhere All at Once" crew.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once," a shock of freshness in a movie industry awash in sequels and reboots, helped Hollywood turn the page from one of the most infamous moments in Oscar history: The Slap. Jimmy Kimmel, hosting for the third time, pledged a ceremony with "no nonsense." He said anyone who wanted to "get jiggy with it" this year would have to come through a fearsome battalion of bodyguards, including Yeoh, Steven Spielberg and his show's "security guard" Guillermo Rodriguez.

The former child star Quan capped his own extraordinary comeback with the Oscar for best supporting actor for his performance in the indie hit "Everything Everywhere All at Once." Quan, beloved for his roles as Short Round in "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" and Data in "Goonies," had all but given up acting before being cast in "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

His win, among the most expected of the night, was nevertheless one of the ceremony's most moving moments. The audience — including his "Temple of Doom" director, Steven Spielberg — gave Quan a standing ovation as he fought back tears.

"Mom, I just won an Oscar!" said Quan, 51, whose family fled Vietnam in the war when he was a child.

"They say stories like this only happen in the movies. I can't believe it's happening," said Quan. "This is the American dream."

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Minutes later, Quan's castmate Jamie Lee Curtis won for best supporting actress. Her win, in one of the most competitive categories this year, denied a victory for comic-book fans. Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") would have been the first performer to win an Oscar for a Marvel movie. Curtis is the rare Oscar winner whose parents were both Oscar nominees: Tony Curtis was nominated for "The Defiant Ones" in 1959 and Janet Leigh was nominated in 1961 for "Psycho."

The German-language WWI epic "All Quiet on the Western Front" — Netflix's top contender this year — took four awards as the academy heaped honors on the craft of the harrowing anti-war film. It won for cinematography, production design, score and best international film.

Though Bassett missed on supporting actress, Ruth E. Carter won for the costume design of "Wakanda Forever," four years after becoming the first Black designer to win an Oscar, for "Black Panther." This one makes Carter the first Black woman to win two Oscars.

"Thank you to the Academy for recognizing the superhero that is a Black woman," said Carter. "She endures, she loves, she overcomes, she is every woman in this film."

ABC's telecast opened traditionally: with a montage of the year's films (with Kimmel edited into a cockpit in "Top Gun: Maverick") and a lengthy monologue. Kimmel struggled to find lessons from the year's prior scandal when Will Smith smacked presenter Chris Rock, and went on to win best actor. If anyone tried any violence this year, Kimmel said, "you will be awarded the Oscar for best actor and permitted to give a 19-minute-long speech."

After landmark wins for Chloé Zhao ("Nomadland") and Jane Campion ("The Power of the Dog"), no women were nominated for best director. Sarah Polley, though, won best adapted screenplay for the metaphor-rich Mennonite drama "Women Talking."

"Thank you to the academy for not being mortally offended by the words 'women' and 'talking,'" said Polley.

Daniel Roher's "Navalny," about the imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, took best documentary. The film's win came with clear overtones to Navalny's ongoing imprisonment and Vladimir Putin's continued war in Ukraine. Yulia Navalnaya joined the filmmakers on the stage.

"My husband is in prison just for telling the truth," said Navalnaya. "Stay strong, my love."

Some big names weren't in attendance for other reasons. Neither Tom Cruise, whose "Top Gun: Maverick" was up for best picture, nor James Cameron, director of best-picture nominee "Avatar: The Way of Water," were at the ceremony. Both have been forefront in Hollywood's efforts to get moviegoers back after years of pandemic.

"The two guys who asked us to go back to theater aren't in the theater," said Kimmel, who added that Cruise without his shirt on in "Top Gun: Maverick" was "L. Ron Hubba Hubba."

Blockbuster nominees typically help boost Oscar ratings. Neither "Maverick" or "Avatar" — with some \$3.7 billion in combined box office — took home much, though. "The Way of Water" won for visual effects; "Maverick" took best sound.

After last year's Oscars, which had stripped some categories from being handed out in the live telecast, the academy restored all awards to the show and leaned on traditional song and dance numbers. That meant some show-stopping numbers, including the elastic suspenders dance of "Naatu Naatu" from the Telugu action-film sensation "RRR," an intimate, impassioned performance by Lady Gaga of "Hold My Hand" from "Top Gun: Maverick," and an Super Bowl follow-up by Rihanna. Best song went to "Naatu Naatu" from "RRR."

It also meant a long show. "This kind of makes you miss the slapping a little bit, right?" Kimmel said midway.

After last year's slap, the academy created a crisis management team to better respond to surprises. Neither Rock, who recently made his most forceful statement about the incident in a live special, nor Smith, who was banned by the academy for 10 years, attended.

Last year, Apple TV's "CODA" became the first streaming movie to win best picture. But this year, nine of the 10 best picture nominees were theatrical releases. After the movie business cratered during the

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pandemic, moviegoing recovered to about 67% of pre-pandemic levels. But it was an up and down year, with smash hits and anxiety-inducing lulls.

This year, ticket sales have been strong thanks to releases like "Creed III" and "Cocaine Bear" — which made not one but two cameos at Sunday's show. Meanwhile, the Writers Guild and the major studios are set to begin contract negotiations March 20, a looming battle that has much of the industry girding for a possible work stoppage.

The Oscars, too, are seeking steadiness. Last year's telecast drew 16.6 million viewers, a 58% increase from the scaled-down 2021 edition, watched by a record-low 10.5 million.

## March Madness 2023: South Carolina women chasing 3rd title

By The Associated Press undefined

March Madness is here! Here is what to know about the women's NCAA Tournament, including the favorites and underdogs as well as key games and how to watch: TOP SEEDS

**THE TOP FOUR SEEDS**  
The top four seeds in the tournament are South Carolina, Indiana, Virginia Tech and Stanford. Each is in a region, some tougher than others (on paper). We break them down for you: **SOUTH CAROLINA (32-0)**: The defending national champions are the No. 1 overall seed and the Greenville I Region breaks down favorably. It includes two teams in No. 2 seed Maryland (25-6) and No. 4 seed UCLA (23-9) who the Gamecocks beat earlier this season. South Carolina is loaded, with two-time Southeastern Conference player of the year Aliyah Boston and leading scorer Zia Cooke.

**INDIANA (27-3)**: After a loss to Ohio State in the Big Ten Tournament semis, some wondered if the Hoosiers might miss out on a top seed. They landed it in the Greenville II Region and start against either Tennessee Tech or Monmouth. Mackenzie Holmes leads Indiana with 22.3 points and 7.3 rebounds per game. Top challengers include No. 2 seed Utah, No. 3 seed LSU and No. 4 seed Villanova, which is led by scoring sensation Maddy Siegrist.

**VIRGINIA TECH (27-5)**: The Hokies won their first ACC Tournament championship and will lead the Seattle 3 Region. Elizabeth Kitley has stepped things up down the stretch as Virginia Tech won its final eight games. Virginia Tech could have to navigate No. 4 seed Tennessee in the Sweet 16 and No. 2 seed UConn or No. 3 seed Ohio State after that.

**STANFORD (28-5)**: The committee looked to Stanford's steadiness for much of the season in giving it the top seed in the Seattle 4 Region. The Cardinal are led by Cameron Brink and Haley Jones, who have combined to score more than 28 points per game this season. Look for a potential high-wattage battle for the Final Four against No. 2 seed Iowa, led by national player of the year candidate Caitlin Clark.

### GAMES TO WATCH

No. 3 seed Notre Dame (25-5) vs. No. 14 seed Southern Utah (23-6), Friday. The Fighting Irish's chances for a deep run will certainly be affected by how seriously do-everything leader Olivia Miles is hurt. She left the ACC Tournament quarterfinals two weeks ago with a knee injury.

Monmouth (18-13) vs. Tennessee Tech (22-9), Thursday, ESPNU. Monmouth, surprise winners of the Colonial Athletic Association Tournament, have not played in the NCAA tourney since 1983 and get the chance to extend its stay in a First Four contest Wednesday. Either the Hawks or the Ohio Valley Conference Tournament champions in Tennessee Tech, both 16 seeds, will have to take on top-seed Indiana on Friday.

No. 5 seed Louisville (23-11) vs. No. 12 seed Drake (22-9), Saturday. The Cardinals were a Final Four team a season ago and start their journey back as a No. 5 seed. They'll open things against Drake (22-9), which was seeded fourth in the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament yet defeated Belmont to take the league's automatic bid. Louisville is led by Hailey Van Lith, who's averaged 19.2 points a game this season.

No. 4 seed Villanova (28-6) vs. No. 13 seed Cleveland State (30-4), Saturday. Villanova features one of the country's best players in Maddy Siegrist, a two-time Big East player of year. The Wildcats are in a stacked region with top seed Indiana, No. 2 seed Utah and No. 3 seed LSU in front of them. Cleveland State won the Horizon League and made the NAAs for the first time since 2010.

### HOW TO WATCH

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Every game of the women's tournament will be available on ESPN's networks or streaming, with fans encouraged to navigate to the "Watch" tab on ESPN's sites. The NCAA will have a women's basketball specific March Madness app by AT&T.

There are multiple sites listing game times and other details, including the NCAA site.

**BETTING GUIDE** Who's going to win the national championship? The betting favorites as of this week to reach the Final Four are (in order): South Carolina, UConn, Stanford, Indiana, Iowa and LSU, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. The Gamecocks are a heavy favorite to become the first repeat champion in the women's tournament since UConn won the last of four straight in 2016.

**MARCH MADNESS CALENDAR** Selection Sunday set the brackets for First Four games (March 15-16) and first- and second-round games (March 17-20) at multiple sites across the country.

Sweet 16 weekend brings a twist this year for the women's teams: There will be two regional sites instead of four, with Greenville, South Carolina, and Seattle each hosting eight teams.

Where is the women's Final Four? In Dallas, where the semifinals are March 31 and the championship game is April 2. As it happens, the men's Final Four is a four-hour drive down the road in Houston that same weekend.

## Trump returns to Iowa aiming for more disciplined campaign

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DAVENPORT, Iowa (AP) — To outsiders, they looked like simple stacks of paper. But for Donald Trump's first presidential campaign, they represented a missed opportunity.

A month before Iowa's 2016 presidential caucuses, mountains of so-called pledge cards sat in the corner of Trump's suburban Des Moines state headquarters. They contained the names and contact information of roughly 10,000 Iowans who attended Trump campaign events and responded by returning the cards suggesting they were open to backing the reality television star who was now seeking the White House.

In what's considered political malpractice by Iowa standards, those who returned the cards received no follow-up contact from the campaign.

"None of that data was used. None of it was entered," said Alex Latcham, the former political director for the Iowa Republican Party and now Trump's early-voting state director. "And those people weren't encouraged or mobilized to caucus."

Chuck Laudner, who was Trump's Iowa state director in 2016, didn't respond to requests for comment. But by ignoring the cards, Trump's team essentially left a pile of uncashed checks out in the open, leaving him vulnerable to better-organized GOP rivals. He was beaten in Iowa by Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who would go on to fight Trump state by state for three months.

As Trump returns to Iowa on Monday, he and his team are aiming for a more disciplined approach. They are particularly focused on building the data and digital engagement he will need to persuade Iowans to traipse through the cold and snow early next year to participate in the caucuses.

Though his swing through the eastern city of Davenport marks his first trip to Iowa since launching his third bid for the presidency, he's held roughly three dozen events in the state since entering political life. They include several rallies that have attracted thousands since he left office in 2021.

His team is using information from those events to compile an exhaustive list of supporters to engage. The list now includes the data from the 2016 campaign that sat gathering dust.

"One of the advantages we have is that's an awful lot of data," said Trump senior consultant Chris LaCivita. "From every donor to rally attendee, we have all that information, which is important in a state like Iowa. This is ground-game stuff. It's about finding and identifying favorable voters and making sure the campaign is turning them out."

In the early phase of the 2024 campaign, Trump remains in a dominant position. But he faces notable challenges, including growing interest in the expected candidacy of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who made his debut swing through Iowa last week.

Early polls show Trump remains widely popular among Iowa Republicans, though views of the former

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president have slipped somewhat since he left the White House. Now, 80% say they have a favorable rating of Trump, down slightly from 91% in September 2021, according to a Des Moines Register/Mediacom poll released Friday.

The poll found DeSantis also gets a rosy review from Iowa Republicans, with 74% saying they have a 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.

Meanwhile, legal scrutiny surrounding Trump is also intensifying with potential indictments in the coming weeks that would make him the first former president in U.S. history to face criminal charges. He has been invited to testify this week before a New York grand jury that has been investigating hush money payments made on his behalf during the 2016 campaign, a move that often indicates a decision on indictments is near.

Elsewhere, the district attorney in Atlanta has said decisions are "imminent" in a two-year investigation into possible illegal meddling in the 2020 election by Trump and his allies. A Justice Department special counsel is also investigating efforts by Trump and his allies to undo the election as well as the handling of classified documents at his Florida estate.

The dynamics make the stakes particularly high for Trump in Iowa. As a former president who boasts of his standing atop the GOP, he can't afford even a narrow loss in the contest that kicks off the nomination process.

And even the most sophisticated data and digital operation may not be enough to satisfy some Iowans, who are accustomed to having intimate conversations with those seeking the White House. Iowa GOP activists say Trump would do well to hold smaller events, including with influential local Republican leaders.

Trump on Monday will deliver what has been billed as an education policy speech, but he is expected to touch more broadly on his accomplishments as president and his agenda for another term, including trade policies and agriculture, according to a person familiar with his plans who spoke on condition of anonymity to preview his remarks.

Trump will also take questions from local reporters and is expected to make an unannounced stop at a local establishment, as he has during other recent trips. The campaign will also roll out endorsements from East Iowa elected officials, the person said.

When he began his Iowa campaign eight years ago, Trump was unsure what a caucus even was. The quirky contests — more than 1,000 simultaneous, local political meetings sponsored by the state Republican Party and run by volunteers — are not state-sanctioned primary elections and require intense organization to have supporters in place at each location.

In 2016, Trump hired Laudner, the former Iowa Republican Party executive director who helped former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum squeak out a win in the 2012 Republican caucuses. But Trump's national team was led by a small band of aides with far less experience than the talent scooped up by prospects expected early in the campaign to be strong contenders, such as former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

While Trump's celebrity drew crowds of sometimes several thousand to his rallies around the state, there was almost no follow-through with interested supporters. Many of Trump's supporters were first-time caucus prospects unfamiliar with the process. Some missed their chance to weigh in by wrongly going to their typical voting polling place, rather than the designated party caucus site.

The assumption that crowds would equate to votes would be a costly lesson. Had Trump netted fewer than four more votes per precinct, he could have beaten Cruz.

This year, Trump's campaign named Marshall Moreau as its Iowa director. He managed the successful state attorney general campaign last year for Brenna Bird. She defeated Democrat Tom Miller, who was first elected in 1978.

More Iowa staff announcements are expected soon, aides said.

The goal of a sharper Iowa approach reflects broader changes to how Trump has structured his latest campaign. While his 2016 bid was a scrappy upstart bid, with a national headquarters in unfinished com-

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mercial space at Trump Tower in New York, his second campaign, as a president seeking reelection, was a sprawling behemoth run out of a shiny Virginia office tower.

Both were riven by rivalries as Trump cycled through top staff.

This time, Trump has chosen a middle-of-the-road approach and eschewed the traditional hierarchy. Instead of a campaign manager, he has entrusted Florida operative Susie Wiles, a longtime adviser, to lead his Florida-based operation, joined by LaCivita and former White House political director Brian Jack.

The campaign has been rapidly adding staff and is quickly outgrowing its office space.

## Cohen to testify before grand jury in Trump hush-money probe

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen is poised to testify Monday before a Manhattan grand jury investigating hush-money payments he arranged and made on the former president's behalf.

Cohen's impending grand jury appearance was confirmed by two people familiar with the matter who were not authorized to speak publicly about grand jury proceedings and did so on condition of anonymity.

Cohen's closed-door testimony is coming at a critical time as the Manhattan district attorney's office closes in on a decision on whether to seek charges against Trump.

A Trump loyalist turned adversary, Cohen is likely to provide critical details about whatever involvement the Republican presidential candidate may have had in the payments, made in the final weeks of the 2016 campaign, to two women who alleged affairs with him.

Cohen has given prosecutors evidence, including voice recordings of conversations he had with a lawyer for one of the women, as well as emails and text messages. He also has recordings of a conversation in which he and Trump spoke about an arrangement to pay the other woman through the supermarket tabloid the National Enquirer.

Prosecutors appear to be looking at whether Trump committed crimes in how the payments were made or 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.

Trump has denied the affairs and has said he did nothing wrong. Prosecutors have invited him to testify before the grand jury, and he has the right to testify under New York law. However, 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. He has also been disbarred.

Trump's lawyers could point to those factors in an attempt to undermine Cohen's credibility, if the former president is charged and Cohen ends up testifying at trial.

Cohen has been meeting regularly with Manhattan prosecutors in recent weeks, including a daylong session Friday to prepare for his grand jury appearance.

The panel has been hearing evidence since January in what Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has called the "next chapter" of his office's yearslong Trump investigation. But the hush-money payments — perhaps the most salacious of the avenues of inquiry into Trump — are well-trodden ground.

Federal prosecutors and Bragg's predecessor in the D.A.'s office, Cyrus Vance Jr., each scrutinized the payments but didn't charge Trump.

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 also declined to comment.

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!"

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 National Enquirer, which squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch-and-kill."

According to federal prosecutors who charged Cohen, the Trump Organization then "grossed up" Cohen's reimbursement for the Daniels payment for "tax purposes," giving him \$360,000 plus a \$60,000 bonus, for a total of \$420,000.

## US turns to new ways to punish Russian oligarchs for the war

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. has begun an aggressive new push to inflict pain on Russia's economy and specifically its oligarchs with the intent of thwarting the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.

From the Treasury Department to the Justice Department, U.S. officials will focus on efforts to legally liquidate the property of Russian oligarchs, expand financial penalties on those who facilitate the evasion of sanctions, and close loopholes in the law that allow oligarchs to use shell companies to move through the U.S. financial system.

Andrew Adams, who heads the KleptoCapture task force, designed to enforce the economic restrictions within the U.S. imposed on Russia and its billionaires, told The Associated Press that the group is prioritizing its efforts to identify those who help Russians evade sanctions and violate export controls.

"These illicit procurement networks will continue to take up an ever-increasing amount of our bandwidth," said Adams, who also serves as acting deputy assistant attorney general.

So far, more than \$58 billion worth of sanctioned Russians' assets have been blocked or frozen worldwide, according to a report last week from the Treasury Department. That includes two luxury yachts each worth \$300 million in San Diego and Fiji, and six New York and Florida properties worth \$75 million owned by sanctioned oligarch Viktor Vekselberg.

The U.S. has begun attempts to punish the associates and wealth managers of oligarchs — in Vekselberg's case, a federal court in New York indicted Vladimir Voronchenko after he helped maintain Vekselberg's properties. He was charged in February with conspiring to violate and evade U.S. sanctions.

The case was coordinated through the KleptoCapture group.

"I think it can be quite effective to be sanctioning facilitators," Adams said, calling them "professional sanctions evasion brokers."

A February study led by Dartmouth University researchers showed that targeting a few key wealth managers would cause far greater damage to Russia than sanctioning oligarchs individually.

Other attempts to inflict pain on the Russian economy will come from the efforts to liquidate yachts and other property owned by Russian oligarchs and the Kremlin, turning them into cash to benefit Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has long called for Russian assets to be transferred to Ukraine, and former Biden administration official Daleep Singh told the Senate Banking Committee on Feb. 28 that forfeiting Russia's billions in assets held by the U.S. is "something we ought to pursue."

Singh suggested the U.S. should "use the reserves that we have immobilized at the New York Fed, transfer them to Ukraine and allow them to put them up as collateral to raise money." He ran the White House's Russia sanctions program when he was national security adviser for international economics.

Adams said the KleptoCapture task force is pursuing efforts to sell Russians' yachts and other property, despite the legal difficulties of turning property whose owners' access has been blocked into forfeited assets that the government can take and sell for the benefit of Ukraine.

He stressed that the U.S. will operate under the rule of law. "Part of what that means is that we will not take assets that are not fully, totally forfeited through the judicial procedures and begin confiscating them without a legal basis," Adams said.

He added that the task force has had "success in working with Congress and working with folks around

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the executive branch in obtaining authorization to transfer certain forfeited funds to the State Department.”

The Treasury Department said on Thursday that the government is “paving the way” for \$5.4 million in seized funds to be sent as foreign assistance to Ukraine.

Additionally, strengthening laws that serve as loopholes for sanctions evaders will also be a priority across federal departments, officials say.

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, under Treasury, is expected to roll out rules to address the use of the U.S. real estate market to launder money, including a requirement on disclosing the true ownership of real estate.

Steven Tian, director of research at the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute, who tracks companies’ disengagement from Russia, said the new real estate rule is long overdue.

“I would point out that it’s not just unique to Russian oligarchs. As you know, the real estate market makes use of shell companies in the United States, period,” Tian said.

Erica Hanichak, the government affairs director at the FACT Coalition, a nonprofit that promotes corporate transparency, urged the administration to put the rule forward by late March, when the U.S. co-hosts the second Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, Netherlands, South Korea and Zambia.

“We’re viewing this as an opportunity for the United States to demonstrate leadership not only in addressing corrupt practices abroad, but looking to our own backyard and addressing the loopholes in our system that facilitate corruption internationally,” she said.

## **Biden to announce Australia submarine deal in San Diego**

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to meet with two of America’s closest allies to announce that Australia will purchase U.S.-manufactured, nuclear-powered attack submarines to modernize its fleet, amid growing concerns about China’s influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Biden is traveling Monday to San Diego, where he will meet Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak for talks on the 18-month-old nuclear partnership known by the acronym AUKUS.

The partnership, announced in 2021, paved the way for Australia’s access to nuclear-powered submarines, which are stealthier and more capable than conventionally powered boats, as a counterweight to China’s military buildup.

San Diego is Biden’s first stop on a three-day trip to California and Nevada. He will discuss gun violence prevention in the community of Monterey Park, California, and his plans to lower prescription drug costs in Las Vegas. The trip will include fundraising stops as Biden steps up his political activities in advance of his expected plans to announce next month a run for reelection in 2024.

Australia is purchasing up to five Virginia-class boats as part of AUKUS, according to two people familiar with the arrangement who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the plans. A future generation of submarines will be built in the U.K. and in Australia with U.S. technology and support. The initial plans call for all of the Australian subs to be constructed in Adelaide, Australia.

The U.S. would also step up its port visits in Australia to provide the country with more familiarity with the nuclear-powered technology before it has such subs of its own.

Biden will also hold bilateral meetings with Albanese and Sunak, an opportunity to coordinate strategy on a range of global challenges, including Russia’s war in Ukraine and the global economy.

The secretly brokered AUKUS deal included the Australian government’s cancellation of a \$66 billion contract for a French-built fleet of conventional submarines, which sparked a diplomatic row within the Western alliance that took months to mend.

Meanwhile, China has argued that the AUKUS deal is in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, arguing that transfer of nuclear weapons materials from a nuclear-weapon state to a non-nuclear-weapon state is “blatant” violation of the spirit of the pact. Australian officials have pushed back against the criticism, arguing that it is working to acquire nuclear-powered and not nuclear-armed submarines.

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"The question is really how does China choose to respond because Australia is not backing away from what it — what it sees to be doing in its own interests here," said Charles Edel, a senior adviser and Australia chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "I think that probably from Beijing's perspective they've already counted out Australia as a woable mid country. It seemed to have fully gone into the U.S. camp."

Before he leaves the White House, Biden will first deliver remarks on his administration's extraordinary efforts to safeguard depositors and protect against broader economic hardship after the second- and third-largest bank failures in the nation's history.

"The American people and American businesses can have confidence that their bank deposits will be there when they need them," Biden said in a statement Sunday night. "I am firmly committed to holding those responsible for this mess fully accountable and to continuing our efforts to strengthen oversight and regulation of larger banks so that we are not in this position again."

## US government moves to stop potential banking crisis

By KEN SWEET, CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, CHRIS MEGERIAN and CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. government took extraordinary steps Sunday to stop a potential banking crisis after the historic failure of Silicon Valley Bank, assuring all depositors at the failed institution that they could access all their money quickly, even as another major bank was shut down.

The announcement came amid fears that the factors that caused the Santa Clara, California-based bank to fail could spread. Regulators had worked all weekend to try to find a buyer for the bank, which was the second-largest bank failure in history. Those efforts appeared to have failed Sunday.

In a sign of how fast the financial bleeding was occurring, regulators announced that New York-based Signature Bank had also failed and was being seized on Sunday. At more than \$110 billion in assets, Signature Bank is the third-largest bank failure in U.S. history.

The near-financial crisis that U.S. regulators had to intervene to prevent left Asian markets jittery as trading began Monday. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 sank 1.6% in morning trading, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.3% and South Korea's Kospi shed 0.4%. But Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.4% and the Shanghai Composite increased 0.3%.

In an effort to shore up confidence in the banking system, the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve and FDIC said Sunday that all Silicon Valley Bank clients would be protected and able to access their money. They also announced steps that are intended to protect the bank's customers and prevent additional bank runs.

"This step will ensure that the U.S. banking system continues to perform its vital roles of protecting deposits and providing access to credit to households and businesses in a manner that promotes strong and sustainable economic growth," the agencies said in a joint statement.

Under the plan, depositors at Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, including those whose holdings exceed the \$250,000 insurance limit, will be able to access their money on Monday.

Also Sunday, another beleaguered bank, First Republic Bank, announced that it had bolstered its financial health by gaining access to funding from the Fed and JPMorgan Chase.

In a separate announcement, the Fed late Sunday announced an expansive emergency lending program that's intended to prevent a wave of bank runs that would threaten the stability of the banking system and the economy as a whole. Fed officials characterized the program as akin to what central banks have done for decades: Lend freely to the banking system so that customers would be confident that they could access their accounts whenever needed.

The lending facility will allow banks that need to raise cash to pay depositors to borrow that money from the Fed, rather than having to sell Treasuries and other securities to raise the money. Silicon Valley Bank had been forced to dump some of its Treasuries at a loss to fund its customers' withdrawals. Under the Fed's new program, banks can post those securities as collateral and borrow from the emergency facility.

The Treasury has set aside \$25 billion to offset any losses incurred under the Fed's emergency lending

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facility. Fed officials said, however, that they do not expect to have to use any of that money, given that the securities posted as collateral have a very low risk of default.

Analysts said the Fed's program should be enough to calm financial markets on Monday.

"Monday will surely be a stressful day for many in the regional banking sector, but today's action dramatically reduces the risk of further contagion," economists at Jefferies, an investment bank, said in a research note.

Though Sunday's steps marked the most extensive government intervention in the banking system since the 2008 financial crisis, its actions are relatively limited compared with what was done 15 years ago. The two failed banks themselves have not been rescued, and taxpayer money has not been provided to the banks.

President Joe Biden said Sunday evening as he boarded Air Force One back to Washington that he would speak about the bank situation on Monday. In a statement, Biden also said he was "firmly committed to holding those responsible for this mess fully accountable and to continuing our efforts to strengthen oversight and regulation of larger banks so that we are not in this position again."

Regulators had to rush to close Silicon Valley Bank, a financial institution with more than \$200 billion in assets, on Friday when it experienced a traditional run on the bank where depositors rushed to withdraw their funds all at once. It is the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history, behind only the 2008 failure of Washington Mutual.

Some prominent Silicon Valley executives feared that if Washington didn't rescue the failed bank, customers would make runs on other financial institutions in the coming days. Stock prices plunged over the last few days at other banks that cater to technology companies, including First Republic Bank and PacWest Bank.

Among the bank's customers are a range of companies from California's wine industry, where many wineries rely on Silicon Valley Bank for loans, and technology startups devoted to combating climate change. Sunrun, which sells and leases solar energy systems, had less than \$80 million of cash deposits with Silicon Valley. Stitchfix, the clothing retail website, disclosed recently that it had a credit line of up to \$100 million with Silicon Valley Bank and other lenders.

Tiffany Dufu, founder and CEO of The Cru, a New York-based career coaching platform and community for women, posted a video Sunday on LinkedIn from an airport bathroom, saying the bank crisis was testing her resiliency. Given that her money was tied up at Silicon Valley Bank, she had to pay her employees out of her personal bank account. With two teenagers to support who will be heading to college, she said she was relieved to hear that the government's intent is to make depositors whole.

"Small businesses and early-stage startups don't have a lot of access to leverage in a situation like this, and we're often in a very vulnerable position, particularly when we have to fight so hard to get the wires into your bank account to begin with, particularly for me, as a Black female founder," Dufu told The Associated Press.

Silicon Valley Bank began its slide into insolvency when its customers, largely technology companies that needed cash as they struggled to get financing, started withdrawing their deposits. The bank had to sell bonds at a loss to cover the withdrawals, leading to the largest failure of a U.S. financial institution since the height of the financial crisis.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen pointed to rising interest rates, which have been increased by the Federal Reserve to combat inflation, as the core problem for Silicon Valley Bank. Many of its assets, such as bonds or mortgage-backed securities, lost market value as rates climbed.

Sheila Bair, who was chairwoman of the FDIC during the 2008 financial crisis, recalled that with nearly all the bank failures then, "we sold a failed bank to a healthy bank. And usually, the healthy acquirer would also cover the uninsured because they wanted the franchise value of those large depositors so optimally, that's the best outcome."

But with Silicon Valley Bank, she told NBC's "Meet the Press," "this was a liquidity failure, it was a bank run, so they didn't have time to prepare to market the bank. So they're having to do that now, and playing catch-up."

## Sister grieves for American killed in Mexico kidnapping

By HILARY POWELL Associated Press

LAKE CITY, S.C. (AP) — Prepping for his first trip out of the country, 28-year-old Zindell Brown of Lake City, South Carolina, had something more than nerves. Perhaps it was a premonition about the trip he and several friends were taking to Mexico.

"He said, 'Something, it just doesn't feel right,'" his older sister Zalandria Brown told The Associated Press over the phone. "(That was) the last thing we talked about."

Hopping into protection mode for the man so close to her that she called him her "hip bone," Brown urged her brother to not take the trip planned earlier this month. As someone known to help others, however, Brown wasn't surprised her sibling shook off the feeling and offered to drive with his group of childhood friends on a road trip to Mexico, where one was scheduled for cosmetic surgery and another planned to celebrate his 34th birthday.

The inside of a rented white van would be the last place Brown would see her baby brother alive. Sometime during the nearly 22-hour trip from South Carolina to Brownsville, Texas, Brown watched a video posted online of Zindell smiling into the camera.

But in Mexico, the group was attacked. Around midday, a vehicle crashed into the group's van. Several men with tactical vests and assault rifles arrived in another vehicle and surrounded them, according to Mexican police reports.

Two members of the group — Zindell Brown and Shaeed Woodard — were shot and killed. Eric Williams was shot in the leg, and he and fellow survivor Latavia McGee were loaded into a pickup truck, according to video posted on social media. The violence was blamed on the Gulf cartel, a drug gang tied to killings and kidnappings in Matamoros, a city of a half-million people that has long been a stronghold of the powerful cartel. The group purportedly apologized for the killings in a letter obtained by the Associated Press from a Mexican law enforcement official.

Even before she viewed footage of the ambush that quickly circulated online, Zalandria Brown said she began to have a sickening feeling that her brother was gone.

"That was the other part of my soul," she said.

She called her brother the male version of herself. Gone is her game hunting partner and the "cool uncle" her two (teenage) sons looked up to.

"He always put a smile on everybody's face. He was always joking and playing and laughing around," she said.

In the days leading up to the trip, Zindell spent time at home, playing video games — a break from the other work his hands were known for: carpentry. Zindell picked up woodworking skills from his father, who wanted to train him in the family craft.

"He had so many skills. He could do carpentry work," she said, adding: "He did roofing work. He could do everything you could think of when it came to building a house. My father trained him to do all of that."

Though she lives in Florence, South Carolina, Brown said she, her brother, Woodard and McGee all grew up in modest Lake City. By midweek, the town of fewer than 6,000 people seemed consumed by the grim loss.

At the local library on Main Street, patrons chatted amongst themselves about condolences, while a few blocks away near the police station a stranger pressed a bouquet of purple flowers into the arms of Shaeed's father.

This month would have marked Shaeed Woodard's 34th birthday, according to his father, James Woodard. Shaeed's cousin Latavia McGee had surprised him with the road trip as a birthday excursion, James Woodard said. Shaeed and Zindell were close; Brown said she also considered him a brother.

By the night of March 5, Brown would get a phone call confirming her worst fears. A family friend phoned to say the doctor's office they were headed to in Mexico called to say McGee was late and thought to be kidnapped. McGee said every day since then for her surviving two siblings and parents has seemed like a "nightmare." Neither family said they accept the cartel's apology for the violent abductions. "It's just crazy to see your own child taken from you in such a way, in a violent way like that," Woodard said. "He

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didn't deserve it because he was a sweetheart. He had a big heart."

## South Carolina No. 1 overall seed in women's NCAA Tournament

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Dawn Staley has South Carolina six wins away from finishing off a historic season.

The Gamecocks are looking to become the 10th women's basketball team to go undefeated for an entire season as they enter the NCAA Tournament as the No. 1 overall seed.

Staley's squad has been challenged a few times this year but has always pulled through. The defending national champions will play Norfolk State in the first round of the tournament, the NCAA selection committee revealed Sunday night.

"It didn't take a loss for us to learn from the lessons of a close game," Staley said. "Now we found ourselves in a position where we can't afford to lose."

While the Gamecocks, led by star Aliyah Boston, have been a lock to be the top seed for most of the season, several schools were vying for the other No. 1s, including Iowa, Indiana, Virginia Tech, Stanford and Utah. The Hawkeyes, led by electrifying guard Caitlin Clark, have been a top seed twice before, in 1988 and 1992.

The committee ultimately chose the Hoosiers, Hokies and Cardinal. Indiana and Virginia Tech are first-time No. 1 seeds. Stanford has been a top seed 13 times now, including in the last three tournaments.

"We spent a lot of time on a variety of things. Certainly the number one line and the right teams hosting," selection committee chair Lisa Peterson said.

The tournament begins Wednesday with two First Four games. The full madness starts with 16 games Friday and 16 more the next day.

South Carolina may have the easiest path to the Final Four in Dallas as it won't have to go far from home. The Gamecocks, who are the 18th team to reach the NCAA tourney unbeaten, will play their first two games on campus before potentially heading 90 minutes away to Greenville, South Carolina, for one of the two regionals. The Gamecocks just won the Southeastern Conference Tournament at that site.

"It's great. When we got shipped out to Stockton (California, in 2017), we thought it was a drag, but we end up winning the national championship. So there are blessings in all types of situations," Staley said. "We're blessed that Greenville was a region. We're blessed that we did enough to get to sent to this region and we have to make it work for us. We know it won't be easy."

The NCAA changed its format this season and is having two regional sites for the Sweet 16 and Elite Eight rounds. Greenville hosts one and Seattle the other. Once again the top four teams in each region will host the opening two rounds.

The other top teams in South Carolina's bracket are No. 2 seed Maryland, No. 3 Notre Dame and No. 4 UCLA. The Gamecocks beat both Maryland and UCLA this season.

"I like it. Some familiarity. Take care of Norfolk State, then see where that takes us," Staley said. "I don't want to put the cart before the horse. Sometimes when you're in a tournament setting like this it's always a good thing to have played someone."

Indiana is the other top seed in Greenville. Utah is the 2 seed with LSU third and Villanova fourth.

UConn, which was the last team to go unbeaten and win the title in 2015-16, is looking to extend its own history and reach the Final Four for the 15th consecutive year. The Huskies had a difficult year with injuries but finally started to get healthy heading into March. Star guard Azzi Fudd, who missed 22 games with a knee injury, returned for the Big East Tournament and helped the Huskies win it.

Geno Auriemma's team, which has won a record 11 national championships, is a No. 2 seed in Seattle. The Hokies are the top seed in that part of the bracket. Ohio State is the 3 seed and Tennessee the 4. The Lady Vols have been in every NCAA Tournament since it started in 1982.

The Cardinal are the No. 1 in the other Seattle regional. Iowa is the No. 2, Duke the 3 seed and Texas 4.

The Atlantic Coast Conference has eight teams in the tournament with the Big Ten, SEC and Pac-12 each having seven. The Big 12 has six and the Big East five.

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Four teams will be making their first appearance in the tournament: Southern Utah, Southeastern Louisiana, Sacramento State and Saint Louis.

Columbia, Kansas, Massachusetts and Oregon were the first four teams out of the field.

## March Madness 2023: Set your brackets! Tide the No. 1 seed

By The Associated Press undefined

March Madness is here! Here is what to know, including the favorites and underdogs as well as key games and how to watch the NCAA Tournament:

**TOP SEEDS** The top four seeds in the tournament are Alabama, Houston, Kansas, and Purdue. Each is in a region, some tougher than others (on paper). We break them down for you: **EAST REGION:** The Boilermakers got a No. 1 seed for the fourth time after edging Penn State 67-65 in the Big Ten championship game, but they face potential hurdles in Memphis and surging Duke. Memphis (26-8) is fresh from a big upset of top-ranked Houston and led by Kendrick Davis. Duke (26-8) shut down Virginia in a 59-49 ACC title game win. **SOUTH REGION:** Alabama is a No. 1 seed for the first time after sweeping the Southeastern Conference regular season and tournament titles behind league player of the year Brandon Miller, capped by an 82-63 romp over Texas A&M. They will open the tourney not far from home, in Birmingham, Alabama. Potential hurdles for the Crimson Tide could include Baylor, Arizona. There's an intriguing early matchup between No. 5 seed San Diego State and No. 12 Charleston, which has 31 wins. Furman is making its first tourney appearance since 1980. **MIDWEST REGION:** Houston (31-3) got a top seed despite stumbling 75-65 against unranked Memphis in the American Athletic Conference title game, minus league player of the year Marcus Sasser (strained groin). They will open against Northern Kentucky (22-12). Potential hurdles could include Penn State, which took Purdue down to the wire in the Big Ten, and SEC Tournament runner-up Texas A&M. **WEST REGION:** The Jayhawks fell 76-56 to Texas in the Big 12 championship game and they wound up with the top seed in a stacked region. They will open against Howard (22-12), making its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 1992. Potential hurdles include No. 6 TCU (21-12), which beat Kansas at Allen Field House 83-60 on Jan. 21, and Arkansas (20-13).

### GAMES TO WATCH

No. 7 Texas A&M (25-9) vs. No. 10 Penn State (22-13), Thursday, 9:55 p.m. ET (TBS) The Aggies, who felt snubbed last season, are making their first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2018, and the Nittany Lions' drought dated to 2011. Both flirted with league tournament titles and have been hot. Texas A&M went 19-4 after a loss to Wofford and Penn State has won eight of 10.

No. 8 Arkansas (20-13) vs. No. 9 Illinois (20-12), Thursday, 4:30 p.m. ET (TBS). The Razorbacks have made back-to-back trips to the Elite Eight. Top prospect and potential top NBA draft pick Nick Smith Jr. has only played in 14 games because of knee issues, but has scored 20-plus in half of the team's last six. Illinois won the Big Ten season title before being ousted by Penn State in the first round of the league tournament. Illinois is led by transfers Terrence Shannon Jr. (Texas Tech) and Matthew Mayer, who helped lead Baylor to the 2021 national championship.

No. 5 Miami (25-7) vs. Drake (27-7), Friday, 7:35 p.m. ET (TBS). The game features two conference players of the year, Miami's Isaiah Wong in the ACC for the regular-season co-champions, and Drake's Tucker DeVries from the Missouri Valley Conference tournament champs. DeVries is averaging 19 points while Wong leads the team in scoring (16.2 points per game), assists and steals. Drake made the Elite Eight three years running, though it has been a while (1969-71).

No. 6 Kentucky (21-11) vs. No. 11 Providence (21-11), Friday, 7:10 p.m. ET. (CBS). Led by last year's AP player of the year Oscar Tshiebwe, the Wildcats are trying to avoid back-to-back first-round exits after that infamous defeat to Saint Peter's. The Friars, meanwhile, went to the Sweet 16 before losing to eventual champion Kansas. They're led by Kentucky transfer Bryce Hopkins.

### GO FIGURE

Texas Southern and Kennesaw State are in. North Carolina is not.

The Tar Heels are the first team since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1985 to start the season

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ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 poll and finish it with an NCAA tourney airball.

Kennesaw State, three years removed from a 1-28 season, made the field. So did Southwestern Athletic Conference Tournament champion Texas Southern, which is 14-20. Southern Conference champ Furman is dancing for the first time since 1980 and MEAC winner Howard makes its first appearance since 1992.

## HOW TO WATCH

Every game of the men's tournament will be aired somewhere, either on CBS, TBS, TNT or TruTV and their digital platforms. CBS will have the Final Four semifinals and national title game this year.

There are multiple sites listing game times, channel and announcing team, including the NCAA and CBS. The NCAA will again stream games via its March Madness Live option and CBS games will be streamed on Paramount+.

## BETTING GUIDE

Who's going to win the national championship? With the regular season over, the betting favorites as of this week to reach the Final Four are Houston, Alabama, Kansas and Purdue, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

MARCH MADNESS CALENDAR Selection Sunday set the bracket matchups for the First Four and first- and second-round games that stretch from Florida to California. Sweet 16 weekend will see games in New York City (East Region), Las Vegas (West), Kansas City, Missouri (Midwest), and Louisville, Kentucky (South). Where is the Final Four? In Houston, on April 1, with the championship game on April 3. Basketball aficionados, take note: The women's NCAA Tournament will hold its Final Four in Dallas, a four-hour drive up the road from Houston. \_\_\_ AP March Madness coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/march-madness> and bracket: <https://apnews.com/hub/ncaa-mens-bracket> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## As Biden weighs Willow, he blocks other Alaska oil drilling

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — As President Joe Biden prepares a final decision on the huge Willow oil project in Alaska, his administration announced he will prevent or limit oil drilling in 16 million acres in Alaska and the Arctic Ocean.

Plans announced Sunday night will bar drilling in nearly 3 million acres of the Beaufort Sea — closing it off from oil exploration — and limit drilling in more than 13 million acres in a vast swath of land known as the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska.

The moves come as regulators prepare to announce a final decision on the \$8 billion Willow project, a controversial oil drilling plan pushed by ConocoPhillips in the petroleum reserve. Climate activists have rallied against project, calling it a "carbon bomb" that would be a betrayal of Biden's campaign pledges to curb new oil and gas drilling.

Meanwhile, Alaska lawmakers, unions and indigenous communities have pressured Biden to approve the project, saying it would bring much-needed jobs and billions of dollars in taxes and mitigation funds to the vast, snow- and ice-covered region nearly 600 miles (965 kilometers) from Anchorage. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, called Willow "one of the biggest, most important resource development projects in our state's history."

Biden's decision on Willow will be one of his most consequential climate decisions and comes as he gears up for a likely reelection bid in 2024. A decision to approve Willow risks alienating young voters who have urged stronger climate action by the White House and flooded social media with demands to stop the Willow project. Approval also could spark protests similar to those against the failed Keystone XL oil pipeline during the Obama administration.

Rejection of the project would meet strong resistance from Alaska's bipartisan congressional delegation, which met with top officials at the White House in recent days to lobby for the project. Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who provided key support to confirm Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, said it was no secret she has cooperated with the White House on a range of issues.



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"Cooperation goes both ways," she told reporters.

Haaland, who fought the Willow project as a member of Congress, has the final decision on whether to approve it, although top White House climate officials are likely to be involved, with input from Biden himself. The White House said no final decision on Willow has been reached.

Under the conservation plan announced Sunday, Biden will bar drilling in nearly 3 million acres of the Arctic Ocean, and impose new protections in the petroleum reserve.

The withdrawal of the offshore area ensures that important habitat for whales, seals, polar bears and other wildlife "will be protected in perpetuity from extractive development," the White House said in a statement.

The action completes protections for the entire Beaufort Sea Planning Area, building upon President Barack Obama's 2016 withdrawal of the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the majority of the Beaufort Sea, the White House said.

Separately, the administration moved to protect more than 13 million acres within the petroleum reserve, a 23-million acre chunk of land on Alaska's North Slope set aside a century ago for future oil production.

The proposed Willow project is within the reserve, and ConocoPhillips has long held leases for the site. About half the reserve is off limits to oil and gas leasing under an Obama-era rule reinstated by the Biden administration last year.

Areas to be protected include the Teshekpuk Lake, Utukok Uplands, Colville River, Kasegaluk Lagoon and Peard Bay Special Areas, collectively known for their globally significant habitat for grizzly and polar bears, caribou and hundreds of thousands of migratory birds.

Abigail Dillen, president of the environmental group Earthjustice, welcomed the new conservation plan, but said if the Biden administration believes it has authority to limit oil development in the petroleum reserve, officials should extend those protections to the Willow site.

"They have the authority to block Willow," she said in an interview Sunday.

Athan Manuel, director of the Sierra Club's lands protection program, said the benefits of the new protections would be more than undone by damage from Willow, which would be the biggest new oil field in decades in Alaska, producing up to 180,000 barrels per day, according to ConocoPhillips.

"No proposal poses a bigger threat to lands, wildlife, communities and our climate than ConocoPhillips' Willow project," Manuel said in a statement. "Oil and gas leasing on public lands and waters must end — full stop. The eyes of the world are watching to see whether this administration will live up to its climate promises."

In 2015, President Barack Obama halted exploration in coastal areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas, and he later withdrew most other potential Arctic Ocean lease areas — about 98 percent of the Arctic outer continental shelf. The bans were intended to protect polar bears, walruses, ice seals and Alaska Native villages that depend on the animals.

President Donald Trump reversed Obama's decision, but a federal judge restored the Obama-era restrictions in 2019, ruling that Trump exceeded his authority.

The Biden administration received one bid in December for the right to drill offshore for oil and gas in Alaska's Cook Inlet.

## March Madness: Alabama, Houston, Kansas, Purdue the 1 seeds

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

The top overall seed, Alabama, has been on a roll despite being entangled in a murder case. Another No. 1 seed, defending national champion Kansas, is coming off a blowout loss and has a coach coming out of the hospital. Yet another, Houston, just watched its best player go down in a heap with a scary injury.

This year's March Madness frontrunners are anything but perfect, but the presence of these teams and all their questions at the top of the bracket could make for precisely what the NCAA wants its tournament to be — a perfectly unpredictable mess.

Most of the drama in picking this year's bracket was resolved far before Selection Sunday.

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Arizona State and Nevada made it off the bubble and into the 68-team field. Rutgers and Oklahoma State did not. Purdue, with 7-foot-4 Zach Edey leading the way, edged out UCLA for the fourth and final No. 1 seed.

And in a decision most everyone saw coming, the selection committee left North Carolina, last year's national runner-up, out of the tournament. It made the Tar Heels the first team since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1985 to start the season ranked No. 1 in the Associated Press poll and finish it by not making the Big Dance.

The team they lost to, Kansas, is trying to become the first back-to-back NCAA champion since Florida in 2007.

The Jayhawks earned the top seed in the West Region, but only the third overall, behind the Crimson Tide and the Cougars. The Jayhawks are awaiting the return of coach Bill Self, who went to the hospital last week complaining of chest tightness and concerns with his balance. He has been discharged and is expected back this week.

The head of the selection committee, Chris Reynolds, said it took every injury, and every absence, into account.

"It's certainly something the committee talked about during the course of the year, and certainly played a factor in seeding and selection," said Reynolds, the athletic director at Bradley.

He said the committee also did not ignore lopsided losses: Two of Kansas' seven Ls came in March to Texas, a No. 2 seed, by 16 and 20 points.

"They mark it how they feel and we're just going to do what we need to do to get where we need to be," Kansas forward KJ Adams said.

The tournament begins Tuesday with two First Four games. The full madness starts Thursday with 16 first-round games, then 16 more the next day.

Kansas' loss to Texas in the Big 12 semifinal Saturday likely played into FanDuel Sportsbook setting the Jayhawks at 10-1 to win the title, behind both Alabama of the South Region (8-1 odds) and the overall favorite, Houston (5-1 odds), which would be playing the Final Four in its hometown if it wins the Midwest Region. The semifinals and finals are set for NRG Stadium on April 1 and 3.

The Cougars lost their conference title game Sunday, in large part because they were without Marcus Sasser, the leading scorer who left the previous day's game early after sliding awkwardly and hurting his groin.

Purdue likely found its way onto the "1" line when it won the program's second Big Ten tournament title Sunday, less than 24 hours after UCLA, also dinged-up this season, fell by two to Arizona in the Pac-12 title game.

For Alabama, the SEC tournament was a relative breeze – nobody stayed within double digits of the Tide -- unlike the past two months, which have been met with a near constant flow of headlines about a former player, Darius Miles, who is accused of capital murder in the Jan. 15 killing of 23-year-old Jamea Harris.

"I'm not sure we would have predicted this," said coach Nate Oats of the Tide, which is a No. 1 seed for the first time. "Being the No. 1 overall seed is great. It says what an unbelievable regular season we've had. You've still got to go win the games."

The SEC and Big Ten led the way by placing eight teams each in the 68-team field. Duke won the ACC for the 22nd time and was one of five teams from that conference in a relatively weak year.

But this tournament is always about more than big schools with big pedigrees.

Some teams to watch for include 13th-seeded Iona, coached by the legend, Rick Pitino, who has the Gaels in the show for the second time in three years – with some people wondering if he'll be heading over to a vacant job at St. John's soon. Iona got a brutal draw – a first-round meeting against fourth-seeded UConn.

There is Southern Conference champion Furman, back in the tournament for the first time since 1980, and MEAC champ Howard, back in the tourney for the first time since 1992.

There is Kennesaw State, the program that went 1-28 in 2019-20 and now finds itself in the bracket. For the rest of the dreamers, there is Texas Southern – the team that won its conference tournament as a

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No. 8 seed and comes to March Madness at 14-20 for a play-in game against Fairleigh Dickinson.

## Illness sidelines Springsteen tour as 3 concerts postponed

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

SOUTH AMBOY, N.J. (AP) — Bruce Springsteen's planned performance Tuesday in Albany has become the third concert in a week postponed by the New Jersey rocker, who cited illness as the reason in a tweet Sunday but did not give specifics.

The postponements come a month into Springsteen's first major tour in six years.

"The Boss," as he is known to his fans, also gave himself and his E Street Band sick days last Thursday when they were to have performed in Columbus, Ohio, and again for a scheduled concert Sunday at Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, Connecticut.

Details were lacking in Springsteen's social media posts. Though the Twitter feed blamed the latest postponement on illness, it did not specify who was ill or what kind of illness was involved.

It merely said: "Due to illness, Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band's concert at MVP Arena in Albany on Tuesday, March 14 has been postponed. We are working on rescheduling the date so please hold on to your tickets as they will be valid for the rescheduled show."

The post made no mention of a major winter storm forecast to hit Albany late Monday.

On Saturday, E Street Band member Little Steven Van Zandt posted an encouraging message about the concert postponements on Twitter, saying: "No need to be anxious or afraid. Nothing serious. Just a temporary situation. We will all be back in full force very soon."

Springsteen, 73, began the tour on Feb. 1 in Tampa, Florida, before 20,000 fans who mostly stood through the 28-song arena show that included staples like "Born to Run," "Glory Days," "Rosalita," "Promised Land" and "Backstreets."

In a story last month that began "COVID has come to E Street," the Asbury Park Press reported that E Street Band members Van Zandt and Soozie Tyrell missed a Feb. 10 show in Dallas.

The newspaper, quoting one of the show spectators, said Springsteen from the stage blamed their absences on COVID-19.

In his Twitter feed at the time, Van Zandt answered a fan who asked why he missed the show with: "Sorry folks. Covid."

He added that he had "a very mild case," crediting his vaccines and adding: "No real danger or damage." He returned to the tour soon afterward.

The setbacks come several months after Springsteen released his latest album, "Only the Strong Survive," in November.

The famed musician has sold about 140 million albums while winning 20 Grammys, an Oscar and a Tony award in a career that has spanned all or parts of six decades.

The first leg of his U.S. tour is to end with an April 14 homecoming in New Jersey before the band goes abroad starting with an April 28 show in Barcelona, Spain. Springsteen then returns for more U.S. concert dates this summer, including a performance at Wrigley Field in Chicago, and other dates into December.

## As atmospheric river exits, a new storm threatens California

By NIC COURY and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

WATSONVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Wet, miserable weather continued across huge swaths of California on Sunday as an atmospheric river that caused major flooding flowed eastward, while a new storm threatened another onslaught of rain, snow and gusting winds as soon as Monday.

The National Weather Service said the next system could exacerbate severe flooding that overwhelmed the area in recent days, prompting a levee failure and widespread evacuations Saturday in farming communities near the state's central coast.

The new storm is not expected to bring as much rain, but forecasters warned that "considerable flooding" could occur at lower elevations from additional rain and creeks and streams swollen with snowmelt.

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"Definitely prepare for some more flooding impacts. The ground is very saturated. We're already seeing some impacts from some light amounts," National Weather Service forecaster Eleanor Dhuyvetter said.

A tornado briefly touched down in Tuolumne County during severe thunderstorms Saturday that also dumped an inch (2.5 centimeters) of hail, the weather service office in Sacramento said. Tornadoes were possible again Sunday afternoon, forecasters warned.

Monday's incoming rain and snow is expected to extend from central California to Oregon and northern Nevada. Wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) are expected in some places and could damage power lines and snap tree branches.

But the new storm is moving fast, meaning it won't have time to dump as much rain.

Over the past two days, more than 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow fell at a measuring station in the Sierra Nevada, and more is expected. The snowpack is now nearly twice the average, and the highest in about four decades, according to UC Berkeley's Central Sierra Snow Lab.

The snowpack stores much-needed water for a state seeking to emerge from a three-year drought.

As much as a foot (30 centimeters) of rain fell in the Big Sur area of the state over a two-day period, weather data.

Authorities suggest that residents have a plan in case further evacuations orders are issued.

Across Monterey County, more than 8,500 people were evacuated Saturday, including roughly 1,700 residents — many of them Latino farmworkers — from the unincorporated community of Pajaro.

"We are still in disaster response mode," said Monterey County spokesman Nicholas Pasculli on Sunday. He said the county is staging high water rescue teams around the county and opening more shelters in anticipation of more flooding.

Highway 1, also known as the Pacific Coast Highway, is closed at several points along Big Sur as well as near Pajaro due to flooding.

The atmospheric river, known as a "Pineapple Express" because it brought warm subtropical moisture across the Pacific from near Hawaii, was melting lower parts of the huge snowpack in California's mountains.

Because of the massive flooding over the early weekend, more than 50 people had to be rescued by first responders and the California National Guard. One video showed a Guard member helping a driver out of a car trapped by water up to their waists.

The extent of property damages was still uncertain but Luis Alejo, chair of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, sought help from the state and federal governments.

"The need will be great! Will take months for our residents to repair homes!" he wrote in a tweet Saturday.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has declared emergencies in 34 counties in recent weeks, and the Biden administration approved a presidential disaster declaration for some on Friday morning. President Joe Biden spoke with Newsom on Saturday to pledge federal support for California's emergency response, the White House said.

Weather-related power outages affected more than 17,000 customers in Monterey County late Saturday, according to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. By late Sunday morning, about 7,000 were still without electricity.

The governor's office said it was continuing to monitor the situation in Pajaro.

The Pajaro River separates the counties of Santa Cruz and Monterey. Officials had been working to shore up parts of the river's levee system when it was breached around midnight Friday into Saturday. Crews began working to fix the levee around daybreak Saturday as residents slept in evacuation centers.

Built in the late 40s to provide flood protection, the levee has been a known risk for decades with several breaches in the 1990s. Emergency repairs to a section of the berm was undertaken in January. A \$400 million rebuild is set to begin in 2025.

This week's storm marked the state's 10th atmospheric river of the winter, storms that have brought enormous amounts of rain and snow to the state and helped lessen drought conditions. State reservoirs that had dipped to strikingly low levels are now well above the average for this time of year, prompting state officials to release water from dams to assist with flood control and make room for even more rain.

## Can the chaos from Silicon Valley Bank's fall be contained?

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Can Washington come to the rescue of the depositors of failed Silicon Valley Bank? Is it even politically possible?

That was one of the growing questions in Washington Sunday as policymakers tried to figure out whether the U.S. government — and its taxpayers — should bail out a failed bank that largely served Silicon Valley, with all its wealth and power.

Prominent Silicon Valley personalities and executives have been hitting the giant red “PANIC” button, saying that if Washington does not come to the rescue of Silicon Valley bank's depositors, more bank runs are likely.

“The gov't has about 48 hours to fix a soon-to-be-irreversible mistake,” Bill Ackman, a prominent Wall Street investor, wrote on Twitter. Ackman has said he does not have any deposits with Silicon Valley Bank but is invested in companies that do.

Some other Silicon Valley personalities have been even more bombastic.

“On Monday 100,000 Americans will be lined up at their regional bank demanding their money — most will not get it,” Jason Calacanis wrote on Twitter. Calacanis, a tech investor, has been close with Elon Musk, who recently took over the social media network.

Silicon Valley Bank failed on Friday, as fearful depositors withdrew billions of dollars from the bank in a matter of hours, forcing U.S. banking regulators to urgently close the bank in the middle of the workday to stop the bank run. It's the second-largest bank failure in history, behind the collapse of Washington Mutual at the height of the 2008 financial crisis.

Silicon Valley Bank was a unique creature in the banking world. The 16th-largest bank in the country largely served technology startup companies, venture capital firms, and well-paid technology workers, as its name implies. Because of this, the vast majority of the deposits at Silicon Valley Bank were in business accounts with balances significantly above the insured \$250,000 limit.

Its failure has caused more than \$150 billion in deposits to be now locked up in receivership, which means startups and other businesses may not be able to get to their money for a long time.

Staff at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation — the agency that insures bank deposits under \$250,000 — have worked through the weekend looking for a potential buyer for the assets of the failed bank. There have been multiple bidders for assets, but as of Sunday morning, the bank's corpse remained in the custody of the U.S. government.

Despite the panic from Silicon Valley, there are no signs that the bank's failure could lead to a 2008-like crisis. The nation's banking system is healthy, holds more capital than it has ever held in its history, and has undergone multiple stress tests that shows the overall system could withstand even a substantial economic recession.

Further, it appears that Silicon Valley Bank's failure appears to be a unique situation where the bank's executives made poor business decisions by buying bonds just as the Federal Reserve was about to raise interest rates, and the bank was singularly exposed to one particular industry that has seen a severe contraction in the past year.

Investors have been looking for banks in similar situations. The stock of First Republic Bank, a bank that serves the wealthy and technology companies, went down nearly a third in two days. PacWest Bank, a California-based bank that caters to small to medium-sized businesses, plunged 38% on Friday.

In a sign of how uncertain it is for these medium-sized banks, First Republic Bank sent an email to clients Sunday telling customers that it is well-capitalized and has no liquidity issues that might have an impact on the bank.

While highly unusual, it was clear that a bank failure this size was causing worries. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen as well as the White House, has been “watching closely” the developments; the governor of California has spoken to President Biden; and bills have now been proposed in Congress to up the FDIC insurance limit to temporarily protect depositors.

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"I've been working all weekend with our banking regulators to design appropriate policies to address this situation," Yellen said on "Face the Nation" on Sunday.

But Yellen made it clear in her interview that if Silicon Valley is expecting Washington to come to its rescue, it is mistaken. Asked whether a bailout was on the table, Yellen said, "We're not going to do that again."

"But we are concerned about depositors, and we're focused on trying to meet their needs," she added.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Virginia, said on ABC's "This Week" that it would be a "moral hazard" to potentially bail out Silicon Valley's uninsured depositors. Moral hazard was a term used often during the 2008 financial crisis for why Washington shouldn't have bailed out Lehman Brothers.

The growing panic narrative among tech industry insiders is many businesses who stored their operating cash at Silicon Valley Bank will be unable to make payroll or pay office expenses in the coming days or weeks of those uninsured deposits are not released. However, the FDIC has said it plans to pay an unspecified "advanced dividend" — i.e. a portion of the uninsured deposits — to depositors this week and said more advances will be paid as assets are sold.

The ideal situation is the FDIC finds a singular buyer of Silicon Valley Bank's assets, or maybe two or three buyers. It is just as likely that the bank will be sold off piecemeal over the coming weeks. Insured depositors will have access to their funds on Monday, and any uninsured deposits will be available as the FDIC sells off assets to make depositors whole.

Todd Phillips, a consultant and former attorney at the FDIC, said he expects that uninsured depositors will likely get back 85% to 90% of their deposits if the sale of the bank's assets is done in an orderly manner. He said it was never the intention of Congress to protect business accounts with deposit insurance — that the theory was businesses should be doing their due diligence on banks when storing their cash.

Protecting bank accounts to include businesses would require an act of Congress, Phillips said. It's unclear whether the banking industry would support higher insurance limits as well, since FDIC insurance is paid for by the banks through assessments and higher limits would require higher assessments.

Phillips added the best thing Washington can do is communicate that the overall banking system is safe and that uninsured depositors will get most of their money back.

"Folks in Washington need to be forcefully countering the narrative on Twitter coming from Silicon Valley. If people realize they are going to get 80% to 90% of your deposits back, but it will take awhile, it will do a lot to stop a panic," he said.

## Russian advance stalls in Ukraine's Bakhmut, think tank says

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's advance seems to have stalled in Moscow's campaign to capture the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, a leading think tank said in an assessment of the longest ground battle of the war.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said there were no confirmed advances by Russian forces in Bakhmut. Russian forces and units from the Kremlin-controlled paramilitary Wagner Group continued to launch ground attacks in the city, but there was no evidence that they were able to make any progress, the ISW said.

The founder of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said Sunday on the Telegram messaging app that the situation in Bakhmut was "difficult, very difficult, with the enemy fighting for each meter."

The ISW report issued Saturday cited the spokesperson of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' Eastern Group, Serhii Cherevaty, who said that fighting in the Bakhmut area had been more intense this week than the previous one. According to Cherevaty, there were 23 clashes in the city over the previous 24 hours.

The ISW's report comes following claims of Russian progress earlier this week. The U.K. Defense Ministry said Saturday that paramilitary units from the Kremlin-controlled Wagner Group had seized most of eastern Bakhmut, with a river flowing through the city now marking the front line of the fighting. The assessment highlighted that Russia's assault will be difficult to sustain without more significant personnel losses.

The mining city of Bakhmut is located in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, one of four regions of

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Ukraine that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last year. Russia's military opened the campaign to take control of Bakhmut in August, and both sides have experienced staggering casualties. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed not to retreat.

In its latest report, the U.K. Defense Ministry said Sunday that the impact of heavy Russian military casualties in Ukraine varies dramatically across Russia. The British military's intelligence update said Moscow and St. Petersburg remained "relatively unscathed," particularly among members of Russia's elite.

In many of Russia's eastern regions, however, the death rate as a percentage of the population is "30-40 times higher than in Moscow," the U.K. ministry said. It added that ethnic minorities often take the biggest hit. In the southern Astrakhan region, for example, about "75% of casualties come from the minority Kazakh and Tartar populations."

Russia's mounting casualties are reflected in a loss of government control over the country's information sphere, the Institute for the Study of War said. The think tank said Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova confirmed "infighting in the Kremlin inner circle" and that the Kremlin has effectively ceded control over the country's information space, with Putin unable to readily regain control.

The ISW saw Zakharova's comments, made at a forum on the "practical and technological aspects of information and cognitive warfare in modern realities" in Moscow, as "noteworthy" and in line with the think tank's long standing assessments about the "deteriorating Kremlin regime and information space control dynamics."

In a separate statement, Zakharova said Sunday that the next round of talks regarding extending the Black Sea grain deal would take place Monday in Geneva. A Russian delegation is expected to meet with top U.N. officials. The deal currently is set to expire on March 18.

The wartime agreement that unblocked grain shipments from Ukraine and helped temper rising global food prices was last extended by four months in November.

The deal, which Ukraine and Russia signed in separate agreements with the U.N. and Turkey on July 22, established a safe shipping corridor in the Black Sea and inspection procedures to address concerns that cargo vessels might carry weapons or launch attacks.

Ukraine and Russia are key global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other food to countries in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia where millions of impoverished people lack enough to eat. Russia was also the world's top exporter of fertilizer before the war.

A loss of those supplies following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 had pushed up global food prices and fueled concerns of a hunger crisis in poorer countries.

Zelenskyy said Sunday that he posthumously conferred the highest national title, Hero of Ukraine, on a soldier who is thought to have been killed by Russian-speakers. Zelenskyy identified him as Oleksandr Matsiyevsky, although the Ukrainian military previously gave a different name for the soldier pending final confirmation.

A brief video that surfaced this month and caused a national outcry in Ukraine showed a man standing and smoking a cigarette in a wooded area and exclaiming "Glory to Ukraine" before being cut down with gunfire. Senior Ukrainian officials alleged, without providing further evidence, that the man was an unarmed prisoner of war killed by Russian soldiers.

Matsiyevsky was "a Ukrainian warrior. A man who will be known and remembered forever," Zelenskyy said. Ukraine's national security service, the SBU, said Matsiyevsky had served as a sniper and was shot on Dec. 30.

Ukrainian authorities reported Sunday morning that Russian attacks over the past day killed at least five people and wounded another seven across Ukraine's Donetsk and Kherson regions, local Ukrainian authorities reported Sunday morning.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said that two people were killed in the region, one in the city of Kostyanivka and one in the village of Tonenke. Four civilians were wounded.

Also in the Donetsk province, Sloviansk Mayor Vadim Lyakh said the power grid and railway lines were damaged by Russian shelling on Sunday, but didn't report any casualties.

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Local officials in the southern Kherson province confirmed that Russian forces fired 29 times on Ukrainian-controlled territory in the region on Saturday, with residential areas of the regional capital, Kherson, coming under fire three times. Three people died in the province and a further three were wounded.

A woman was wounded in Russian shelling in the village of Bilozerka on Sunday, just outside Kherson. In Kharkiv province, three districts came under fire, but no civilian casualties were reported.

The governor of the Mykolaiv region, Vitali Kim, said the town of Ochakiv at the mouth of the Dnieper River came under artillery fire early Sunday. Cars were set ablaze and private houses and high-rise buildings sustained damage. No casualties were reported.

## 'Scream VI' tops box office with franchise-best \$44.5M

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Oscar weekend belonged to "Scream VI" in theaters, as the horror sequel notched a franchise-best \$44.5 million in domestic ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The Paramount Pictures and Spyglass Media Group co-production sailed past expectations, easily surpassing the previous series high of \$32 million that "Scream 2" opened with in 1997. The film's robust debut, coming as Hollywood prepared to gather for the 95th Academy Awards, was yet another reminder of how horror has come to be one of the industry's few sure things at the box office.

After lying dormant for more than a decade, the "Scream" franchise, previously directed by Wes Craven and released by Dimension Films, has found a ripe revival with a young cast led by "Wednesday" star Jenna Ortega and Melissa Barrera.

Directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett have brought back the 27-year-old series' meta slasher storylines and serial killer Ghostface, and it's paying off. Last year's "Scream V" grossed \$137 million worldwide on a production budget of \$24 million. In the latest chapter, Courtney Cox returns as reporter Gale Weathers, as does Hayden Panettiere, a veteran of "Scream IV." But it's the first "Scream" movie without Neve Campbell.

"Scream VI," quickly greenlit after the success of "V," has also fared fairly well with both critics and audiences. On Rotten Tomatoes, it has a 75% fresh rating. Moviegoers gave it a "B+" CinemaScore, a decent grade for a horror film. The sixth "Scream," which cost \$33 million to make, added \$22.6 million overseas.

Last week's top film, "Creed III," slid to second after its above-expectations launch. Michael B. Jordan's MGM "Rocky" spinoff, starring him and Jonathan Majors, earned \$27.1 million in its second weekend. It has rapidly passed \$100 million in U.S. and Canadian theaters.

Columbia Pictures' "65," a science-fiction thriller starring Adam Driver as a space explorer stranded on prehistoric Earth, opened in third place with an estimated \$12.3 million from 3,405 locations, and an additional \$7.2 million internationally. That might be better than expected, too, for a film that got terrible reviews from critics. (It scored just 35% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes.) But "65" reportedly carried a hefty production budget of about \$90 million, though tax rebates roughly halved that cost to financiers including Sony, Bron Studios and TSG.

Bobby Farrelly's "Champions," starring Woody Harrelson as a disgraced coach trying to lead a basketball team to the Special Olympics, opened with \$5.2 million in 3,030 locations. Audiences (an "A" CinemaScore) have liked it more than reviewers (53% on Rotten Tomatoes).

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Scream VI," \$44.5 million.
2. "Creed III," \$27.1 million.
3. "65," \$12.3 million.
4. "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania," \$7 million.
5. "Cocaine Bear," \$6.2 million.
6. "Jesus Revolution," \$5.2 million.
7. "Champions," \$5.2 million.



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8. "Avatar: The Way of Water," \$2.7 million.
9. "Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba: To the Swords," \$1.9 million.
10. "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," \$1.7 million.

## How does Oscars voting work? This is how winners are decided

By The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The road to an Oscar winds through a long awards season, which finally culminates Sunday at the Academy Awards. We take you through the process of getting that golden statuette into a winner's hand — this is how Oscar voting works:

### WHO VOTES ON THE OSCARS?

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences boasts some 10,000-plus members, divided among 17 branches. All academy members have to be involved in the movie business in some capacity, but membership isn't restricted to creatives — there are branches for executives and marketing and public relations professionals, as well.

While nominations are mostly decided by members of the relevant branch (directors nominate directors, for instance), all voting members can nominate films for best picture. Once nominees are decided, all voting members are eligible to cast their ballots in any category.

In recent years, the academy has taken steps to diversify its membership, especially after receiving criticism for a spate of all-white acting nominees.. It adds new members once a year.

### WHEN DOES OSCAR VOTING TAKE PLACE?

Voting takes place over a few days not too long before the ceremony — in 2023, voting opened March 2 and ended March 7, five days before the big night.

### HOW ARE VOTES CAST?

While the final results can sometimes be controversial, there's no risk of hanging chads — voting takes place entirely online.

Tabulation for most categories is simple — the nominee that gets the most votes wins.

Best picture, on the other hand, employs ranked-choice voting (also known as preferential voting). Voters order the nominees by preference; if one movie comes away with more than 50% of the first-place votes in the first round, that's the winner. But if no movie meets that threshold, then the one with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated — people who had ranked that film first will have their votes transferred to their second choices. And so on it goes until some movie wins a majority.

It sounds complicated, we know, but proponents of ranked-choice voting argue that it's more representative, especially in a large field of nominees.

### WHO KNOWS THE WINNERS BEFORE THEY'RE ANNOUNCED?

According to the academy website, just two PricewaterhouseCoopers partners know the results beforehand. PwC is the accounting firm that tabulates the votes. Each partner is stationed in the Dolby Theatre's wings during the ceremony with a full set of winners' envelopes. They're charged with handing the sealed envelope to the winner.

Infamously, in 2017, a PwC accountant handed Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway the wrong envelope, resulting in the "La La Land"/"Moonlight" best picture fiasco.

## How BBC host's tweet, suspension upended UK's sports weekend

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The BBC's sports coverage was hit with a second day of severe disruptions Sunday as dozens of staff refused to work in solidarity with top soccer host Gary Lineker, who was suspended by the broadcaster after he tweeted criticism of the British government's asylum policy.

The news corporation is reeling from huge fallout and questions over its impartiality after it suspended Lineker, one of English soccer's most lauded players and the corporation's highest-paid presenter, on Friday after he compared the Conservative government's language about migrants to that used in Nazi Germany.

He was referring to the government's plans to stop migrants from arriving in small boats on U.K. shores

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by introducing tough new laws that would detain asylum seekers, deport them and ban them from ever re-entering the U.K.

Immigration and “taking back control” of Britain’s borders has been a hot-button issue in the U.K. since voters backed Britain’s exit from the European Union. Like his predecessors in recent years, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made stopping the English Channel migrant crossings one of his top priorities. But his latest plans have drawn swift condemnation from the U.N.’s refugee agency and many rights groups, which call the policies unethical and unworkable.

Pressure is mounting on the BBC to resolve the crisis, with growing calls for its bosses to step down over allegations of political bias and suppressing free speech.

The controversy has impacted the BBC’s sports programs, with dozens of sports presenters and reporters walking out of their jobs Saturday and Sunday in support of Lineker.

A look at who Lineker is, the debate surrounding his comments and how it’s affected the BBC:

WHO IS LINEKER AND WHAT DID HE SAY?

Lineker, 62, is one of Britain’s most influential media figures and was paid 1.35 million pounds (\$1.6 million) by the BBC last year.

One of England’s greatest strikers with 48 goals in 80 international appearances, he was a household name in Britain even before he became chief presenter of the soccer highlights show “Match of the Day” in 1999.

In a post Tuesday to his 8.7 million followers on Twitter, Lineker described the government’s new plan to detain and deport migrants arriving by boat as “an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s.”

HOW DID THE BBC AND OTHERS REACT?

The BBC — which has prominently covered the Lineker controversy — said the presenter breached its social media guidelines and said he was to step back from presenting “Match of the Day.”

While BBC news staff are barred from expressing political opinions, Linker is a freelancer who doesn’t work in news or current affairs. However, in guidelines updated in 2020, the BBC said presenters with a “significant public profile” had responsibility to avoid taking sides on party political issues or political controversies.

The government called Lineker’s Nazi comparison offensive and unacceptable, and some lawmakers said he should be fired.

In a BBC interview, the broadcaster’s director-general Tim Davie flatly rejected a suggestion that Lineker was suspended due to pressure from the governing Conservative Party.

Many who supported Lineker said he had a right to express his opinion online.

“I cannot see why you would ask someone to step back for saying that,” said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who is known for being outspoken about current affairs. “If I understand it right, it is a message, an opinion about human rights and that should be possible to say.”

Others say the corporation’s impartiality rules seem muddled, pointing out that Lineker did not face discipline when he criticized the Qatar government’s rights record during the World Cup last year.

“It seems that they want to pick and choose when they want to be partial, criticizing others or criticizing other countries or other political parties or other religions seems to be okay,” former England soccer player John Barnes told Sky News.

HOW HAS THE BBC BEEN AFFECTED?

The 100-year-old BBC is under scrutiny particularly because it is a public corporation — it is mostly funded by a license fee paid by all households with a television — and is expected to be independent.

The broadcaster’s neutrality came under recent scrutiny over revelations that its chairman, Richard Sharp — a Conservative Party donor — helped arrange a loan for then Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2021, weeks before he was appointed to the BBC post on the government’s recommendation.

More immediately, the decision to suspend Lineker has triggered a mass walkout of BBC sports presenters and reporters in solidarity with their colleague.

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On Saturday, several daytime soccer shows were pulled at the last minute and "Match of the Day," regarded as something of a British institution since the 1960s, aired with no commentary and only featured shortened footage. Usually lasting around an hour and a half, Saturday's "Match of the Day" only aired for 20 minutes.

Sunday's coverage of the Women's Super League aired without commentary from regular BBC presenters and "Match Of The Day 2" was also expected to run in a reduced format.

Davie apologized for the disruption and said bosses are "working very hard to resolve the situation and make sure that we get output back on air."

## In post-Roe world, college coaches search for middle ground

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

The conversation Cecile Landi never imagined she'd feel compelled to have with the gymnasts she coaches came abruptly last summer, shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade.

Landi, who competed for her native France at the 1996 Olympics before going into coaching with her husband, Laurent, gave her athletes a brief, heartfelt message: I'm here for you no matter what.

"I literally will do whatever they need me to do (if they get pregnant), even if I guess it puts me in trouble," said Landi, who coaches in Texas, a state with one of the country's strictest abortion bans.

For Landi, whose athletes have included seven-time Olympic medalist and five-time world champion Simone Biles and 2020 Olympic silver medalist Jordan Chiles, having a public conversation about such a private matter is part of her evolving role.

"It's just way more than coaching, the relation we have with the athletes, talking to them about everything," she said.

Landi's holistic approach to her job reflects the rapidly shifting tectonic plates of the athlete-coach relationship at all levels of sports, particularly those involving women.

The overturn of Roe v. Wade added another complex and potentially fraught layer for coaches and athletes to navigate, joining a list that includes everything from the ever-evolving rules around name, image and likeness to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and transgender rights to states weighing whether to track the menstrual cycles of high schoolers.

For some coaches, the constantly shifting landscape is making their profession more demanding than ever.

"They're getting overwhelmed," said Dr. Kathryn Ackerman, a sports medicine physician based in Boston and the co-chair of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee's Women's Health Task Force. "They are overwhelmed with all of the different issues that are coming into the female athlete space."

None may have a greater long-term impact than the overturn of Roe, a move that took away women's constitutional protections for abortion and allowed individual states to take up the issue. More than a dozen states have since enacted laws that restrict or outright ban abortion.

Women's athletics, particularly at the NCAA level, finds itself in largely uncharted territory.

For decades, when a high school athlete was weighing her options on where to compete collegiately, a given state's stance on abortion wasn't a part of the decision-making process. For some young women, now it is.

And if an athlete who becomes pregnant goes to school in a state with strict abortion laws and chooses to tell their coach, the coach may find themselves in an increasingly difficult position.

Several NCAA coaches across multiple sports who spoke to The Associated Press understand that they are required to remove their own personal politics from the equation and simply offer support if one of their players discloses a pregnancy. The coaches spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic.

That can be far easier for those who work in states like California, where abortion rights are codified in state law, but trickier in states with harsh restrictions. Texas, Alabama, Oklahoma and Tennessee — states that include numerous schools where women's college athletics is thriving — have all passed aggressive bans over the past nine months.

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Greg Marsden, who coached women's gymnastics at Utah for four decades before retiring in 2015, said he's dealt with pregnancy and supported his athletes' choices but is glad he's no longer in that position.

"It breaks my heart to know that now some will no longer be able to make their own decision without the threat of being tracked, reported, arrested and charged with a felony for what, until recently, had been a right," he said.

Marsden said athletes "shouldn't have to worry about the fate of someone to whom they may confide or ask for help, be it a parent, friend, teammate, trainer, coach or medical professional."

Marsden is speaking from the safety of retirement, putting him at a comfortable remove. Landi works for World Champions Centre north of Houston, a facility owned by the Biles family, which gives her more freedom to speak her mind.

It's not the same for many active college coaches, who must answer to a variety of stakeholders, from the athletes they lead to athletic directors, university presidents and governing boards. Those groups cut across a wide swath of the political spectrum, one of the reasons so many coaches were reluctant to talk on the record.

The dynamic is slightly different at the professional level. Leagues like the WNBA and NWSL have player unions to help find "workaround solutions" for those living in states with restrictive abortion laws, as NWSL Players Association Executive Director Meghann Burke put it.

The situation is far more fragile at the collegiate level.

Less than a year after the Supreme Court's decision, several coaches told the AP that a state's stance on abortion has come up on the recruiting trail. One coach said a recruit's parent explicitly said their child wanted to go to school in a state where abortion rights are protected.

When the daughters of Umme Salim-Beasley, the Rutgers women's gymnastics coach, were making their list of potential college destinations, they crossed off states where abortions were sharply restricted.

Salim-Beasley called her daughters' thought process "eye-opening" but also emblematic of their generation, one she believes is more politically aware.

"When I was in high school, (politics) was the furthest thing from my mind," Salim-Beasley said. "That's not something I had to concern myself with. But I think that kids nowadays, high school kids and college kids, are very aware and informed of what's going on."

Stanford women's basketball coach Tara VanDerveer works in a state where abortion rights are protected but said it's not something she's going to mention to a recruit.

"I think that's for a young person to figure out for themselves, or their family to help them," she said.

Coaching has never been just about teaching athletes the finer points of a given sport. Marsden rattled off a long list of things he did during his tenure at Utah that had nothing to do with gymnastics, from serving as the driver on road trips to cleaning the gym after practice.

Several coaches told the AP that the actual coaching portion of their jobs is becoming an increasingly smaller fraction as the years pass. There's a culture to build. Relationships to nurture. Addressing the needs, both spoken and unspoken, of athletes of disparate backgrounds. Oh, and they've got to win, too.

"I think there is a lot of expectation on a coach," Ackerman said. "And I think probably a better system would be if we had the resources at these different teams, at these different schools to allow people to 'stay in their lane' a little bit more — to have a sports psychologist, to have a sports medicine physician, to have a sports nutritionist or dietician, to have all these people there to help the team so the coach doesn't have to be their everything for them."

At the highest level of men's and women's athletics, many of those things are in place. But now those who coach women also have to worry about certain rights of their players being stripped, though Ackerman doesn't believe it will cause many to leave a profession that most consider a calling.

"I think our lives in general have become more complicated," Ackerman said. "So if they love coaching, then they just have to go along with the times and learn these skills. ... Part of doing your job is understanding it's going to change from when you first signed up. That is a choice that coaches need to make."

## US calls Iran's prisoner swap claim a 'cruel lie'

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's top diplomat claimed Sunday that a prisoner swap was near with the U.S., though he offered no evidence to support his assertion. The U.S. immediately dismissed his comments as a "cruel lie."

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has made similar comments in the past about possible deals with the U.S. on frozen assets abroad and other issues that never came to fruition. Some of those remarks have appeared aimed at shoring up domestic support amid the mass protests challenging Iran's theocracy and supporting the country's troubled rial currency.

However, in an interview Sunday with Iranian state television, Amirabdollahian claimed that Iran had "reached an agreement in recent days regarding the exchange of prisoners between Iran and the United States."

"If everything goes well on the American's side, I think we will see the exchange of prisoners in the short term," he added. He alleged a document between Iran and the U.S. laying out the exchange had been "indirectly signed and approved" since March 2022.

Reached by The Associated Press, U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price called the comments "another especially cruel lie that only adds to the suffering of their families."

"We are working relentlessly to secure the release of the three wrongfully detained Americans in Iran," Price said. "We will not stop until they are reunited with their loved ones."

A separate statement from the White House's National Security Council also called the remarks "false."

"Unfortunately, Iranian officials will not hesitate to make things up, and the latest cruel claim will cause more heartache for the families of Siamak Namazi, Emad Shargi and Morad Tahbaz," the council said, naming the three Americans known to be held by Tehran on widely disputed espionage charges.

Iran long has taken prisoners with Western passports or ties to use in negotiations with foreign nations.

The evidence against them has never been made public. The detainees all have dual U.S.-Iranian citizenship, something Tehran does not recognize.

In recent days, however, Namazi was allowed to conduct an interview with CNN from Tehran's notorious Evin prison — something that would not have happened without the acquiescence of security forces.

Meanwhile, Ali Bagheri Kani, a deputy Iranian foreign minister who has handled nuclear talks with world powers, made a trip Sunday to Oman, a longtime interlocutor between Tehran and Washington.

Amirabdollahian's comments also come after Iran and Saudi Arabia, with Chinese mediation, announced Friday they would reestablish diplomatic ties and reopen embassies after a seven-year freeze in relations.

## Gun bills coming in Michigan after 2nd school mass shooting

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Armed with two handguns and dozens of rounds of ammunition, 43-year-old Anthony McRae open fired on the Michigan State University campus on the night of Feb. 13, killing three students and wounding five more.

The mass shooting has pushed Michigan Democrats, who had already planned to prioritize changes to gun laws, into action.

Democrats are expected to bring a sweeping 11-bill gun safety package before the Michigan Legislature this week, emboldened by their sweeping victories in statewide elections in November that gave them legislative control. Responding to two mass school shootings in 15 months, the party's leaders say it is only the beginning of gun reform in the state.

"Nothing is off the table," said Democratic state Sen. Rosemary Bayer, who leads the firearm safety caucus. "But every state has a culture. So I think we're trying to be conscious of Michigan and how we do things."

The package aims to establish safe storage laws, universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders, also known as red flag laws. Lawmakers will consider the package less than three years after protesters armed with guns entered the statehouse.

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"Tyrannical government, like we're witnessing here today, is why the Second Amendment is here in the first place," Republican Rep. Angela Rigas said on the House floor prior to Democrats voting to approve universal background checks last week.

The bills were introduced in the days following the shooting at Michigan State University. Students across the vast campus were ordered to shelter in place for four hours while police hunted for McRae who — when confronted by police — killed himself near his Lansing home.

Students killed in the shooting were Arielle Anderson, 19; Brian Fraser, 20; and Alexandria Verner, 20, all of suburban Detroit.

Much of the package was crafted by Democrats nearly 15 months ago following a shooting at Oxford High School that left four students dead and seven others injured. The bills saw little movement with Republicans controlling the House and Senate.

But now, with Democrats in full control of state government for the first time in decades, the bills quickly came before House and Senate committees earlier this month. Gun violence survivors and the families of victims packed committee meeting rooms and gave tearful testimony to lawmakers.

"I'm not asking for your pity. I'm asking for your change," Oxford High School senior Reina St. Juliana told lawmakers during a hearing March 2. St. Juliana's younger sister, Hana, was killed in the Oxford shooting.

Krista Grettenberger attended a hearing Wednesday to tell lawmakers about a phone call she received Feb. 13 from her 21-year-old son, MSU student Troy Forbush.

"My son called my cellphone and said: 'I love you mom. I've been shot. There's a shooter,'" Grettenberger said. Forbush was critically injured in the shooting, but survived.

"We are victim of a failed system that can't keep guns from those who aim to inflict devastating harm," Grettenberger said.

Mass shootings across the U.S. in recent years seem to have widened the political divide on gun ownership. In Democratic-led states with restrictive gun laws, elected officials have responded to home-state tragedies by enacting and proposing even more limits on guns. In many states with Republican-led legislatures, the shootings appear unlikely to prompt any new restrictions this year, reflecting a belief that violent people, not their possession of weapons, is the problem.

Michigan law requires someone buying firearms such as rifles or shotguns to be 18 years or older and at least 21 years old to purchase a handgun from a federally licensed dealer. Certain licenses allow 18-year-olds to purchase handguns from private sellers.

Police said they found dozens of rounds of ammunition on McRae, the MSU shooter, in addition to two handguns that were legally purchased but never registered. Legislation passed in the House Wednesday would address that loophole, shifting the responsibility to perform the background check and register the firearm with police onto the seller.

Democrats say safe storage and red flag laws could have stopped the Oxford attack.

"The whole story of Oxford was this kid just grabbed his parents' gun and took it to school and it wasn't locked up. There was no safe, there was no gun lock. There was no check on this kid," said U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, who represents East Lansing.

The student accused in the shooting when he was just 15, Ethan Crumbley, has pleaded guilty to killing four fellow students and wounding seven other people using a gun that he said was purchased by his father.

James and Jennifer Crumbley are charged with involuntary manslaughter. They're accused of making the gun accessible to their son and failing to reasonably care for Ethan when he showed signs of mental distress.

Bayer told The Associated Press that she expects legislation implementing universal background checks and safe storage laws to quickly make it through the state Senate, but that Democrats are "still working on" red flag laws.

Republicans argue that current gun laws need to be better enforced, not altered. A former prosecutor dropped a felony charge against McRae in 2019 that would have barred him from owning a firearm.

"If they don't pick up a gun, they could drive a car into a school. We need to try to find the mental health for these individuals," Republican state Rep. Luke Meerman told AP. "If they've had some kind of

criminal history, we have to make sure that they're getting right sentences or that they're okay to come out of prison."

Senate Republican Leader Aric Nesbitt and House Republican Leader Matt Hall did not respond to questions from the AP, including whether they planned to support the package.

## Oil giant Saudi Aramco makes a historic \$161B profit in 2022

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Oil giant Saudi Aramco reported Sunday earning \$161 billion last year, claiming the highest-ever recorded annual profit by a publicly listed company and drawing immediate criticism from activists.

The monster profit by the firm, known formally as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., came off the back of energy prices rising after Russia launched its war on Ukraine in February 2022, with sanctions limiting the sale of Moscow's oil and natural gas in Western markets.

Aramco also hopes to increase its production to take advantage of market demand as China reenters the global market after lifting its coronavirus restrictions. That could raise the billions needed to pay for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plans to develop futuristic cityscapes to pivot Saudi Arabia away from oil.

However, those plans come despite growing international concerns over the burning of fossil fuels accelerating climate change. Meanwhile, higher energy prices already have strained relations between Riyadh and Washington, as well as driven up inflation worldwide.

"Given that we anticipate oil and gas will remain essential for the foreseeable future, the risks of underinvestment in our industry are real — including contributing to higher energy prices," Saudi Aramco CEO and President Amin H. Nasser said in a statement.

Profits rose 46.5% when compared to the company's 2021 results of \$110 billion. It earned \$49 billion in 2020 when the world faced the worst of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown, travel disruptions and oil prices briefly going negative.

Aramco put its crude production at around 11.5 million barrels a day in 2022 and said it hoped to reach 13 million barrels a day by 2027.

To boost that production, it plans to spend as much as \$55 billion this year on capital projects.

Aramco also declared a dividend of \$19.5 billion for the fourth quarter of 2022, to be paid in the first quarter of this year.

Aramco's results, viewed as a bellwether for the global energy market, mirror the huge profits seen at those of U.K. energy giant BP, America's Exxon Mobil, Shell and others in 2022. But the sheer size of the \$161 billion profit overshadowed even its own previous results, as well as records by Apple, Vodafone and the U.S. Federal National Mortgage Association, or Fannie Mae.

Benchmark Brent crude oil now trades around \$82 a barrel, though prices had reached over \$120 a barrel back in June. Aramco, whose fortunes hinge on global energy prices, announced a record \$42.4 billion profit in the third quarter of 2022 off the back of that price spike.

Those high prices have further strained ties between the kingdom and the United States, traditionally a security guarantor among the Gulf Arab states amid tensions with Iran. Before the midterm elections in November, the kingdom said the Biden administration sought to delay a decision by OPEC and allies including Russia to cut production that could have kept gasoline prices lower for voters — making public the typically behind-the-scenes negotiations common in the region.

President Joe Biden had warned the kingdom that "there's going to be some consequences for what they've done" in terms of oil prices. However, those consequences have yet to be seen as Saudi Arabia and Iran went to China to strike a diplomatic deal Friday. U.S. gasoline prices now stand on average at \$3.47 a gallon, down just about a dollar from last year.

For the kingdom, higher crude oil prices can help fuel the dreams of Prince Mohammed, including his planned \$500 billion futuristic desert city project called Neom.

Those revenues also can go into Riyadh Air, a new airline announced Sunday by Prince Mohammed that

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will be under the kingdom's Public Investment Fund and plans to fly to over 100 destinations by 2030. The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous sources, reported Saudi Arabia may purchase up to \$35 billion worth of planes from Boeing Co.

However, they also run against the fears of activists over climate change, particularly as the United Nations' COP28 climate talks will begin this November in the neighboring United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia has pledged to have net-zero carbon emissions by 2060, like China and Russia, though its plans to reach that goal remain unclear. Aramco's earnings report noted it started a \$1.5 billion Sustainability Fund in October and plans a carbon-capture-and-storage facility as well.

Amnesty International's secretary-general, Agnès Callamard, criticized Aramco's annual profit coming amid global concerns about climate change.

"It is shocking for a company to make a profit of more than \$161 billion in a single year through the sale of fossil fuel — the single largest driver of the climate crisis," she said in a statement. "It is all the more shocking because this surplus was amassed during a global cost-of-living crisis and aided by the increase in energy prices resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

Callamard also noted that Saudi Arabia remains one of the world's top executioners while also remaining locked in a yearslong war in Yemen and cracking down on dissent.

"These extraordinary profits, and any future income derived from Aramco, should not be deployed to finance human rights abuses, cover them up, or try and gloss over them," she said.

Saudi Arabia's vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, make it one of the world's least expensive places to produce crude. For every \$10 rise in the price of a barrel of oil, Saudi Arabia stands to make an additional \$40 billion a year, according to the Institute of International Finance.

Shares in Aramco stood at \$8.74 on Riyadh's Tadawul stock exchange. That's down from a high of \$11.55 a share in the last year. However, that current price still gives Aramco a valuation of \$1.9 trillion — making it the world's second most valuable company behind only Apple.

The Saudi government still owns the vast majority of the firm's shares. Saudi Aramco publicly listed a sliver of its worth back in late 2019.

Aramco will release a comprehensive earnings report Monday.

## **Iraqi PM promises action to tackle crippling climate change**

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's prime minister Sunday promised sweeping measures to tackle climate change — which has affected millions across the country — including plans to meet a third of the country's electricity demands using renewable energy.

Climate change for years has compounded the woes of the troubled country. Droughts and increased water salinity have destroyed crops, animals and farms and dried up entire bodies of water. Hospitals have faced waves of patients with respiratory illnesses caused by rampant sandstorms. Climate change has also played a role in Iraq's ongoing struggle to combat cholera.

"More than seven million citizens have been affected in Iraq ... and hundreds of thousands have been displaced because they lost their livelihoods that rely on agriculture and hunting," Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a speech to open the two-day Iraq Climate Conference in Basra.

Al-Sudani said the Iraqi government is working on a national plan to tackle climate change that consists of a series of measures it hopes to take by 2030. The plan includes building renewable energy plants, modernizing inefficient and outdated irrigation techniques, reducing carbon emissions, combating desertification, and protecting the country's biodiversity.

Among the projects is a massive afforestation initiative, where Iraq would plant 5 million trees across the country. Iraq also hopes to provide one-third of the country's electricity demand through renewable energy instead of fossil fuel.

Al-Sudani said he is hoping to organize a regional conference on climate change in Baghdad in the near future as well.

Developments in neighboring countries have also compounded Iraq's water woes.



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Iraq relies on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for nearly all of its water needs. They flow into the country from Turkey and Iran. Because those countries have constructed dams that have either blocked or diverted water, shortages have worsened in Iraq.

Climate change and its impact on Iraq's water resources and agriculture also comes at an economic cost, destroying people's livelihoods and making it more likely for Iraq to hike up its imports for basic staples that were once heavily produced in the country, such as wheat. The government once subsidized seeds, fertilizer and pesticides to soften the blow of increasing costs on wheat farmers and maintain a high level of production, but slashed them two years ago.

## How coconuts protect the Jersey Shore, other eroding coasts

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

NEPTUNE, N.J. (AP) — Coastal communities around the world are adding a tropical twist to shoreline protection, courtesy of the humble coconut.

From the sands of the Jersey Shore to the islands of Indonesia, strands of coconut husk, known as coir, are being incorporated into shoreline protection projects.

Often used in conjunction with other measures, the coconut material is seen as a cost-effective, readily available and sustainable option. This is particularly true in developing countries. But the material is also popular in wealthy nations, where it's seen as an important part of so-called "living shorelines" that use natural elements rather than hard barriers of wood, steel or concrete.

One such project is being installed along a section of eroded river bank in Neptune, New Jersey, about a mile from the ocean on the Shark River. Using a mix of a federal grant and local funds, the American Littoral Society, a coastal conservation group, is carrying out the \$1.3 million project that has already added significantly to what was previously a severely eroded shoreline in an area that was pummeled by Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

"We're always trying to reduce wave energy while shielding the shoreline, and whenever we can, we like to employ nature-based solutions," said Tim Dillingham, the group's executive director. "This material is readily available, particularly in developing countries and it's relatively inexpensive compared with harder materials."

Coir is made of the stringy fibers of coconut shells, and spun into mats or logs, often held together with netting. In developing areas, discarded or ripped fishing nets can be incorporated.

Its flexibility allows it to be molded and contoured as needed on uneven areas of shoreline, held in place by wooden stakes.

The coconut-based material biodegrades over time, by design. But before it does, it is sometimes pre-seeded with shoreline plants and grasses, or those plants are placed in holes that can be punched into the coir logs.

The logs hold the plants in place as they take root and grow, eventually breaking down and leaving the established plants and sediment around them in place to stabilize the shoreline.

Coconut-based materials are being used around the world for erosion control projects.

One of them is in Boston, where Julia Hopkins, an assistant professor at Northeastern University, is using coconut fibers, wood chips and other material to create floating mats to blunt the force of waves, and encourage growth of aquatic vegetation. A pilot project has four such mats in waterways around Boston. Hopkins envisions a network of hundreds or even thousands of mats linked together to protect wider areas.

She's pleased with what she's seen so far.

"Coconut fiber is organic material, it's relatively cheap and it's a discard," she said. "It's actually recycling something that was going to be discarded."

Two projects in East Providence, Rhode Island, used coconut logs in 2020, and 2,400 feet (731 meters) of shoreline in New York's Jamaica Bay that were eroded during Superstorm Sandy were stabilized in 2021 by a project that also included coconut coir logs.

Cape Cod, Massachusetts, did a similar project last year, and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is offering funding to help landowners, homeowner associations and

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others install living shorelines made of materials that can include coconut fibers.

A project in Austin, Texas, stabilized part of the Lake Austin shoreline; monitoring from 2009 to 2014 showed decreased erosion and the healthy growth of native plants at the water's edge.

Indonesia is the world's largest coconut producer, with more than 17 million metric tons in 2021. Scientists from the Oceanography Program of Bandung Institute of Technology used coconut husk material to help build a sea wall in the Karangjaladri village of Pangandaran Regency in 2018.

Residents of Diogue Island in Senegal are using wooden structures and coconut fronds and sticks to reclaim eroded sections of beach.

It doesn't always work, however.

In 2016, the Felix Neck Wildlife Refuge in Edgartown, Massachusetts, on Martha's Vineyard installed it at the Sengekontacket Pond, where a salt marsh had eroded by several feet in previous years. While it did help reduce erosion for a while, the husks did not last long due to strong wave action.

"It got blown out multiple times," said Suzan Bellincampi, the sanctuary's director. "We had it in place for a few years and we decided not to reinstall it.

"The project was really interesting in terms of what we wanted to do and how we adapted it," she said. "It's not for every site; it has to be site-specific. It works in some places; it doesn't work in all places."

Similarly, coconut fiber mats and logs were used recently on Chapel Island in Nova Scotia, Canada, but they were damaged by bad weather.

Another Canadian site, Lac des Battures, a lake on Montreal's Nuns' Island, uses coconut mats to control the growth of invasive reeds along the shoreline.

At the New Jersey site, a few miles south of the musical hotbed of Asbury Park, trucked-in sand has joined with sediment accruing from the tides to create a beach that is noticeably wider than what used to be there.

"Underneath your feet right now are hibernating fiddler crabs," said Capt. Al Modjeski, a restoration specialist with the Littoral Society. "They'll be excited about this new habitat."

## Saudi Arabia's golf case threatens to spill kingdom secrets

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Officials who oversee Saudi Arabia's tens of billions of dollars in U.S. investments haven't been shy about flaunting their ties with top American business and political figures, down to wearing MAGA caps as they swing golf clubs alongside former President Donald Trump. But they've been silent about many of the details of these relationships.

That's changing as a result of a federal lawsuit in California pitting the Saudi-owned golf tour upstart LIV against the PGA Tour. A judge, citing what she described as the kingdom's hands-on management of LIV, found that when it came to the new golf league, Saudi officials and the Saudi government aren't shielded from U.S. courts the way sovereign nations usually are.

While Saudi Arabia is fighting the decision, insisting U.S. courts have no jurisdiction over its high officials, the ruling means lawyers for the PGA Tour would be able to question top officials about business secrets that the Saudis have held close, such as details of deal-making involving 2024 presidential candidate Trump and others.

U.S. District Judge Beth Labson Freeman found that the Saudis had smacked up against a commercial exception to U.S. laws on sovereign immunity.

Yasir al Rumayyan, appointed under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to manage the oil-rich Saudi government's \$600 billion-plus stockpile of wealth, is "up to his eyeballs" in managing the golf tour, Labson Freeman declared.

The finding follows PGA Tour claims that al Rumayyan himself recruited LIV players, approved LIV contracts and was otherwise the golf league's decision-maker and manager. Lawyers for Saudi Arabia counter that Rumayyan's actions were those of an eager investor, not of someone actually running a business.

The case matters beyond the world of golf. Saudi Arabia has been assertive in U.S. business investments

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and political relationships and could now face court demands for greater transparency and accountability.

The insistence by Saudi officials that U.S. courts have little or no say over their actions is especially sensitive. Last year, the kingdom, with legal backing from the Biden administration, successfully argued that American courts had no authority to try the prince in a lawsuit over the 2018 killing of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi. U.S. intelligence officials had concluded that aides and other Saudi officials sent by the prince killed Khashoggi. The slaying has opened a lasting rift between the Biden administration and Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler.

Longstanding international law generally protects the leaders and government of one country from being hauled into another country's courts. Congress carved out commercial activity as an exception to that sovereign immunity in 1976.

The PGA Tour argued in a filing Friday that Saudi Arabia and its sovereign wealth fund under the prince have a record of flip-flopping on insisting upon sovereign immunity, depending on whether doing so works to their advantage in various business deals and lawsuits.

Saudi Arabia's critics and independent legal experts and analysts say the kingdom may be in a tough spot legally.

"It seemed to me very clear that it wasn't immune" from U.S. courts when it came to operating the LIV golf tour and tournaments, said Donald Baker, a lawyer and a former head in the Justice Department's antitrust division who is not involved in the case.

Baker projected the case could lead to California's Northern District federal court seeking depositions from Saudi royals. Any decisions on whether other Saudi government business deals in the United States have similarly lost their immunity from U.S. courts would have to be made on a case-by-case basis, he said.

Sarah Leah Whitson, who runs the Democracy for the Arab World Now rights group founded by Khashoggi, said that "if they want to have sovereign immunity from their business transactions, it means they can sue people, they can demand that the judicial system enforces contracts and the laws governing contracts, but nobody can impose that against them. Nobody can hold them accountable."

The Saudi-funded professional golf tour, now in its second season and with a slogan of "Golf, but louder," is known for its blaring music, record multimillion-dollar purses, ties with Trump and unfriendly rivalry with the PGA Tour. Trump courses this year will host three LIV tournaments, in deals whose financial terms have not been publicly disclosed.

Saudi Arabia's immunity problem comes in an antitrust lawsuit that was initially brought by LIV players against the long-established PGA Tour. The case already has revealed that the Saudi government's sovereign wealth fund owns 93% of LIV.

A lawyer for Saudi Arabia's side of the case did not respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment. A LIV spokeswoman referred questions to the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, which also did not respond to requests for comment.

Under the now eight-year rule of Saudi Arabia's king, Salman, his son Prince Mohammed has made the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund a primary tool of Saudi investment at home and abroad. The prince is the fund's chairman. Saudi officials say the aim is to diversify the kingdom's oil-funded economy.

Under Prince Mohammed and fund governor al Rumayyan, the fund has more than \$30 billion invested in Uber, Meta, luxury electric car brand and Tesla rival Lucid, Paypal, Costco and other publicly traded U.S. businesses.

The fund also has consolidated Saudis' relationship with the Trump family, using Trump golf courses and directing \$2 billion to the investment firm of Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Rumayyan sits on the board of Uber. He plays golf with Trump. He triggered one of Elon Musk's biggest tweet storms and legal cases, when Musk tweeted about what he later testified was the prospect of a Saudi sovereign wealth fund deal to take Tesla private.

The Saudi sovereign wealth fund also is spending heavily on sports. In addition to creating the LIV golf tour, the Saudis have bought the Newcastle United soccer team in Britain's Premier League and hosted Formula One races, horse races with record prize money, and other tournaments and matches, from snooker to boxing and chess.

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Saudi Arabia is presenting itself as an energetic, youthful and business-friendly government. Human rights groups counter with the word "sportswashing," saying the kingdom under Prince Mohammed's influence is trying to distance itself from the killing of Khashoggi, the jailing of other rights advocates, and a failed war in Yemen. U.S. critics paint Saudi Arabia's financial deals with Trump and Kushner as the oil kingdom backing one side in America's highly partisan politics.

"They're really trying to rebrand the kingdom ... using sport to reach a much wider public audience and trying to tap into some of the passion that people have," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a fellow for the Middle East at the Baker Institute in Houston.

To close the deal buying Newcastle United, Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund provided what authorities said were "legally binding assurances" that the kingdom would not be involved in running the team, even though Rumayyan serves as team chairman. Rights advocates argued unsuccessfully for a reexamination of that deal in light of the rulings of the California federal court.

Critics — and the PGA Tour lawyers in Friday's filing — also contend Saudi Arabia willingly waived sovereign immunity when it submitted government documents in another U.S. case, against a Saudi who had served as a top intelligence official under the previous king. The United States intervened to quash the case on the grounds it threatened to reveal national security secrets.

In the golf lawsuit, LIV players and the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, formally called the Public Investment Fund, argue that unfair practices by the PGA are harming LIV. PGA lawyers respond in filings that it's the reputations of Saudi Arabia and Prince Mohammed that are scaring away business.

## Today in History: March 13, Pope Francis is elected

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, March 13, the 72nd day of 2023. There are 293 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

In 1925, the Tennessee General Assembly approved a bill prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution. (Gov. Austin Peay signed the measure on March 21; Tennessee repealed the law in 1967.)

On this date:

In 1781, the seventh planet of the solar system, Uranus, was discovered by Sir William Herschel.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure prohibiting Union military officers from returning fugitive slaves to their owners.

In 1933, banks in the U.S. began to reopen after a "holiday" declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1938, famed attorney Clarence S. Darrow died in Chicago.

In 1943, financier and philanthropist J.P. Morgan Jr., 75, died in Boca Grande, Florida.

In 1946, U.S. Army Pfc. Sadao Munemori was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for sacrificing himself to save fellow soldiers from a grenade explosion in Seravezza, Italy; he was the only Japanese-American service member so recognized in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

In 1954, the Battle of Dien Bien Phu began during the First Indochina War as Viet Minh forces attacked French troops, who were defeated nearly two months later.

In 1995, two Americans working for U.S. defense contractors in Kuwait, David Daliberti and William Barloon, were seized by Iraq after they strayed across the border; sentenced to eight years in prison, both were freed later the same year.

In 1996, a gunman burst into an elementary school in Dunblane, Scotland, and opened fire, killing 16 children and one teacher before killing himself.

In 2011, the estimated death toll from Japan's earthquake and tsunami climbed past 10,000 as authorities raced to combat the threat of multiple nuclear reactor meltdowns while hundreds of thousands of people struggled to find food and water.

In 2020, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was fatally shot in her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky, during a botched raid by plainclothes narcotics detectives; no drugs were found, and the "no-knock" warrant used to enter by force was later found to be flawed. (A grand jury brought no charges

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against officers in her death, and prosecutors said two officers who fired at her were justified because her boyfriend shot at them; one officer was found not guilty of endangering Taylor's neighbors by firing into the side of her apartment during the raid.)

Ten years ago: In 2013, Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina was elected pope, choosing the name Francis. He was the first pontiff from the Americas and the first from outside Europe in more than a millennium. A man went on a shooting rampage in the small villages of Mohawk and Herkimer in New York state, killing four and wounding two more at a barbershop and a car wash. (Police would shoot and kill the suspect, 64-year-old Kurt Myers, the following day.)

Five years ago: President Donald Trump abruptly dumped Secretary of State Rex Tillerson — via Twitter — and moved CIA Director Mike Pompeo from the role of America's spy chief to its top diplomat. On his first trip to California as president, Trump accused the state of putting "the entire nation at risk" by refusing to take tough action against illegal immigration. Joy Behar of "The View" apologized for suggesting that mental illness was behind claims by people that Jesus Christ talks to them; her comment had come during a discussion about Vice President Mike Pence.

One year ago: Russian missiles pounded a military base that served as a crucial hub between Ukraine and the NATO countries supporting its defense, killing 35 people. The barrage marked an escalation of Moscow's offensive and moved the fighting perilously close to the Polish border. A year after holding its basketball tournament in isolated bubbles and two years after holding no tournament at all, the NCAA announced teams for a full-fledged March Madness. Former President Barack Obama announced he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Roy Haynes is 98. Songwriter Mike Stoller is 90. Singer-songwriter Neil Sedaka is 84. R&B/gospel singer Candi Staton is 83. Opera singer Julia Migenes is 74. Actor William H. Macy is 73. Comedian Robin Duke is 69. Actor Dana Delany is 67. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., is 66. Rock musician Adam Clayton (U2) is 63. Jazz musician Terence Blanchard is 61. Actor Christopher Collet is 55. Rock musician Matt McDonough (Mudvayne) is 54. Actor Annabeth Gish is 52. Actor Tracy Wells is 52. Rapper-actor Common is 51. Rapper Khujo (Goodie Mob, The Lumberjacks) is 51. Singer Glenn Lewis is 48. Actor Danny Masterson is 47. Actor Noel Fisher is 39. Singers Natalie and Nicole Albino (Nina Sky) are 39. Actor Emile Hirsch is 38. U.S. Olympic gold medal skier Mikaela Shiffrin is 28. Tennis star Coco Gauff is 19.