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Groton Community Calendar

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, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15

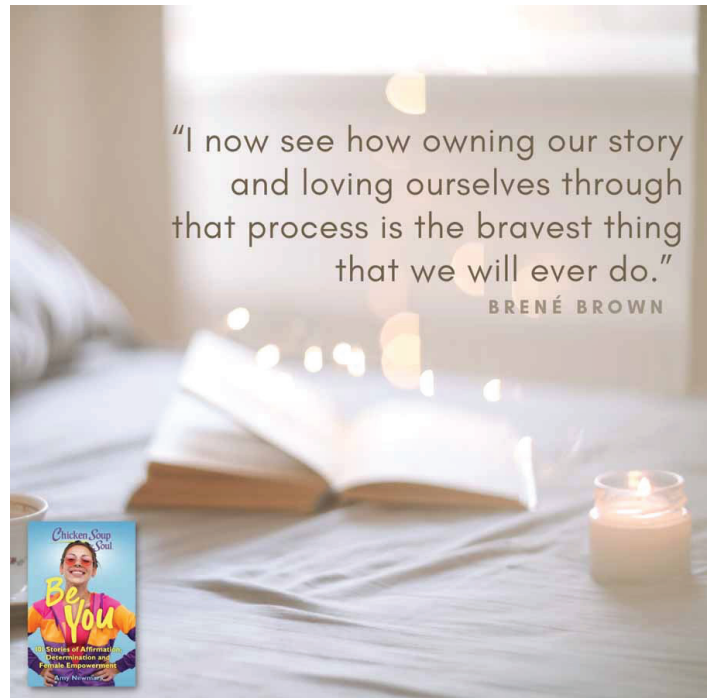
Senior Menu: Breaded cod, parsley buttered potatoes, green beans, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Hashbrown pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken Alfredo vegetable blend.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



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.

Thursday, March 16

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, sherbert.

School Breakfast: Pancake on a stick.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, smiley fries.

Boys Basketball State Tournament in Sioux Falls

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA (Program-Nigeria, hostess - Sarah).

Friday, March 17

Senior Menu: St. Patrick's Day Dinner: Corned beef, boiled potatoes, cabbage, Jell-O cake, dinner roll.

Boys Basketball State Tournament in Sioux Falls
SPRING BREAK - No School

Fruit Fusion Grand Opening, 7:10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 110 N Main St.

GDILIVE.COM

Middle School Talent Show Tuesday, March 14, 2023, GHS Gym, 7 p.m.

"We Love Rock 'n Roll"

Directors: Desiree Yeigh and Scott Glodt

I Love Rock 'n Roll- 6-7 Choir Girls

*Addison Hoeft- You Say
Vocal Solo*

Sharp Dressed Man- 6-7 Choir Guys

*Aurora Washenberger- Jessies's Girl
Flute Solo*

*A President's Childhood- Addison Hoeft,
Ryelle Gilbert, Makenna Krause, Kyleigh Kroll,
Libby Cole, Rylie Rose, Journey Zieroth*

We Will Rock You- 6-7 Choir Guys

*Teagan Hanten- Ain't No Mountain High
Enough*

Dr. ROCKenstein- 6-7 Band

*Let Her Go- Arianna Dinger, Tenley Frost,
Novalea Warrington, Mrs. Yeigh
Flute Quartet*

*The Invader- Sam Crank and Connor Kroll
Drumline Battle*

*Junior Drumline- Makenna Krause,
Journey Zieroth, Ryelle Gilbert,
Kyleigh Kroll, TC Schuster,
Addison Hoeft, Jordan Schwan
Connor Kroll, Tenley Frost, Sam Crank,
Novalea Warrington, Aurora Washenberger*

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GFP Commission Holds March Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their March meeting at Pierre's Matthew's Training Center.

WILDLIFE PROPOSALS

Waterfowl Seasons

The Commission set several hunting seasons with no changes. By rule, the following seasons are finalized:

Dove

Duck

Early Fall Canada Goose

Sandhill Crane

Snipe

Tundra Swan

August Management Take

Youth Waterfowl

Light Goose

Special Canada Goose

Apprentice Deer

The Commission proposed to open the Ft. Meade Bureau of Land Management area in Unit WRD-49A to archery only for the Apprentice deer season.

Custer State Park Deer

The Commission proposed to remove the Nov. 1-15 archery only restriction for the Custer State Park deer season.

Refuge Deer

The Commission proposed to restrict hunters during the fourth season at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge to muzzleloaders without telescopic sights. The proposal also allows the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge staff the ability to control the areas open to hunting.

West River Deer

The Commission proposed an administrative cleanup for Unit WRD-27A (portions of Custer and Fall River counties) and to allow hunting in Ft. Meade Bureau of Land Management Area in Unit 49A to archery only.

Youth Deer

The Commission proposed to open the Ft. Meade Bureau of Land Management area in Unit WRD-49A to archery only for the Youth deer season.

Nonresident Waterfowl

The commission proposed to increase 3-day temporary nonresident licenses from 2,000 to 2,100 and increase two 5-day nonresident licenses from 3,750 to 3,950.

WILDLIFE FINALIZATIONS

Archery Antelope

The Commission finalized their proposal to allow for:

Unlimited number of nonresident one-tag archery buck antelope licenses valid on private land not leased by the Department of Game Fish and Parks for public hunting; and,

No more than 450 nonresident one-tag archery buck antelope licenses valid on public and private land.

Archery Deer

The Commission finalized their proposal to allow for:

Unlimited nonresident archery any deer licenses valid on private land not leased by the Department of Game Fish and Parks for public hunting;

No more than 2,200 nonresident any deer licenses valid on public and private land; and,

Remove the East River and West River specific licenses for nonresident archery deer, limiting nonresidents to one any deer archery license.

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Mountain Goat

The Commission finalized the closing of the mountain goat hunting season.

During the 2022 helicopter survey, 42 mountain goats were counted in the survey. The mountain goat action plan provides guidance when the minimum number counted reaches less than 50 individuals the season will be closed.

Included in this finalization would be the discontinuance of the sale of preference points for mountain goat hunting.

No Boating Zone

The Commission finalized changing the "no boating zone" on Angostura Reservoir from 100 to 300 feet fronting the dam which includes the 5 control gates and the canal siphon.

PARKS FINALIZATIONS

Firearms Changes to State Parks and Recreation Areas

The Commission finalized a change to provide the Department the option to open portions of state parks and recreation areas to hunting during the months of September and May by means of posting, signage, and other designations. This change would provide additional public hunting acres in some state parks for early fall seasons such as mourning dove, archery deer, and youth seasons in addition to spring turkey seasons.

This will allow hunters to hunt park lands at Oahe Downstream Recreation Area west of SD Hwy 1806, that include the off-highway vehicle designated area and land outside the fenced shooting complex perimeter.

It also clarifies Revheim Bay Recreation Area as archery only and designate Newtown Hills State Park, Rocky Point Recreation Area, and Lake Poinsett Recreation Area to archery hunting and shotgun with shot shells only, but with options to post certain areas for open hunting.

Public Comments Currently Being Accepted

If you would like to comment on any of these proposals, visit gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions. Comments can also be mailed to 523 E. Capitol Ave Pierre, SD.

To hear the discussion on these proposals, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these proposals in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CST on April 9.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Brookings April 13-14.

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Bubble Easter basket with sweetart jelly beans, neat rope easter eggs with candy inside them, two bubble machines, tootsie roll piggy bank with tootsie rolls inside it, a bag of tropical skittles, and bubble bottles. \$18



Sloth Easter basket with bubbles, Easter eggs with candy in them , peeps hard candy, mike and Ike's chocolate Easter bunny, and a bag of tootsie rolls. \$20.

Tina's Baskets

Call/Text Tina at 605-397-7285

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The Bulletin

by **Newsweek**

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

- At least 100 people have been killed after Cyclone Freddy made landfall in the southern African countries of Malawi and Mozambique.
- Former U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder, who pioneered women's and family rights in Congress, has died at the age of 82.
- The U.S. and U.K. have unveiled plans to arm Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines from the 2030s onwards to counteract China's spread across the South Pacific.
- The Texas Department of Public Safety warned Americans to skip spring break vacations in Mexico, noting that ongoing violence poses a significant safety threat.
- Sayfullo Saipov, the Uzbek terrorist who killed eight people in a truck attack on a New York City bike path in 2017, has been sentenced to life in prison after a jury deadlocked over handing down the death penalty.
- Model Ashley Graham has spoken out about the backlash she received after her awkward Oscars interview with Hugh Grant. For more Oscars coverage, sign up and read [For the Culture](#) today.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, the International Criminal Court will reportedly open two war crimes cases over Russia's invasion and will seek arrest warrants for multiple people, according to sources close to the court.

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School year to continue May 25; local beef may soon be on the menu by Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area school year is set to last until the end of May.

As of Monday evening's Groton Area School District board meeting, weather has caused 11 missed days of school, five late starts and two early dismissals.

"Thankfully this is not an annual occurrence," said Superintendent Joe Schwan.

Schwan asked the school board for direction on setting a date for the end of the school year.

After a bit of back-and-forth, school board member Steve Smith proposed moving the last day of class to May 25, with May 26 scheduled as a faculty in-service day. The move, which was seconded by Board Vice President Marty Weismantel, was approved by a unanimous vote.

The last day of school for students had been scheduled for May 17 with May 18 scheduled as a faculty in-service date. So far this school year, the district has canceled classes for two days in November, five days in December, three days in February and one day in March. Two late starts were announced in January and three took place so far in March. The district has had one day of weather-related early dismissal in February and one in March.

The calendar has already been changed this year, as the board approved being in session on President's Day, March 16 and April 10, all of which had previously been no-school days.

However, there are still eight days to make up for, Schwan told the board.

The state doesn't dock the district for late starts or early dismissals, but days with no school count toward the minimum number of hours teachers need to have contact with students, he said. The district is scheduled to be well above that statutory required amount time.

Board member Tigh Flihs asked if teachers were having trouble keeping up with their lessons.

"I think there's no doubt we're behind where we should be," Superintendent Schwan replied. "We've missed almost two weeks of school."

Beyond students missing class time, there are also concerns about some hourly staff being able to work enough hours, he said.

"I've been telling people this. I'm sure there will be days on the end of the calendar," Schwan said. "I just don't know what they will be."

He estimates there are potentially six more weeks where winter weather could have an impact on the school year.

The board approved the new last day of classes as May 25 and the last faculty in-service day as May 26, "barring any catastrophies," said board President Deb Gengerke.

The district is also in talks to get local beef on the school lunch menu. Justin Morehouse with Meathouse in Andover, hopes to be USDA certified by the end of August, which would allow them to process meat for the National School Lunch Program, Superintendent Schwan told the board. This would allow local producers to either donate or sell cattle that would be processed in Andover and served at the Groton schools. The cost to process the meat would be \$2.50 per pound. Estimating a yield of 400 pounds per head, the district will look for donations of five or six beef cattle to get the project going.

In another look at the 2023-2024 school year, there are still positions available, with more added after Monday's meeting.

The board accepted two letters of resignation.

Jordan Kjellsen, middle school math teacher and junior high track coach submitted his letter of resignation to take affect at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Kjellsen thanked the district and fellow teachers in his resignation letter that was read to the board.

Kjellsen, who received a Master's Degree in leadership and administration from Northern State University in December, did not cite a reason for his resignation or job plans in the letter to the board.

The board also accepted the immediate resignation of food service staff member Amanda Tarpein.

The district is currently seeking an elementary school special education instructor, middle school math teacher, middle school/high school special education teacher, middle school/high school business educa-

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tion/personal finance/CTE or middle school/high school science/CTE health science instructor, a middle school/high school special education paraprofessional and a part time kitchen staff member.

- JLG Architects is preparing a Preliminary Design Study with rough cost estimates to renovate the 1968 gymnasium, restroom, locker room and stage area. The preliminary report could be ready as early as mid-April.

- Supply chain issues have pushed back completion of the air conditioning project in the new high school gym. An electrical shut off component won't be available until late October, Superintendent Joe Schwan said. Installation of the rest of the project can continue as scheduled, but the air conditioning system can't start running until that part is installed.

- Project costs for renovations of the health science lab are still up in the air, Schwan said, but the subcontractor for the flooring portion of the project has said the asbestos flooring needs to be replaced. The current floor is very bumpy, and, if the district were to just cover the existing flooring, those bumps would still be visible. The cost to abate and replace the current floor tiles in the 52 foot by 30 foot room is estimated to cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000, he said.

- Superintendent Schwan recapped legislation that could impact the Groton Area School District, including Senate Bill 24, which sets the school district maximum property tax levy in 2024. The bill also increases the target teacher salaries for South Dakota by 7% to \$59,659.25.

- The governor has already signed Senate Bill 76, which would provide for licensure by endorsement for certain licensed professionals and occupations, including teaching, Schwan said. It should make it easier for teachers in good standing in other states to be able to transfer their teaching licenses to South Dakota.

- Senate Bill 182 will also have an impact on the school district, Schwan said. It involves standardizing how schools issue credits for dual-credit classes. It could impact grade-point averages for those taking the college-level classes where students receive both college and high school credit.

- Alexa Schuring, who has been interning at the middle/high school while working toward an administrative endorsement and certification, reported that 18 Groton high school students will be inducted into the National Honors Society.

- The Smarter Balance Assessment for grades six, seven, eight and 11, will take place between March 27 and April 14, though that doesn't include additional snow days, said middle school/high school Principal Kiersten Sombke.

- Summer school and Connect 4Ed classes at the elementary school will continue this summer, though only for June and July, said elementary school Principal Brett Schwan. That will save the district some money, though the cost for three staff members for the twice a week Connect 4Ed program for two months is nearly \$8,000. Currently, 33 students have been recommended for the program.

- A new 11-foot slide has been found for the elementary school, though it won't be installed until weather improves. The current slide has a large crack down the middle, Principal Schwan said.

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2022-2023 Groton Area School District

Approved 2/14/2022; Amended 1/9/2023, 2/16/2023, 2/21/2023

August 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August	
22 - Faculty Inservice	
23 - Faculty Inservice	
24 - 1st Day of School	

January 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January	
4 - School Resumes	
13 - Elementary Christmas Concert (2:30)	
13 - End of 1st Semester - Moved from 12/22/22	
17 & 27 - 2 Hour Late Start (Weather)	

September 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

September	
2 - NO SCHOOL	
5 - Labor Day - NO SCHOOL	
23 - Homecoming	
29 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
30 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	

February 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

February	
15 - No School (Weather)	
16 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
17 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
21 - 12:00 PM Dismissal (Weather)	
22/23 No School (Weather)	

October 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

October	
7 - Lake Region Marching Festival	
10 - Native American Day - NO SCHOOL	
21 - End of 1st Quarter (39)	

March 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

March	
1 - No School (Weather)	
6, 10, 13 - 2 Hour Late Start (Weather)	
12 - 12:00 PM Dismissal (Weather)	
16 - IN SESSION	
17 - Spring Break - NO SCHOOL	
24 - End of 3rd Quarter (45)	

November 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

November	
10 - No School (Weather)	
11 - No School (Weather)	
11 - Veterans Day Program	
23-25 - Thanksgiving - NO SCHOOL	

April 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

April	
2 - Pops Concert (2:00 & 5:00)	
7 - Good Friday - NO SCHOOL	
10 - Easter Monday - IN SESSION	
22 - PROM	
27 - Middle School Spring Concert (7:00)	

December 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

December	
8 - MS/HS Christmas Concert (7:00)	
13-16 - No School (Weather)	
22 - No School (Weather)	
22-31 Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL	

May 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May	
2 - Elementary Spring Concert (7:00)	
4 - High School Concert/Awards Night (7:00)	
14 - Graduation (2:00)	
17 - End of 2nd Semester TBD (37+/90)	
18 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	

Decisions on additional make-up days will be made as the year progresses.

- Early Dismissal - Wx
- Late Start - Weather
- No School - Weather

- Faculty Inservice
- No School
- Important Dates
- End of Quarter/Semester
- Early Dismissal

Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

March 13, 2023

Legislative Session. The legislative session has concluded with the exception of "veto day."

HB1055. Increase the dollar amount of the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarships.

HB1079. Appropriates \$2M to DOH for grants to support mental health services for youth and young adults.

HB1123. Authorize school boards to modify the length of terms for board members to allow for holding joint elections.

BS1137. Reduce certain gross receipt tax rates and a use tax rate, and repeal a conditional reduction of certain gross receipts tax rates.

HB1165. Modify certain provisions pertaining to absentee voting.

HB1191. Clarify the duties of truancy officers. *[Signed]*

HCR6001. Recommends the executive board to establish a task force to study a potential optional educational path.

SB4. Modify a court's authority to commit a habitual juvenile offender to the Department of Corrections.

SB5. Extend the termination date of the Juvenile Justice Oversight Council and modify its membership requirements. *[Signed]*

SB6. Authorize community response teams to recommend alternative community-based resources for children alleged to be delinquent and children alleged to be in need of supervision prior to adjudication. *[Signed]*

SB24. Revise property tax levies for school districts and revise the state aid to general and special education.

SB76. Provide for licensure by endorsement for certain licensed professionals and occupations. *[Signed]*

SB129. Include school employees in certain assault provisions and provide a penalty therefor. *[Vetoed]*

SB162. Revise public meeting requirements. *[Signed]*

SB168. Authorize a board of a school district to adopt policies regarding students who are registered sex offenders, and to declare an emergency.

SB182. Establish a uniform method for calculating high school credit received from completing post-secondary courses. *[Signed]*

SB207. Provide a penalty for the expenditure of public funds to influence the outcome of an election.

ASBPT Annual Meeting. The annual Associated School Boards Protective Trust meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, March 22 in Chamberlain. This is the meeting where we learn about potential program changes and renewal rates for the Health Fund and Worker's Compensation Fund.

USDA Supply Chain Assistance. The District has received a total of \$23,828.68 for Round 2 and Round 3 funding to offset costs related to supply chain disruptions and related financial difficulties. These funds must be used to purchase domestic, unprocessed or minimally processed foods and do not have an expiration date.

Local Beef in School Lunch Project. Beginning next fall, the new Meathouse in Andover is expecting to be USDA certified which would allow for them to process beef for use in our National School Lunch Program. Justin Morehouse and I spoke again last week about this concept. He estimates that we would get 400 pounds of ground beef per head. According to Mr. Clocksene, we will use approximately 2,000 pounds of ground beef this school year, or the equivalent of approximately five head. This would be a win-win project for our community allowing local producers to either donate or sell cattle to be used in our school lunch program and provide a food product that we can be excited about. Cost for processing would be about \$2.50/pound (\$1,000/head). We plan to seek donations of 5-6 beef cattle to get this project going.

1968 Gymnasium/Restroom/Locker Room/Stage Project Update. On Friday, March 3, Tigh, Deb, and I met with Herm Harms from JLG Architects regarding potential work in the 1968 Gymnasium/RR/Locker Rooms/Stage areas. From that meeting, JLG is going to put together a Preliminary Design Study with some solutions and rough estimated probable costs. They anticipate this being ready for review in mid-April.

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HVAC Project Update. Following our last board meeting on February 13, I received a call from Sichmeller Engineering to inform me that a supply chain issue with one of the electrical shut off components will likely delay the start-up of part of our HVAC project until late October 2023. This will impact the units being installed in the wrestling room, weight room, locker rooms, and Arena Lobby. Things appear to still be in order to have the Arena units functioning when fall athletics begin – work in the arena itself plans for the week of July 9 through July 15th. The plan is to complete the work in the old gym after completion of the work in the 2004 addition (Late July-Early August).

Health Science Lab Renovation Update. I've met with Huff Construction and a crew of subcontractors regarding demolition and renovation of the Chemistry Lab/Health Science Lab space and am still waiting for their project cost. The flooring contractor believes the existing tile will need to be abated to accommodate new flooring due to the uneven condition of the tiles. They've given me an estimate of \$4-\$5/square foot for abatement of the tile and will include that figure as part of the project cost.

Summer Strength Program. Jordan Carson has been working with our students in the weight room after school since the first of the calendar year and would like to operate our summer strength training program in a format similar to how we've conducted this previously. The plan is to move forward with plans for Jordan to take this on and begin getting students registered.

Staffing Vacancies. Here is a list of current staff vacancies for the 2023-2024 school year.

Elementary Special Education

MS Mathematics

MS/HS Special Education (Immediate)

MS/HS Business Education/Personal Finance/CTE OR MS/HS Science/CTE Health Science

MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional (Immediate)

Part-Time Kitchen

Business Manager's Report

March 13, 2023

Clay Target League Funds

The Clay Target League group established their own checking account at Dacotah Bank and on March 3 we transferred the balance of funds we were holding for them in the amount of \$5,913.73. As a result, they will no longer have access to our Mastercard charge accounts or sales tax exempt certificate.

School Board Election Update

On Friday, February 24, 2023, incumbent candidate Grant Rix and candidate-elect Heather Lerseth-Fliehs submitted nominating petitions for two vacant seats on the Groton Area School Board prior to the 5:00 pm deadline. Incumbent candidate Steven R. Smith did not submit a petition for re-election. Since both Rix and Lerseth-Fliehs are unopposed, they are awarded new 3-year terms, beginning July 2023. There will be no Groton Area School Board election on April 11, 2023.

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Dr. Sombke

March 13, 2023

1) Administrative Intern: Ms. Alexa Schuring/Spring 2023- Ms. Schuring will be completing 120 hours in the Groton Area Middle School and Groton Area High School during the Spring 2023 school year while working toward an administrative endorsement and certification. Currently, Ms. Schuring has been working on district policy found within the Groton Area Student Handbook, required documentation regarding staff leave, student behaviors, National Honor Society process and requirements, and staffing needs in preparation for Smarter Balance Testing.

2) Groton Area National Honor Society Information- Presented by Ms. Schuring

- National Honor Society History Information

- Student Criteria

- Number of Upcoming Students to be Inducted

- Date of Induction Ceremony

- Benefits of becoming a recognized member of the National Honor Society

3) Smarter Balance Assessments/Spring Testing- During the weeks of March 27th, April 3rd, and April 10th, students in grades 6-8 and 11 will take the Smarter Balance Educational Assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Students in grade 8 and 11 will also take the Smarter Balance Educational Assessment for Science. More about the Smarter Balance Assessment:

- Smarter Balance Assessments measure student achievement of state standards in the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science

- Smarter Balance Assessments are completed through an online computer application and adapt to each student's question responses

- Assessments are not timed; approximate assessment duration includes English- 3.5 hours; Math- 3.0 hours; and Science- 1.5 hours (grade 8 and 11 only)

- Parent and Guardian letters enclosed to encourage best practices for helping all students be well prepared to perform well

4) Requisitions for 2023-2024 School Year- Middle School and High School Staff have researched and completed the requisitions for resources and materials to support learning plans for the 2023-2024 school year.

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5) Dual Credit Parent and Guardian Meeting-

Groton Area High School

➤➤ Dual Credit Meeting

March 21 @6:00pm

MS/HS Library Conference room

Attend to learn more about the
Dual Credit program!

Mrs. Jodi Schwan will present information regarding the
Dual Credit program along with answer any questions you might have.

D2L
DES RELEARN

What is Dual Credit:

Dual credit is an opportunity for High School Juniors and Seniors who meet admissions standards to enroll in public postsecondary institutions in South Dakota and simultaneously earn credits for both their high school diploma and postsecondary degree or certificate.

Questions?

Contact Jodi Schwan
Jodi.schwan@kia.sd.us
Phone: 605-397-8981

6) Dates to Know:

March 14 @ 7:00pm- MS Talent Show GHS Gym

March 21 @ 6:00pm- Dual Credit Parent Meeting in MS/HS Library Conference Room

March 27-April 5th- Smarter Balance Testing Grades 6-8, and 11

April 3- 4 year Dual Credit Registration

April 4- 2 year Dual Credit Registration

April 6- Groton FFA-CDE

April 10- School Board Meeting @ 7:00pm

April 14-15- All School Play

April 15- ACT @ Groton Area

April 24- School Board Meeting @ 7:00pm

April 27- Middle School Spring Music Concert @ 7:00pm

May 4- HS Spring Music Concert @ 7:00pm

May 14- Groton Area High School Graduation @ 2:00pm

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Brett Schwan

Elementary Principal

March 13, 2023

1. Enrollment

- a. JK: 21
- b. KG: 39 (+1)
- c. 1st: 45 (+1)
- d. 2nd: 42
- e. 3rd: 47
- f. 4th: 52
- g. 5th 39

2. **SASD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY '23.** Our final session will be on March 23 in Rapid City.

3. **OST Update:** We just want to remind parents and families OST is open on most late start days unless it is announced otherwise. Mr. Schwan will let everyone know if we plan to be closed on late start days in his school message. For any days we get out early due to the weather OST is closed. School is closed this Friday, so OST will also be closed for spring break.

4. **Playground Slide Update:** Our 11 ft slide has a large crack down the middle. They were able to find a replacement one even though the color is not the exact match. Installation will be weather permitting.

5. **Track and Field Day:** Our plan is to hold track and field day on Friday, May 12 starting at 12:30. We will once again have our "picnic" lunch. Lunch schedule:

KG and 1st – 11:00-11:25

2nd and 3rd – 11:25-11:50

4th and 5th – 11:50-12:15.

6. **ESY-Extended School Year for Special Education Students:** Depending on the amount of service necessary, we will have a minimum of 2 staff members with an additional one if needed. This all depends on who is coming and what services will need to be provided.

7. **Summer School/Connect 4Ed:** Last summer we ran summer school two days per week through the 2nd week of August with 3 staff members. This year we are looking to do the same but will end services at the end of July. Some of the funds used last year to provide a 3rd staff member were used with our ESSER funds. (Back)

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

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

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- Heated hand grips
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- High-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty

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■ Indicates step-up feature



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¹Restrictions apply. See dealer or cubcadet.com/en_US/financing for details.

*When compared to the same engine without IntelliPower™ technology. Improvements vary depending on engine models and specific operating conditions.

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** See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.
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OFFERS AVAILABLE!**





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Criminal justice bills passed in 2023 described as 'just a start' for lawmakers **Rehabilitation programs seen as next step**

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 13, 2023 4:21 PM

The recently concluded legislative session emphasized and funded criminal justice to an extent not seen in a decade, but according to some prosecutors and lawmakers, it's just the start of reforms.

The focus next year, they say, should be on rehabilitation.

"We've had legislators who have reached out and have already said, 'Hey, what can we start working on for next year?'" said Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Haggar.

Lawmakers convened for their annual session in January and finished Thursday, except for a day set aside on March 27 to consider vetoed bills. Not since former Gov. Dennis Daugaard's reform efforts in 2013 had the Legislature focused so closely on criminal justice.

Among other updates to public safety laws, such as enhancing the penalty for attempted murder of a law enforcement officer, legislators passed:

A bill to upend the state's parole system for 23 violent offenses under the banner of "truth in sentencing," potentially costing the state millions in incarceration expenses,

Another potentially costly proposal to set mandatory minimum sentences for anyone convicted of four or more driving under the influence violations, and,

Two bills that allocate around \$400 million for a new women's prison in Rapid City and a replacement facility for the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Lawmakers ponder rehab programs

Haggar helped draft the truth in sentencing bill, which was sponsored by Sioux Falls Republicans Brent Hoffman in the Senate and Sue Peterson in the House.

During a press conference to discuss 2022 crime statistics in Sioux Falls last week, Haggar called the bill "a good first step." The next step will be to bolster rehabilitation programs behind the prison walls, particularly for nonviolent offenders.

Haggar is hopeful that will happen next year, because legislators are already asking about it.

"That's a golden opportunity for us," Haggar said. "And hopefully, we're going to be able to make some real impact on rehabilitation as well."

Hoffman would like to improve rehabilitation and community transition in upcoming legislative sessions, as well. The new prisons will help, he said, since the current outdated or overcrowded facilities make it difficult for the Department of Corrections to offer coursework for inmates.

The women's prison in Pierre is so full that space for drug treatment is severely limited. The additional women's prison in eastern Rapid City, set to begin construction soon and open in 2024, will free up space to resume rehabilitation coursework. The men's facility, meanwhile, at an as-yet undetermined location in or near Sioux Falls, will ease crowding for some men's facilities and offer flexibility for programming and placement.

The penitentiary was designed for an era when inmates were expected to sit in cells for 22 hours a day.

"We're largely limited within the Sioux Falls men's penitentiary by simple logistics, building structure, and a multi-story building that doesn't lend itself to those kinds of things," Hoffman said. "There simply

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isn't space."

Hoffman would also like to make it easier for paroled inmates to return to their home areas. Inmates often stay in Sioux Falls after release for its wealth of employment opportunities and broad range of social service programs. The Banquet offers free daily meals, there are several temporary work agencies that hire felons, and the city has halfway houses like the Glory House or the Arch to help them step slowly back into society from supervision.

Hoffman said legislation to encourage the expansion of services to more rural areas or partnerships to expand existing programs could aid in community transition and prevent Sioux Falls from being the default choice for post-incarceration parole planning.

With the right programming and supervision in place, Hoffman said, the state could reach a place for parolees where "you aren't just released in Sioux Falls, you are transported and transitioned and assisted with relocating back to your home on record."

Specialty courts encouraged with DUI penalties

Rehabilitation will be top of mind for Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, too. Karr, whose grandmother was struck by and killed by a drunken driver with multiple convictions in 2019, spearheaded mandatory minimums for DUIs this session.

It was the second year he moved to stiffen the penalties for repeat offenders, but this time he was convinced to adjust the verbiage to encourage the use of DUI courts prior to a sentence. He also added provisions for post-conviction supervision.

Karr told South Dakota Searchlight he shifted his thinking after discussions with representatives from the Unified Judicial System. DUI courts defer felony DUI sentences in exchange for intensive monitoring and weekly court sessions that last at least 18 months. The sessions play out like support group meetings, where positive peer pressure from other participants is coupled with incentives and encouragement from a judge.

Those courts have an 80% success rate in terms of reducing recidivism, Karr learned. Evidence-based programs that can improve public safety for less money – probation and parole are significantly less costly than incarceration – often make more sense for taxpayers, Karr said.

"The work is not done," Karr said. "At the end of the day, we want to address serial offenders. If we can do that through rehabilitation ... that's what we want."

Nonviolent crime rate dropping

Expansion of specialty courts for DUIs, drug users, veterans and people with mental illness was a pillar of Daugaard's 2013 criminal justice reform package. Other rehab and diversion programs meant to keep offenders out of jail or prison if they do not pose serious risk to the public were bolstered in some jurisdictions by grant funding from groups like the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation.

Arrest rates for non-violent crimes over the past five years would suggest those efforts have paid off.

Drunken driving arrests in Rapid City for the past three years have held steady at lower than the 10-year average, with the second-lowest arrest total for that time frame logged in 2022. DUI trends have been similar in Sioux Falls, and methamphetamine arrests continued a downward trend in both cities for 2022. Fentanyl arrests have increased in recent years, but the arrest numbers for that drug remain lower than arrests for meth.

Drug arrests statewide have trended downward for at least five years, according to the latest report from the Division of Criminal Investigation.

Diversion programs, pre-trial monitoring through the 24/7 sobriety program, and facilities for mental health holds are now so plentiful in Sioux Falls that Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead hasn't sent a jail inmate out into the community to pick up trash or otherwise perform community service for five years.

Low-risk inmates, sometimes called "trusties," had performed such tasks in Sioux Falls for decades. At this point, Milstead said, the inmates who may have been trusties a decade ago are already on supervision in the community.

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Beyond incarceration

Per capita violent crime in Sioux Falls has ticked up since the pandemic. But non-violent crime – and even some violent crimes like rape – dropped in 2022.

That's a point that stuck with House Majority Leader Will Mortenson, R-Pierre. Mortenson was among the handful of House members who argued against the truth in sentencing bill.

On the House floor, he pointed to the latest DCI report as proof that the bill was unnecessary.

Arrests for burglary, rape and other crimes are down, not up.

"There are a lot of parts of our country that appear to be getting less safe, particularly in urban areas," Mortenson said last week. "That really does not appear to be true in most of South Dakota, thankfully. We remain a very safe state."

The Hoffman bill had the support of sheriffs and prosecutors statewide, which made it difficult for lawmakers to side with him on the issue, Mortenson said late last week.

He's concerned about the potential cost of this year's public safety bills, but said he's hopeful his fellow legislators will return next year ready to consider approaches beyond lock and key.

"It's easy to say, 'We're mad at people for breaking the law, so let's put them in prison forever. That'll make sure they don't commit these crimes any more,'" Mortenson said. "That's the easy way. It just isn't the effective way if what you're looking for is public safety."

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

COMMENTARY

Don't legislate love of country into the lesson plan

DANA HESS

After twice missing passage by just one vote, it's likely that next year South Dakota lawmakers will, once again, have to decide if they want to create a Center for Exceptionalism at Black Hills State University.

According to the failed legislation, the center would make curriculum available to K-12 schools that would teach "students to balance critical thinking with love of country." The center would create professional development for K-12 history and civics teachers. It would oversee the implementation in public schools of "We the People," which promotes civic competence in students. The center would develop two courses for the state's public universities comparing communist countries with Western-style democracies and comparing socialist economies with free-market economies.

A bill like this may have sailed through the Legislature unnoticed if the word "exceptionalism" wasn't in the title of the center. This has become a buzzword on the right, implying that the history of the United States allows it a sense of superiority when compared to other countries. Those who prefer a warts-and-all version of their nation's history are often referred to as "woke" or dismissed as unpatriotic.

The bill was sponsored in the House by Spearfish Republican Scott Odenbach, who told his colleagues that an integrated curriculum created for students in kindergarten through college would make schools "work together to train up our young people to better understand history and become more engaged in civic involvement within a framework of love of country."

Love of country was on display during the House debate. Howard Republican Tim Reisch said he originally thought he would vote against the bill but ended up signing on as a sponsor. "Why? Because we live in the greatest country in the world. I, for one, am sick and tired of hearing the continual drumbeat about what is wrong with America."

While quick to say that they, too, were patriotic, some lawmakers pointed to the shortcomings in the bill. Brookings Republican Roger DeGroot pointed out that no one from the Board of Regents or state Board of Education testified in favor of it. He wondered how this new curriculum would fit into the two-year struggle that the state has gone through as it tries to set new social studies standards.

Critics of the bill are right to wonder just how a curriculum that sees this country as exceptional will handle

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the darker aspects of its history. Will slavery be explained away as a whoopsie-daisy? Will the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II be dismissed as just a misunderstanding? Will the genocide of Native American tribes be consigned to the small print of a footnote?

The bill failed twice in the House on identical 46-23 votes. Because the bill had \$150,000 in funding attached, it needed a two-thirds majority of 47. The best bet for Odenbach is to get BHSU to raise the money if, as he says, the school is really interested in a center devoted to exceptionalism. This year, if all his bill needed was a simple majority, it would have flown through the House.

Almost as disturbing as the attempt to force patriotism and love of country into a school curriculum was the off-hand way that lawmakers treated the \$150,000 in funding. Most South Dakota families would see \$150,000 as a windfall. For legislators, it was chump change.

Odenbach characterized it as "a very small amount" compared to the price tags on other legislation. "One hundred fifty thousand dollars is not a large dollar amount," according to Elkton Republican Randy Gross. Maybe spending \$400 million on prisons or cutting taxes by \$100 million has made lawmakers lose their perspective about the way they spend taxpayers' money.

One of the shortcomings of the exceptionalism bill was that the \$150,000 was a one-time allotment, with no plan in the legislation for future funding. Proponents said, "Try it for a year. See what happens." Even though they have an ongoing relationship with the state budget, some lawmakers don't seem to realize that government programs, once created, seldom go away.

Any school curriculum should offer students insight and enlightenment. With that knowledge, they should emerge from their studies as well-rounded citizens. Patriotism and love of country are desirable, but they shouldn't be legislated into the lesson plan.

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.

Biden says U.S. bank deposits are safe despite tumult over California bank collapse

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MARCH 13, 2023 10:43 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden reassured Americans early Monday that their money is safe in U.S. banks, after a tumultuous weekend following the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and a move by regulators to shut down a second lender.

Americans "should feel confident that their deposits will be there, if and when they need them," Biden said during short remarks from the White House.

The Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department took what is being described as an extraordinary step Sunday night, ensuring that depositors of the California-based SVB and Signature Bank of New York would be able to access their money by Monday morning, even above the federally insured limit of \$250,000.

"Treasury Secretary (Janet) Yellen and a team of banking regulators have taken action, immediate action, and here are the highlights," Biden said.

"First, all customers who had deposits in these banks can rest assured they will be protected and they'll have access to their money as of today. That includes small businesses across the country that bank there and need to make payroll, pay their bills and stay open for business.

"No losses, and this is an important point, no losses will be borne by the taxpayers," he said.

Rather, deposits will be covered by an insurance pool that banks regularly contribute to, according to a joint decision Sunday by the Fed, Treasury and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the agency tasked with buoying confidence in the U.S. financial system.

The agencies further announced that shareholders and "certain unsecured debtholders" would not be protected and would be held responsible for losses, as required by law.

Biden reiterated the point Monday as he listed steps being taken by the government to avoid a further run on banks.

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"Second, the management of these banks will be fired," he said. "If the bank is taken over by FDIC, the people running the bank should not work there anymore. Third, investors in the banks will not be protected. They knowingly took a risk and when the risk didn't pay off, investors lose their money. That's how capitalism works."

The administration will seek a "full accounting" of what led to SVB's investors and depositors withdrawing what totaled to \$42 billion Thursday, Biden said.

By Friday, federal regulators had seized the bank, causing the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history. The bank, the nation's 16th largest, is headquartered in Santa Clara, California, and is known for its role in the tech boom.

On Sunday, the U.S. financial agencies announced that state regulators had shut down Signature Bank, which operates in New York, Connecticut, California, Nevada and North Carolina.

Signature had already been under the scrutiny of regulators for its rocky role in cryptocurrency banking. The weekend upheaval stoked fears, as the banks were the largest to fail since the 2008 financial crisis.

Biden urged Americans to consider the "broader context" — a strong job market and low unemployment numbers — and said he will push Congress to enact regulations that were reversed during the Trump administration.

"During the Obama Biden administration, we put in place tough requirements on banks, like Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, including the Dodd-Frank law, to make sure that the crisis we saw in 2008 would not happen again," Biden said. But he said those rules were rolled back by the Trump administration.

"I'm going to ask Congress and the banking regulators to strengthen the rules for banks to make it less likely this kind of bank failure would happen again," he said.

In a joint statement Sunday, Democrats' top Banking Committee lawmakers issued a joint statement praising the administration's actions.

"As we work to better understand all of the factors that contributed to the events of the last several days and how to strengthen guardrails for the largest banks, we urge financial regulators to ensure the banking system remains stable, strong and resilient, and depositors' money is safe. Americans should continue to be confident in their preferred financial institutions in their communities," said Senate Banking Committee Chair Sherrod Brown, of Ohio, and the ranking member of the House Financial Services Committee, Maxine Waters, of California.

Brown, long a proponent of regulating the crypto market, expressed concern Thursday after Silvergate, a main lender to digital asset companies, announced it would be liquidating its operations.

In January, the Ohio lawmaker sent a letter to U.S. banking regulators warning that taxpayers could be on the hook if another financial collapse, similar to the 2008 crisis, were to occur.

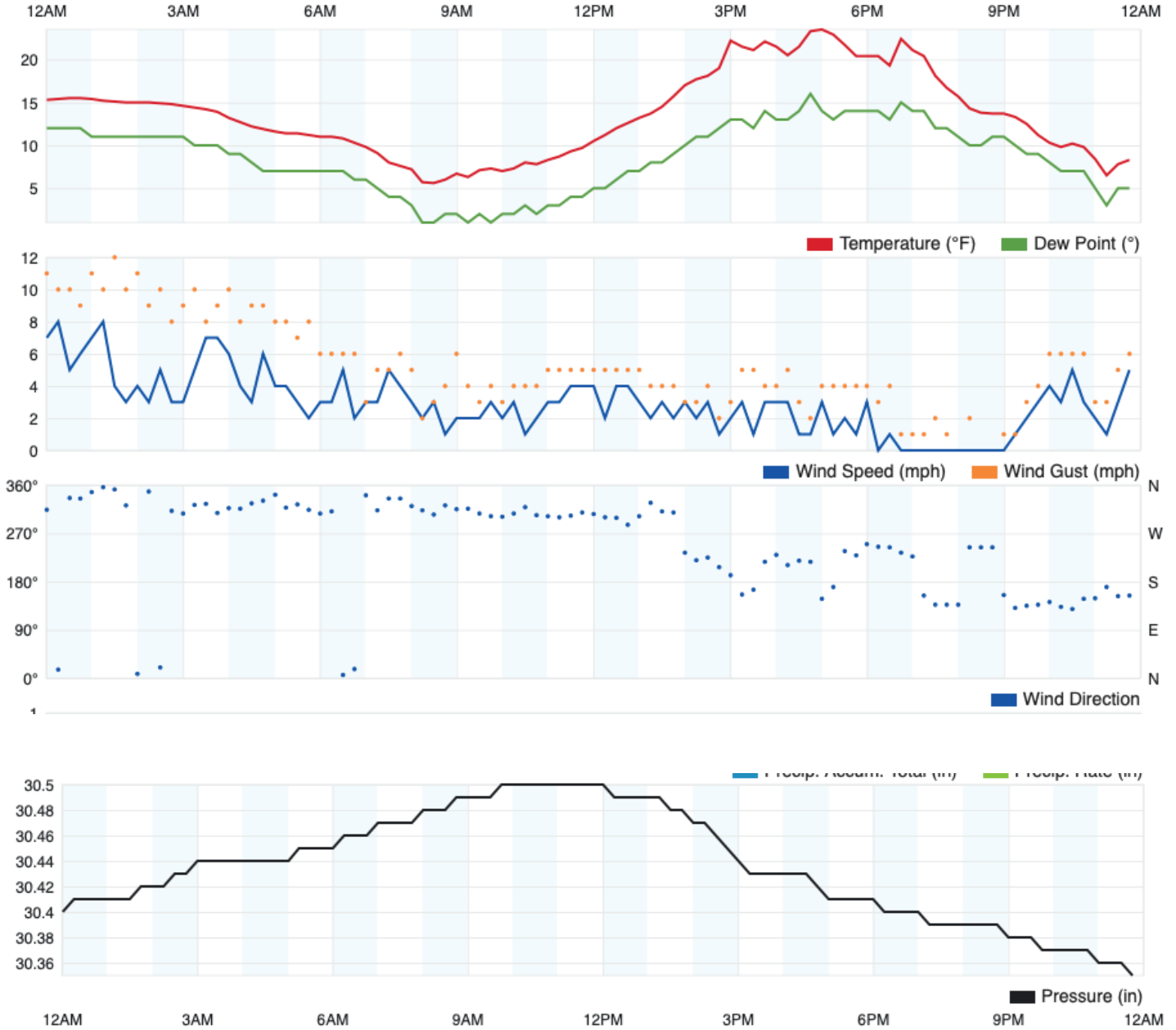
"We cannot allow the banking system to lose public confidence again," he wrote. "It is the responsibility of the financial institution and its investors, not taxpayers, for preventing a bank failure and absorbing losses that may occur during such a failure."

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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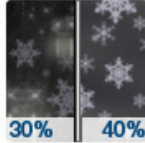



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
			 30% 40%	 30%		
Patchy Blowing Snow and Breezy	Increasing Clouds	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Rain/Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Windy	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery
High: 34 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 34 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 22 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 15 °F

Black Ice

Black ice is difficult to see and makes roads very slippery, especially bridges and overpasses



weather.gov/winter

With the strong winds today, some blowing and drifting of snow is possible and could make for icy road surfaces.

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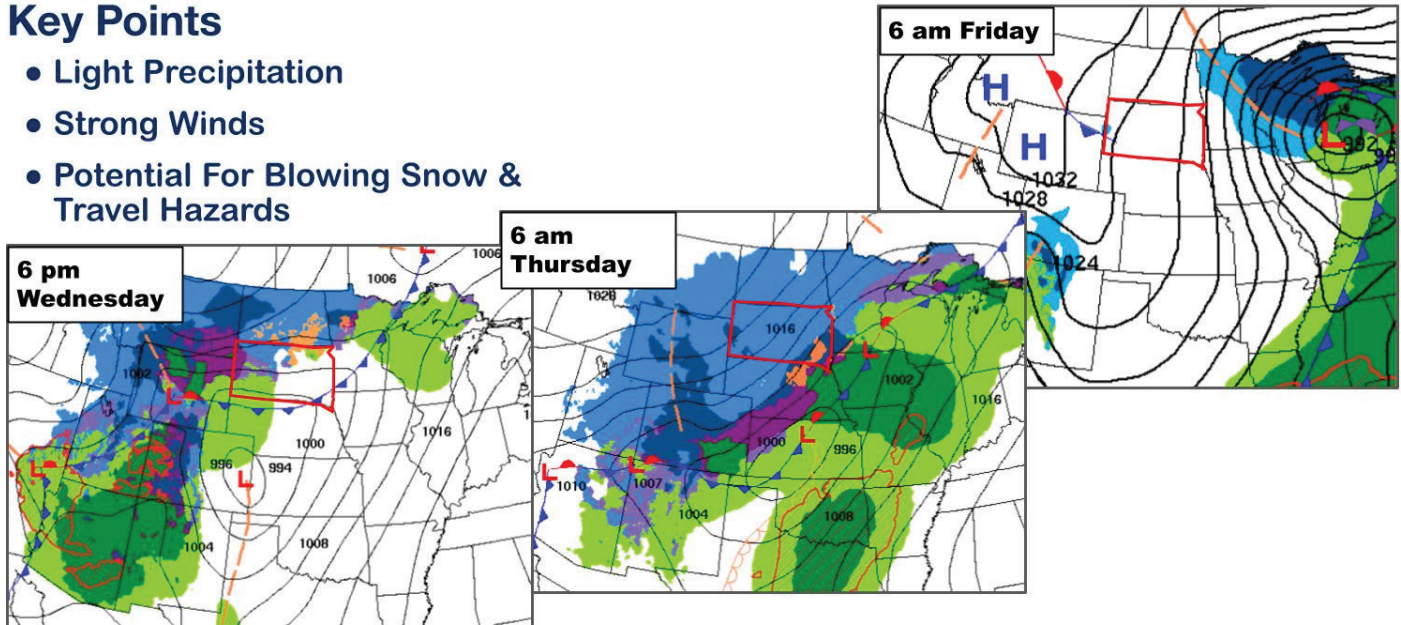


Mid-Week System

March 14, 2023
4:23 AM

Key Points

- Light Precipitation
- Strong Winds
- Potential For Blowing Snow & Travel Hazards



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A mid week system will bring the potential for strong winds, light snow and falling temperatures



Wind Gusts Timing

March 14, 2023
4:26 AM

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	3/14 Tue					3/15 Wed					3/16 Thu					3/17 Fri										
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm					
Aberdeen	43↑	40↑	35↑	25↑	13↑	5	6	12	14	18	18	25	37	37	38	40	43	41	38	44	46	40	38	33	32	32
Britton	40↑	41↑	36↑	28↑	18↑	10	6	7	12	15	16	18	32	35	38	41	41	39	38	39	41	41	37	37	36	33
Eagle Butte	17	10	12	9	9	8	10	15	14	17	21	28	35	37	37	37	37	36	40	41	40	36	32	30	30	31
Eureka	29	25	21	13	6	5	7	16	21	21	20	24	33	35	40	40	37	38	39	41	41	38	38	36	33	32
Gettysburg	26	22	17	8	7	8	8	14	17	17	16	22	32	33	38	39	39	39	40	41	43	41	37	35	33	32
Kennebec	26	20	13	9	5	6	3	10	14	17	17	20	31	35	38	41	40	39	39	41	41	41	38	36	35	33
McIntosh	15	14	12	10	9	6	7	14	16	14	21	30	35	36	38	36	33	36	38	38	37	32	31	26	28	30
Milbank	32	37	36	28	15	17	14	8	9	12	13	13	18	30	36	39	41	45	41	46	48	48	45	45	43	38
Miller	39	35	30	17	9	6	5	8	13	15	15	18	28	31	36	39	41	40	40	41	41	39	39	37	33	32
Mobridge	21	17	14	10	5	3	6	12	14	15	16	23	31	31	35	35	32	33	36	39	38	33	29	28	28	30
Murdo	21	16	15	9	8	6	8	14	16	23	24	24	35	36	38	39	39	38	38	43	44	39	33	31	30	31
Pierre	18	10	8	8	7	5	5	10	12	14	16	22	30	33	37	35	32	32	36	41	43	37	31	28	29	31
Redfield	44	39	36	26	15	7	5	10	13	17	17	21	32	36	38	40	44	44	41	45	45	40	39	37	35	33
Sisseton	30	36	36	25	16	15	9	7	9	10	10	13	24	32	35	39	39	39	39	40	43	44	41	41	39	36
Watertown	40	43	41	38	35	25	20	18	22	23	22	18	18	29	36	39	41	44	43	43	44	44	44	43	38	36
Webster	45	46	44	38	30	18	12	14	17	21	21	21	28	36	39	45	46	46	47	46	48	48	44	44	40	36
Wheaton	35	37	37	32	26	17	9	10	10	12	14	14	18	29	32	36	38	38	38	38	40	40	39	38	36	35

*Table values in mph
**Created: 3 am CDT Tue 3/14/2023
***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

Period of Snowfall

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Light snow (less than an inch) and strong winds will accompany the system. There is the potential for hazardous travel due to blowing snow

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24 °F at 4:49 PM

Low Temp: 5 °F at 8:32 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 1:01 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 52 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 71 in 1981

Record Low: -31 in 1897

Average High: 41

Average Low: 19

Average Precip in March.: 0.35

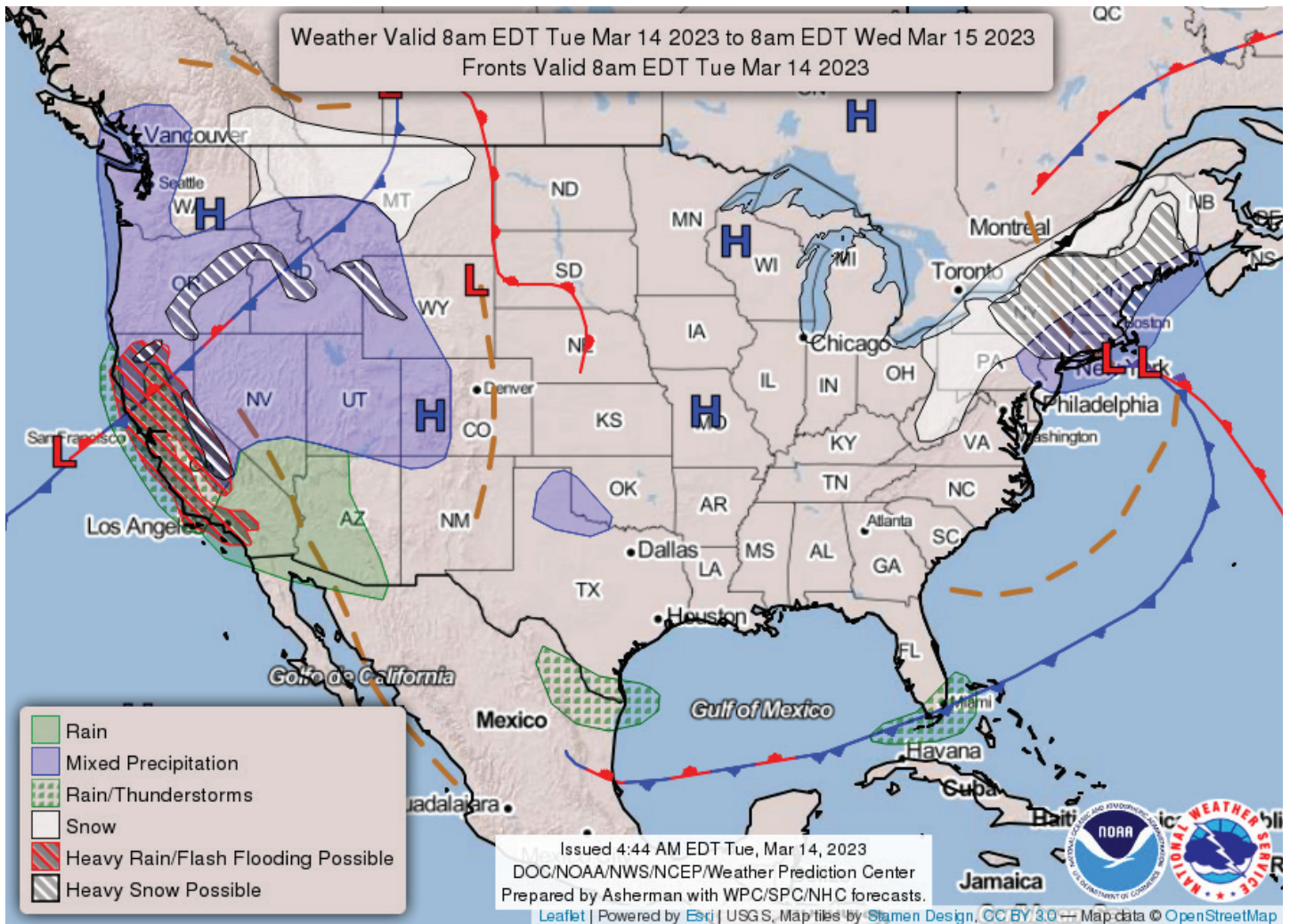
Precip to date in March.: 1.20

Average Precip to date: 1.52

Precip Year to Date: 2.78

Sunset Tonight: 7:38:02 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:13 AM



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Today in Weather History

March 14, 1989: A fast-moving winter storm produced freezing rain and heavy snow across most of South Dakota. The visibility was reduced to 100 ft within areas of blowing snow. Driving conditions were treacherous, resulting in abandoned vehicles, several accidents, and the temporary closing of I-29 from Sioux Falls to the North Dakota border.

March 14, 1990: Heavy Snow fell across parts of the southwest, central, and north-central South Dakota from the late afternoon on the 13th into the morning hours of the 14th. The highest accumulations were recorded in the north-central part of the state, including 9 inches at Gettysburg, 8 inches at Pollock, and 5 inches at Pine Ridge.

March 14, 2002: Heavy snow of 6 to 16 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota from the early morning to the evening hours. Some freezing rain fell across parts of the area before changing over to snow. Also, the winds increased from the north resulting in blowing snow and reduced visibilities. The combination of ice, heavy snow, and blowing snow resulted in challenging travel conditions. There were several accidents across the area, along with many vehicles sliding off the road. Schools either started late or were closed. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Blunt, 7 inches at Murdo, 8 inches at Stephan and Clark, 9 inches at Gann Valley and Miller, and 11 inches at Highmore and Watertown. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included, 12 inches at Hayti and Milbank, 14 inches at Castlewood and Presho, 15 inches at Clear Lake, and 16 inches at Kennebec.

1933: A deadly tornado outbreak affected the Middle Tennessee region, including Nashville, on this day. The outbreak, which produced five or more tornadoes, killed 44 people and injured at least 461 others. The strongest tornado, F3, cut a path through the center of Nashville. About 1,400 homes were damaged or destroyed. Windows were blown out of the State Capitol Building.

1935: Suffocating dust storms frequently occurred in southeast Colorado between the 12th and the 25th of the month. Six people died, and many livestock starved or suffocated. Up to six feet of dust covered the ground. Schools were closed, and tenants deserted many rural homes.

1944 - A single storm brought a record 21.6 inches of snow to Salt Lake City UT. (The Weather Channel)

1870 - The term blizzard was first applied to a storm which produced heavy snow and high winds in Minnesota and Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1960 - Northern Georgia was between snowstorms. Gainesville GA received 17 inches of snow during the month, and reported at least a trace of snow on the ground 22 days in March. Snow was on roofs in Hartwell GA from the 2nd to the 29th. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm in the western U.S. produced 15 inches of snow in the Lake Tahoe Basin of Nevada, and wind gusts to 50 mph at Las Vegas NV. Thunderstorms in the Sacramento Valley of California spawned a tornado which hit a turkey farm near Corning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region continued to produce heavy snow in northwest Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, and produced up to 14 inches of snow in northeast Ohio. Poplar WI reported 27 inches of snow in two days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - High winds in Colorado and Wyoming gusted above 120 mph at Horsetooth Heights CO. High winds in the Central Plains sharply reduced visibilities in blowing dust as far east as Kansas City MO. Winds gusting to 72 mph at Hill City KS reduced the visibility to a city block in blowing dust. Soil erosion in northwest Kansas damaged nearly five million acres of wheat. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Fifty-three cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Gulf coast to the Great Lakes Region. Charleston WV was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 89 degrees. It was the fourth of five consecutive days with record warm temperatures for many cities in the eastern U.S. There were 283 daily record highs reported in the central and eastern U.S. during between the 11th and the 15th of March. (The National Weather Summary)

2007 - The temperature in Concord, NH, reaches a record high of 74 degrees less than one week after a record low temperature of 7 degrees below zero on March 8, an 81 degree temperature swing in six days.

2008: An EF2 tornado moved through downtown Atlanta, Georgia, shortly before 10 pm, damaging the Georgia Dome where the SEC men's basketball tournament was underway.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT'S NEXT?

Reading through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, reveals God's thoughtful planning.

Nothing in His creation happened by chance. He wisely created everything to fit together very carefully and logically, in perfect harmony. The fish came after water, grass before animals, and trees before birds. Then when everything was prepared, God created man. God knew what He was doing and where He was going. What a great example for us.

James gave us some insight about planning too. He reminds us that we sometimes begin to do something without even knowing what tomorrow may bring. He seems to be making fun of us when he says, "Now listen, you who go here or there spend a year here to carry on business thinking you will make money, but not knowing anything about tomorrow." Rather he says, "Focus on God's will!" Great advice!

It is important for us to have visions of what we want to accomplish and plans to make the vision a reality. But we get into difficult situations if our focus is on our self-sufficiency or self-importance. We must humbly rely on God, looking to Him first and foremost, in all that we plan to do. We must always be close enough to Him to hear His voice, and willing to change our plans when He asks. Our plans must agree with His purpose or our work will be in vain.

Prayer: We ask, Father, that You guide us in all that we do and guard us from being self-centered. May we always seek first the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10



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 15 Hrs 24 Mins 35
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.13.23

20 23 28 33 51 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$39,680,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 24
DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.13.23

3 9 20 27 37 15

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 54 Mins
DRAW: 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.11.23

6 15 17 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$88,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 24
DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.13.23

5 25 32 38 62 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.13.23

3 10 24 46 63 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$63,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota session saw tax cut, transgender care limits

By AMANCAI BIRABEN Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are taking a break in the legislative session until they return later in March to consider any bills Republican Gov. Kristi Noem vetoed.

Republican legislative leaders were focused on cutting taxes when the session began in January. They now can declare victory on that topic.

The record was more mixed on other topics, ranging from restricting gender-affirming care for transgender people to limiting foreign ownership of farmland.

Here is a rundown on how the session's top issues fared:

BIGGEST TAX BREAK IN STATE HISTORY

As legislators opened the session with a \$423 million surplus, lawmakers were intent on passing a sales tax cut — and they accomplished that goal earlier this month. The Legislature approved a general sales tax cut from 4.5% to 4.2% that is set to end after four years. The change is expected to reduce taxes by \$104 million per year.

The legislation included removal of a mechanism known as the "Partridge Amendment," which gradually reduced the state's sales tax as more money was collected from internet sales.

Rather than the general sales tax reduction, Noem had campaigned for reelection on a promise to repeal sales taxes on groceries. Since legislators took a different approach, it wasn't clear whether she would sign the legislation.

"I still believe that the best budget option for our state's future is the one that I presented in December, including the elimination of the sales tax on groceries," Noem said Friday in a statement. "And in the coming weeks, I will have to decide whether the budget that has been presented to me is worthy of my signature."

STOKING FEARS AGAINST CHINA

Many lawmakers voiced fears about foreign businesses in the state but struggled to agree on strategies for restricting them.

While Noem favored creating a chapter of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to judge whether a foreign entity was eligible to purchase 160 acres or more of land, some lawmakers preferred streamlined procedures to simply count foreign ownership.

"China's kind of coming in the front door. Nobody's putting any restrictions on anything and when you really start paying attention and looking at what's happening, you get even more concerned," said Republican Sen. Erin Tobin, whose bill for an oversight committee was defeated.

Lawmakers and the cattle industry opposed Noem's proposal, pointing out flaws in the mechanics and cautioning against pitting business opportunities against national security.

The legislature approved a bill to require agricultural businesses to document whether their land is owned by a foreign entity for government records, as well as a bill that will cut ties between the government and overseas businesses.

CULTURE WAR ISSUES

Noem signed into law a bill that prohibits gender-affirming care for transgender people younger than 18.

The new law bans the prescription of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and gender-affirming surgery for minors. By approving the legislation, lawmakers pushed back against opponents who argued that such treatment can help young people psychologically and reduce the risk of suicide among minors.

The new measure would see medical licenses removed from health care providers who provide banned treatment to transgender youth, despite criticism from the state's leading health organizations. It's unclear whether this will result in a lawsuit, as has been the case with similar laws across the country.

This is the latest move opposed by transgender advocates that Noem has signed. Last year, the governor imposed a ban on transgender girls and college-age women playing in state school leagues.

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"Every year, South Dakota lawmakers zero in on transgender youth," said Samantha Chapman with the ACLU of South Dakota. "And every year the transgender community is hurt while meaningful problems go unaddressed."

Separately, some Republican lawmakers backed restrictions on drag shows on state university campuses and other publicly funded spaces and sought to stop children from attending such events. That effort ultimately failed.

A bill to ban library books "harmful to minors" also lost in an initial hearing.

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

In South Dakota, native youth are put into foster care at three times the rate of white youth, and some lawmakers proposed a bill aimed at placing Native American children with other relatives when they are removed from their families.

The move came as the U.S. Supreme Court considers challenges to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, which gives preference to Native American families in foster care and adoption proceedings for Native American children.

"What can the tribes do better and what can the states do better?" Democratic Rep. Peri Pourier said when presenting a statewide Indian Child Welfare Act bill. "What it really boils down to is a relationship built on trust."

Other states have added similar protections to state law, but such efforts failed in South Dakota, and proposals again didn't pass this session. Supporters expressed disappointment that Noem and Democratic legislators couldn't work together on such a bill.

PROPERTY RIGHTS VS. PIPELINES

Ranchers called for restrictions on the use of eminent domain to install carbon capture pipelines, but lawmakers opted not to approve limitations out of concern it could hurt the state's ethanol industry and break business agreements.

The lack of action means carbon sequestration companies like Summit Carbon Solutions and Navigator CO2 can continue using eminent domain to build pipelines across the state as part of a larger regional network.

Those opposed to the limits expressed concern that restrictions could lead to legal action against the state and argued the pipelines would help South Dakota's long-term agricultural industry.

ELECTION RULES

While South Dakota said the state's electoral system is safe and accurate, lawmakers still approved changes to election laws.

"South Dakota has an excellent election system but we can always be better," said Republican Rep. Tony Venhuizen.

The new measures include slight changes in recounts and runoffs through language and proceedings, such as a law that enables candidates outside the primary election to run. Candidates tied for second place would be required to participate in the runoff election alongside the first-place candidates if the margin is less than 35%.

Silicon Valley Bank's demise disrupts the disruptors in tech

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

Silicon Valley Bank's collapse rattled the technology industry that had been the bank's backbone, leaving shell-shocked entrepreneurs thankful for the government reprieve that saved their money while they mourned the loss of a place that served as a chummy club of innovation.

"They were the gold standard, it almost seemed weird if you were in tech and didn't have a Silicon Valley Bank account," Stefan Kalb, CEO of Seattle startup Shelf Engine, said during a Monday interview as he started the process of transferring millions of dollars to other banks.

The Biden administration's move guaranteeing all Silicon Valley Bank's deposits above the insured limit of \$250,000 per account resulted in a "palpable sigh of relief" in Israel, where its booming tech sector is

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"connected with an umbilical cord to Silicon Valley," said Jon Medved, founder of the Israeli venture capital crowdfunding platform OurCrowd.

But the gratitude for the deposit guarantees that will allow thousands of tech startups to continue to pay their workers and other bills was mixed with moments of reflection among entrepreneurs and venture capital partners rattled by Silicon Valley Bank's downfall.

The crisis "has forced every company to reassess their banking arrangements and the companies that they work with," said Rajeeb Dey, CEO of London-based startup Learnerbly, a platform for workplace learning.

Entrepreneurs who had deposited all their startups' money in Silicon Valley Bank are now realizing it makes more sense to spread their funds across several institutions, with the biggest banks considered safer harbors.

Kalb started off Monday by opening an account at the largest in the U.S., JP Morgan Chase, which has about \$2.4 trillion in deposits. That's 13 times more than the deposits at Silicon Valley Bank, the 16th largest in the U.S.

Bank of America is getting some of the money that Electric Era had deposited at Silicon Valley Bank, and the Seattle startup's CEO, Quincy Lee, expects having no difficulty finding other candidates to keep the rest of his company's money as part of its diversification plan.

"Any bank is happy to take a startup's money," Lee said.

Even so, there are fears it will be more difficult to finance the inherently risky ideas underlying tech startups that became a specialty of Silicon Valley Bank since its founding over a poker game in 1983, just as the advent of the personal computer and faster microprocessors unleashed more innovation.

Silicon Valley quickly established itself as the "go-to" spot for venture capitalists looking for financial partners more open to unconventional business proposals than its bigger, more established peers who still didn't have a good grasp of technology.

"They understood startups, they understood venture capital," said Leah Ellis, CEO and co-founder of Sublime Systems, a company in Somerville, Massachusetts, commercializing a process to make low-carbon cement. "They were woven into the fabric of the startup community that I'm part of, so banking with SVB was a no brainer."

Venture capitalists set up their accounts at Silicon Valley Bank just as the tech industry started its boom and then advised the entrepreneurs that they funded to do the same.

That cozy relationship came to an end when the bank disclosed a \$1.8 billion loss on low-yielding bonds that were purchased before interest rates began to spike last year, raising alarms among its financially savvy customer base who used the fruits of technology to spread warnings that turned into a calamitous run on deposits.

Bob Ackerman, founder and managing director of venture funder AllegisCyber Capital, likened last week's flood of withdrawal demands from Silicon Valley Bank to a self-inflicted wound by "a circular firing squad" intent on "shooting your best friend."

Many of Silicon Valley Bank's roughly 8,500 employees now find themselves hanging in limbo, too, even though government regulators now overseeing the operations have told them they will be offered jobs at 1.5 times their salaries for 45 days, said Rob McMillan, who had worked there for 32 years.

"We don't know who's going to pay us when," McMillan said. "I think we all missed a paycheck. We don't know if we have benefits."

Even though all of Silicon Valley Bank's depositors are being made whole, its demise is expected to leave a void in the technology sector that may be difficult to fill. In an essay that he posted on his LinkedIn page, prominent venture capitalist Michael Moritz compared Silicon Valley Bank to a "cherished local market where people behind the counters know the names of their customers, have a ready smile but still charge the going price when they sell a cut of meat."

Silicon Valley Bank is fading away at a time when startups were already having a tougher go at raising money, with a downturn in technology stock values and a steady ride in interest rates caused venture capitalists to retrench. The bank often helped fill the financial gaps with one of its specialties — loans known

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as "venture debt" because it was woven into the funding provided by its venture capitalist customers.

"There's going to be a lot of great ideas, a lot of great teams that don't get funding because the barriers to entry are too high or because there are not enough people who are willing to invest," said William Lin, co-founder of cybersecurity startup Symmetry Systems and a partner at the venture capital firm ForgePoint.

With Silicon Valley Bank gone and venture capitalists pulling in their reins, Lin expects there will be fewer startups getting money to pursue ideas in the same fields of technology. If that happens, he foresees a winnowing of competition that will eventually make the biggest tech companies even stronger than they already are.

"There's a real day of reckoning coming in the startup world," predicted Amit Yoran, CEO of the cybersecurity firm Tenable.

That may be true, but entrepreneurs like Lee and Kalb already feel like they had been through an emotional wringer after spending the weekend worrying that all their hard work would go down a drain if they couldn't get their money out of Silicon Valley Bank.

"It was like being stuck inside a doomsday loop," Lee said.

Even as he focuses on growing Shelf Engine's business of helping grocers managing their food orders, he vowed not to forget "a very hard lesson."

"I obviously now know banks aren't as safe as I used to think they were," he said.

China to reopen to tourists, resume all visas Wednesday

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — China will reopen its borders to tourists and resume issuing all visas Wednesday as it tries to revive tourism and its economy following a three-year halt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

China is one of the last major countries to reopen its borders to tourists. The announcement Tuesday came after it declared a "decisive victory" over COVID-19 in February.

All types of visas will resume from Wednesday. Visa-free entry also will resume at destinations such as Hainan island as well as for cruise ships entering Shanghai that had no visa requirement before COVID-19.

Foreigners holding visas issued before March 28, 2020, that are still valid will be allowed to enter China. Visa-free entry will resume for foreigners entering Guangdong in southern China from Hong Kong and Macao. The notice didn't specify whether vaccination certificates or negative COVID-19 tests would be required, but Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters Tuesday that China had "optimized measures for remote testing of people coming to China from relevant countries," allowing pre-boarding antigen testing instead of nucleic acid testing.

"All these have been well implemented, and the epidemic risk is generally controllable," Wang said at a daily briefing.

The move would "further facilitate the exchange of Chinese and foreign personnel," according to the notice posted on the websites of numerous Chinese missions and embassies.

China had stuck to a harsh "zero-COVID" strategy involving sudden lockdowns and daily COVID-19 testing to try to stop the virus before abandoning most aspects of the policy in December amid growing opposition.

The relaxation of visa rules follows China's approval of outbound group tours for Chinese citizens, the results of which have been positive, and the overall improvement in pandemic conditions, Wang said.

"China will continue to make better arrangements for the safe, healthy and orderly movement of Chinese and foreign personnel on the basis of scientific assessments and in light of the situation," he said. "We also hope that all parties will join China in creating favorable conditions for cross-border exchanges."

Death toll climbs as Cyclone Freddy slams Malawi, Mozambique

By VITUS-GREGORY GONDWE and WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP) — An unrelenting Cyclone Freddy that is currently battering southern Africa has killed at least 56 people in Malawi and Mozambique since it struck the continent for a second time on Saturday night, authorities in both countries have confirmed.

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Local police said 51 people in Malawi, including 36 in Chilobwe in the financial hub of Blantyre in the center of the country have died, with several others missing or injured. Authorities in Mozambique reported that five people were killed in the country since Saturday.

The deaths in Malawi include five members of a single family who died in Blantyre's Ndirande township after Freddy's destructive winds and heavy rains demolished their house, according to a police report. A three-year-old child who was "trapped in the debris" is also among the victims, with her parents among those reported missing, authorities also said.

"We suspect that this figure will rise as we are trying to compile one national report from our southwest, southeast and eastern police offices which cover the affected areas," Malawi police spokesperson Peter Kalaya told the AP.

The cyclone lashed over Mozambique and Malawi over the weekend and into Monday. It's the second time the record-breaking cyclone — which has been causing destruction in southern Africa since late February — made landfall in mainland Africa. It also pummeled the island states of Madagascar and Réunion as it traversed across the ocean.

The cyclone has intensified a record seven times and has the highest-ever recorded accumulated cyclone energy, or ACE, which is a measurement of how much energy a cyclone has released over time. Freddy recorded more energy over its lifetime than an entire typical U.S. hurricane season.

Freddy first developed near Australia in early February and traveled across the entire southern Indian Ocean. It's set to be the longest-ever recorded tropical cyclone. The U.N.'s weather agency has convened an expert panel to determine whether it has broken the record set by Hurricane John in 1994 of 31 days.

Freddy made landfall in the seaport of Quelimane in Mozambique on Saturday where there are reports of damage to houses and farmlands, although the extent of the destruction is not yet clear. Telecommunications and other essential infrastructure are still cut off in much of the affected Zambezia province, impeding rescue and other humanitarian efforts.

French weather agency Météo-France's regional tropical cyclone monitoring center in Réunion warned Monday that "the heaviest rains will continue over the next 48 hours" as Freddy barrels on. Mozambique's central provinces and Malawi have been identified as especially vulnerable to "floods and landslides in mountainous areas" by weather monitors.

Much of the damage experienced in Malawi is in homes built in areas prohibited by law such as in mountainous regions or near rivers where they are battling landslides, unprecedented flooding and rivers bursting their banks. The cyclone has forced the Malawian government to suspend schools in 10 districts in its southern region "as a precautionary measure."

Freddy is expected to weaken and to exit back to sea on Wednesday, according to Météo-France.

Biden expected to sign new executive order on gun control

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — President Joe Biden is expected to sign an executive order on Tuesday aiming to increase the number of background checks to buy guns, promote better and more secure firearms storage and ensure U.S. law enforcement agencies are getting the most out of a bipartisan gun control law enacted last summer.

The Democratic president plans to unveil his latest efforts at curbing gun violence in a speech from Monterey Park, California, said a senior White House official, who discussed the order ahead of its signing on the condition of anonymity. In January, a gunman stormed a dance hall in the community near Los Angeles and shot 20 people, killing 11, following a Lunar New Year celebration.

Biden's rhetoric has only grown stronger around guns — he routinely calls for banning so-called assault weapons in his speeches — and Democrats didn't push such a vocal anti-gun platform even during the Obama administration, when Biden was vice president. But Biden has been emboldened by the midterms after his regular talk of gun control didn't result in massive losses, and he's expected to continue to push for strong changes as he inches toward a 2024 run, his aides say.

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Biden invited Brandon Tsay, the 26-year-old who wrestled the semi-automatic pistol away from the gunman in Monterey Park, to his State of the Union address and praised the young man's heroism.

"He saved lives. It's time we do the same as well," Biden said in his speech to Congress. "Ban assault weapons once and for all."

But his power is limited to go beyond bipartisan legislation passed by Congress last summer, the most sweeping gun violence bill in decades. It followed the killings last year of 10 shoppers at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store and 19 students and two teachers at a Uvalde, Texas, elementary school.

"Too many lives have been taken by gun violence," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. "But he believes we need to do more. You'll hear him call on Congress to take action and not to stop ... that we need to continue."

Biden will mandate that his Cabinet work on a plan to better structure the government to support communities suffering from gun violence, said the senior White House official who previewed the order. The plan will call on Attorney General Merrick Garland to shore up the rules for federally licensed gun dealers so they know they are required to do background checks as part of the license.

Biden is also mandating better reporting of ballistics data from federal law enforcement for a clearinghouse that allows federal, state and local law enforcement to match shell casings to guns. But local and state law enforcement agencies are not required to report ballistics data, and many do not, making the clearinghouse less effective.

And the president is going to ask the Federal Trade Commission to issue a public report analyzing how gun manufacturers market to minors and use military images to market to the general public.

The bill passed last year, known as the Safer Communities Act, is viewed by gun control advocates as a good start but one that doesn't go far enough. After the law was signed, there were 11 other mass shootings, according to a database of mass killings since 2006 maintained by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. Those killings don't include shootings in which fewer than four people were killed — and gun violence is also rising nationwide.

"President Biden's executive order today is a home run for public safety," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety. "This is the latest example of President Biden's leadership on gun safety, and we're proud to stand with him as he takes robust action to help close the gun-seller loophole — which will significantly expand background checks on gun sales, keep weapons out of the hands of dangerous people and save lives."

Biden will also direct his Cabinet to make sure law enforcement agencies understand the benefits of the new law, particularly around red-flag laws, also known as extreme risk protection orders, which are intended to temporarily remove guns from people with potentially violent behavior and prevent them from hurting themselves or others.

Last month, the Justice Department sent out more than \$200 million to help states and the District of Columbia administer red-flag laws and other crisis-intervention programs.

Garbage tarnishes Paris luster as pension strike continues

By ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The City of Light is losing its luster with tons of garbage piling up on Paris sidewalks as sanitation workers strike for a ninth day Tuesday. The creeping squalor is the most visible sign of widespread anger over a bill to raise the French retirement age by two years.

The malodorous perfume of rotting food has begun escaping from some rubbish bags and overflowing bins. Neither the Left Bank palace housing the Senate nor, across town, a street steps from the Elysee Palace, where waste from the presidential residence is apparently being stocked, was spared by the strike.

More than 5,600 tons of garbage had piled up by Monday, drawing complaints from some district mayors. Some piles disappeared early Tuesday with help from a private company, the TV station BFMTV reported.

Other French cities are also having garbage problems, but the mess in Paris, the showcase of France, has quickly become emblematic of strikers' discontent.

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"It's a bit too much because it was even hard to navigate" some streets, said 24-year-old British visitor Nadiia Turkey after touring the French capital. She added that it was "upsetting to be honest" because on "beautiful streets ... you see all the rubbish and everything. The smell."

Turkey nevertheless sympathized with striking workers and accepted her discomfort as being "for a good cause."

Even the strikers themselves, who include garbage collectors, street cleaners and underground sewer workers, are concerned about what Paris is becoming in their absence.

"It makes me sick," said Gursel Durnaz, who has been on a picket line for nine days. "There are bins everywhere, stuff all over. People can't get past. We're completely aware."

But, he added, President Emmanuel Macron has only to withdraw his plan to increase the French retirement age "and Paris will be clean in three days."

Strikes have intermittently hobbled other sectors including transport, energy and ports, but Macron remains undaunted as his government presses ahead with trying to get the unpopular pension reform bill passed in parliament. The bill would raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 for most people and from 57 to 59 for most people in the sanitation sector.

Sanitation workers say two more years is too long for the essential but neglected services they render to all.

"What makes France turn are the invisible jobs. ... We are unfortunately among the invisible people," said Jamel Ouchen, who sweeps streets in a chic Paris neighborhood. He suggested politicians go on a "discovery day" to learn first-hand what it takes to keep the city clean.

"They won't last a single day," Ouchen said.

Health is a prime concern within the sanitation sector, officially acknowledged with the current early retirement at 57, though many people work longer to increase their pensions. With the exception of sewage workers, there appear to be no long-term studies to confirm widespread claims of shortened life expectancy among sanitation workers.

Still, health reasons were behind Ali Chaligui's decision to switch out of his job as a garbage collector for an office position in logistics. Chaligui, 41, says he still suffers after-effects 10 years later, like tendonitis, shoulder and ankle problems.

"Monsieur Macron wants us to die on the job," said Frederic Aubisse, a sewer worker and member of the executive committee of the sanitation section of the leftist CGT union, at the forefront of the mobilization against the pension plan.

The stakes will be high on Wednesday for both the government and striking workers. Unions are organizing their eighth nationwide protest marches since January, and the third in nine days; the action is timed to coincide with a closed-door meeting of seven senators and seven lower-house lawmakers who will try to reach a consensus on the text of the bill. Success would send the legislation back to both houses for voting on Thursday.

But nothing is certain, and the ticking clock appears to have fed the determination of strikers manning picket lines.

Durnaz, 55, is among those on the picket line at an incineration plant south of Paris, one of three serving the capital — all blocked since March 6. He has only been home twice to see his wife and three children. "It's cold, it rains, there's wind," he said.

Even if the bill becomes law, "we have other options," said Durnaz. "It's not over."

"Nothing is written in stone," Aubisse, the union official, added. He cited an unpopular 2006 law to promote youth employment that was pushed through by then-Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin despite massive student protests that triggered a political crisis. Months later, it was abandoned in a parliamentary vote.

If the pension reform is voted through, "Things will happen," Aubisse said. "That's sure and certain."

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Russian missile hits another Ukraine apartment block, 1 dead

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile struck an apartment building in the center of Kramatorsk on Tuesday, killing at least one person and wounding three others in one of Ukraine's major city strongholds in its eastern Donetsk region as it fights against Moscow's invasion, officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that six apartment buildings were damaged in the blast and rescue efforts were continuing. He posted a video showing gaping holes in the facade of the low-rise building that bore the brunt of the strike.

The Ukrainian general prosecutor's office and regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko also reported on the attack, posting photos of the building with mounds of rubble in front of it.

The war, which erupted after Russia's launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, has brought heavy civilian casualties. Tuesday's victims were among at least six civilians killed and 30 wounded in 24 hours, Ukraine authorities said.

"Russian troops are striking residential buildings, schools and hospitals, leaving cities on fire and in ruins," Kyrylenko, the regional governor, said on Ukrainian television. "The Russians mark each meter (yard) of their advance in the region not only with their own blood, but also with the (lost) lives of civilians."

Kramatorsk houses the local Ukrainian army headquarters. Ukrainian authorities say it has been regularly targeted by Russian shelling and other attacks in the past.

A missile strike on the city's train station last April, which Kyiv and much of the international community blamed on Moscow, killed several dozen people and wounded more than 100.

Russia had welcomed a Chinese peace proposal to end the fighting, but Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that Kyiv's refusal to have talks leaves Moscow with only military options.

Beijing has said it has a "no limits friendship" with Russia and has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion, or even refer to it as an invasion.

"We must achieve our goals," Peskov told reporters. "Given the current stance of the Kyiv regime, now it's only possible by military means."

However, Moscow's pursuit of its goals in Ukraine has been slowed by poor war management and short resources after being beaten back at the end of last year in a Ukrainian counteroffensive, military analysts say.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense said Tuesday that Russia's artillery ammunition shortages "have likely worsened to the extent that extremely punitive shell-rationing is in force on many parts of the front."

That shortcoming, it said, has "almost certainly been a key reason why no Russian formation has recently been able to generate operationally significant offensive action." _____

Follow the AP's coverage of the war at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Biden seeks to show stability in bid to avert banking chaos

By SEUNG MIN KIM and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In 2016, Vice President Joe Biden warned against efforts to unravel banking regulations that Democrats had fought to implement following the nation's financial crisis, just as the emerging Trump administration was determined to loosen those strict banking rules.

Biden argued that without the far-reaching 2010 banking overhaul known as Dodd-Frank, financial institutions would continue to gamble with consumers' cash and ultimately hurt the middle class.

"We can't go back to the days when financial companies take massive risks with the knowledge that a taxpayer bailout is around the corner when they fail," Biden said in a speech at Georgetown University in the waning days of the Obama administration.

Now there's a banking crisis on his watch as president, and Biden is moving aggressively to assure the public that it is contained, bank executives will be fired, deposits are safe and taxpayers aren't on the hook — measures also designed to calm jittery financial markets.

As he contemplates an announcement for a second term, Biden's ability to avert a contagion among

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financial institutions will test his contention that his administration represents competence and stability in contrast to the chaos of the Donald Trump years.

His call for additional regulation, though, is likely to run into stiff resistance in the Republican-controlled House and even among some moderate Democratic lawmakers who joined Republicans to loosen some rules in a 2018 law — not to mention criticism from the still-forming 2024 Republican field that has already labeled his actions a bailout by just another name.

Privately, Biden has been adamant that the government's intervention would not be like that of 2008, when Congress authorized billions in taxpayer cash to rescue financial institutions that were deemed too big to fail. That's according to a senior White House official, who was not authorized to describe private discussion by name.

But administration officials believe that this time they had to act substantively despite bad decision-making by bank executives, given the economic risks and the potential impact on customers who did nothing wrong.

Unlike in 2008, Biden was insistent that bank executives had to pay a price, said the official, granted anonymity to discuss internal White House deliberations.

"The management of these banks will be fired," Biden declared Monday. If an institution is taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., "the people running the bank should not work there anymore."

On Monday, Biden also stressed that taxpayers will not bear the cost of his administration's penalties on the two failed banks, instead tapping into an insurance fund that is paid for by bank fees. And while customers and small businesses who stashed their money with the penalized banks would be protected, Biden emphasized that investors would not.

"They knowingly took a risk and when the risk didn't pay off, investors lose their money," Biden said. "That's how capitalism works."

California Rep. Maxine Waters, the top Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee, said that Biden, like others, cannot ignore the lessons of the 2008 financial collapse and that having endured it firsthand, the president was well aware of the stakes. In conversations over the weekend, the White House assured her he was on top of it.

"I think that his main concern was how to, No. 1, take care of the depositors and avoid contagion so that we would not basically, seriously, disrupt the banking system in this country," Waters said.

Regulators put Silicon Valley Bank under FDIC control on Friday afternoon after panicked depositors rushed to withdraw all their funds within a matter of hours. That's a bank run. Top administration officials including Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stressed that they were monitoring the situation, as reports of companies struggling to figure out how to manage their finances amid the two banks' shutdown rippled throughout the media and threatened regional banks around the country.

By Sunday night, Treasury, the Federal Reserve and the FDIC announced that all Silicon Valley Bank clients would be able to access their money, as would depositors from Signature Bank in New York, which similarly failed and would be taken over by state regulators. As administration officials were working behind the scenes, Biden was regularly briefed by his chief of staff, Jeff Zients, National Economic Council director Lael Brainard and Yellen throughout the weekend, according to the White House.

Biden also spoke with outside economists, although the White House declined to identify them.

Administration officials also worked to brief lawmakers over the weekend, although several Republicans were left off a call for senators with Treasury and FDIC officials on Sunday night. After Republicans protested publicly, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., pointed out to Treasury that GOP senators were excluded, the administration quickly convened a separate briefing for Senate Republicans on Monday afternoon.

There, several GOP senators conveyed their concerns to administration officials that Silicon Valley executives were being rescued in a way that could ultimately harm community banks in their home states, according to a person with knowledge of the call who was granted anonymity to discuss a private conversation. That would be because these banks would be assessed new fees to replenish the insurance fund

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that the administration tapped to aid the two failed banks' depositors.

Indeed, the political specter of the word "bailout" will linger over the White House for some time.

Republicans angling for the 2024 presidential nomination are already arguing that customers will ultimately bear the costs of the government's actions even if taxpayer funds weren't directly used. Some economists believe more fees levied on banks will just get passed onto consumers, such as increased rates for loans.

"Joe Biden is pretending this isn't a bailout. It is," former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said, arguing that depositors at other banks now are "forced to subsidize Silicon Valley Bank's mismanagement" and that bank customers will ultimately be responsible for the costs if the insurance fund is drained.

Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., the top Republican on the Senate Banking Committee who is eyeing a presidential bid, also criticized what he called a "culture of government intervention," arguing that it incentivizes banks to continue risky behavior if they know federal agencies will ultimately rescue them.

White House and other administration officials are insisting their actions are not a bailout. But Harvard University economist Kenneth Rogoff said while he agrees that the government is rightly protecting the two banks' depositors, the money spent to make them whole is "certainly a bailout."

"The government swore after the financial crisis it was not going to bail out uninsured depositors and it was not going to bail out money funds," Rogoff said. "It basically, as I understand it, is guaranteeing everything. So that's certainly a bailout."

Garoppolo heads long list of QBs on move in free agency

By STEVE REED AP Sports Writer

Jimmy Garoppolo is finally out of San Francisco, ready to start the next phase of his career wearing the Raiders' silver and black. Sam Darnold is heading out West, where he'll replace Garoppolo and join Trey Lance and Brock Purdy with the 49ers. Mike White, Case Keenum and Jarrett Stidham have new teams, too.

Deshawn Watson is staying in Cleveland, but with a restructured deal with the Browns.

As for Aaron Rodgers, who is not a free agent but whose name has widely been circulated in trade rumors, his future remains unclear because, well, he's Aaron Rodgers.

Quarterbacks took center stage on Monday as NFL free agency began with teams allowed to negotiate — and agree to deals — with unrestricted free agents. The deals can't be announced until Wednesday and therefore were confirmed to The Associated Press by people speaking on condition of anonymity.

Garoppolo was the highest-profile QB to change teams.

He agreed to a three-year, \$67.5 million contract with Las Vegas, where he'll replace Derek Carr, who signed with the New Orleans Saints earlier this offseason after being cut by the Raiders. Garoppolo's contract includes \$34 million in guaranteed money.

White is staying within the AFC East, leaving the New York Jets for the Miami Dolphins to back up Tua Tagovailoa. Keenum is rejoining the Houston Texans, where he went 0-8 as a starter back in 2013. Stidham is going to Denver to back up Russell Wilson.

The Browns restructured Watson's record-setting guaranteed \$230 million contract to create salary cap space.

But the day wasn't just about quarterbacks. Several other big-name players agreed to join new franchises.

The Broncos were among the big spenders on Monday, addressing their offensive line by agreeing on a five-year, \$87.5 million contract with tackle Mike McGlinchey from the 49ers and a four-year, \$52 million deal with guard Ben Powers from the Baltimore Ravens. Denver later agreed with former Arizona Cardinals defensive end Zach Allen on a \$45.75 million, three-year deal.

But the Broncos couldn't keep everyone.

The Seattle Seahawks agreed to terms with former Broncos defensive lineman Dre'Mont Jones, a deal reported to be worth \$51 million over three years.

As usual, the first day of free agency negotiations meant some players cashed in.

Defensive tackle Javon Hargrave got a four-year, \$84 million contract from the 49ers, adding more talent to what was already considered one of the best defenses in the league, and Jawaan Taylor will become

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Patrick Mahomes' new blindside protector after agreeing to an \$80 million, four-year contract with the Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs.

Former Cincinnati Bengals safety Jessie Bates got a four-year, \$64 million deal from the Atlanta Falcons. Bates, an All-Pro in 2020, started 79 games in five seasons with the Bengals and had 14 interceptions, forced three fumbles and recovered two.

The Bengals' other free agent safety, Vonn Bell, signed with the Panthers.

The Chicago Bears made two big additions at linebacker, agreeing to contracts with two-time Buffalo Bills Pro Bowler Tremaine Edmunds and former Philadelphia Eagle T.J. Edwards. Edmunds' deal is worth \$72 million over four years with \$50 million guaranteed.

The New York Giants agreed on a four-year, \$40 million contract with linebacker Bobby Okereke. Okereke spent his first four season in Indianapolis, where he started 49 games and had a career-high 151 tackles with six tackles for loss, five pass breakups, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries last season.

And the Pittsburgh Steelers landed cornerback Patrick Peterson.

Even some kickers got paid, with Greg Zuerlein agreeing to re-sign with the New York Jets.

Plenty of quality unrestricted free agents remain unsigned, including wide receivers Odell Beckham Jr., Jakobi Meyers and JuJu Smith-Schuster, offensive tackle Orlando Brown, cornerback James Bradberry and linebackers Bobby Wagner and Lavonte David.

Q&A: Actor John Cena makes time for wrestling, Hollywood

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

With a wave of his hand in front of his face, John Cena built a WWE career trash talking his opponents by telling each one, "You Can't See Me."

Can't see Cena?

The 45-year-old ubiquitous Hollywood heavyweight can be spotted pretty much everywhere these days, from studio lots to the squared circle. Cena just wrapped a role in Peter Farrelly's new comedy "Ricky Stanicky," played the flawed DC Comics superhero in the "Peacemaker" series and will voice the brutish rhinoceros Rocksteady in the upcoming Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles film.

Wearing his trademark jorts, Cena hasn't forgotten his wrestling roots. He returns to fight WWE United States champion Austin Theory next month at WrestleMania at SoFi Stadium and can be seen — and played — as the cover boy for various editions of the WWE 2K23 game, with the WWE 2K23 Deluxe Edition and Icon Edition out Tuesday and the standard edition and Cross-Gen on Friday.

What's a wrestling game without a shocking twist? Cena guides gamers in the "You Can't Beat Me" 2K Showcase mode through some of the biggest losses of his career to wrestlers such as Rob Van Dam and Kurt Angle, rather than highlighting all his championship wins.

"Perseverance is a core value of mine," he said. "Never give up is written on all my stuff. I like the fact that it walks you through my toughest opponents, my toughest losses. That's very much a personal touch of mine and I'm glad 2K was very receptive to that."

Cena, not much of a gamer, calls the cover "a tip of the cap" from 2K for building a game around his 20-year body of work.

"There's been some very important moments where I didn't live up to the hype," Cena said.

In a recent phone interview with The Associated Press from Georgia, where he was filming "Grand Death Lotto," the Hollywood heavyweight discusses wrestling retirement, his starring role in the "WWE 2K23" video game and his relationship with embattled WWE boss Vince McMahon. Answers have been shortened for clarity and brevity.

AP: What did you mean in your tweet after your return to WWE last week when you wrote, "it might be the last time." Are you nearing the end of your WWE career?

CENA: I tried to put it in words in Twitter. I guess I didn't explain myself correctly. It was the first time I came out into the arena knowing that this has a definitive end. Normally, you come out, you get all excited, OK, this is the next one and I'm waiting for the next one. I'm not done, of course. I made that statement

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accepting a match at WrestleMania so I know I have at least one more in front of me. But what I was trying to convey was, that was the first time I looked at all that excitement and energy and realized this is the twilight of that journey.

AP: Why come back to feud with Austin Theory?

CENA: You would be surprised at my answer. Because that's what I was told would happen. I don't do that. I don't say, I want to do this. I want to work with that person. I don't ever do that. I've never done that. I just try and do what I'm told to do and do it to the best of my abilities. Instead of dictating my terms, I often just try to make the performance the best it can be. What I don't do and what I've never done is curate the direction of the narrative. I don't pick opponents, but I love to tell stories. I didn't pick Austin Theory but I certainly spoke from the heart (on RAW).

AP: How do you feel about the fact WWE could be on the market?

CENA: That's way above my paygrade. I just don't know what's going on with that. I love Vince McMahon. He's everything you could want in a great friend, business partner, father, mentor. I love the man. But his business dealings are his business and what he shares with me, that's between us. But I don't know what's going on with the corporate structure in the WWE or the creative direction of the WWE. But when I'm there as a performer, it's (WWE champion) Roman Reigns' show. In my mind, he needs to be in the conversation, and in my mind, he's the greatest of all time.

AP: Is it tough to reconcile the feelings you have toward Vince McMahon with the sexual misconduct accusations made against him?

CENA: No. I mean, everyone has the right to have their perspective. I have the right to have mine. When you love somebody, you take them as imperfectly perfect as they are. We all make mistakes, we all have poor decisions. Lord knows I've made my collection of poor choices. That doesn't mean I'm not going to love somebody. There's no way I can go on record and say I don't love Vince McMahon.

AP: You have WrestleMania coming up and a slew of acting projects including "Grand Death Lotto." Has the pace of your schedule ever become too much?

CENA: I'm feeling my age, so to speak. I could use a little bit of rest, but all my choice. These are wonderful things to be a part of. This one I'm really excited for because this movie does not stop. It is going to be action from the opening credits. We have a great team that mixes action and comedy. I'm also trying to do my best to, I hate the term work-life balance, but I'm trying to do my best to not fall into the trap of workaholicism where I just hide in my work and I'm not a fully open, vulnerable human being to the people around me, the people that I love. I haven't yet sacrificed my relationships for my work. I'm at a pretty good pace right now where I can hit on all cylinders.

Japan, S. Korea summit must overcome history to renew ties

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — South Korean and Japanese leaders will meet in Tokyo this week, hoping to resume regular visits after a gap of over a decade and overcome resentments that date back more than 100 years. The two major Asian economies and United States allies face increasing need to cooperate on challenges posed by China and North Korea, but previous rounds of diplomacy have foundered on unresolved issues from Japan's 35-year occupation of the Korean Peninsula.

Seoul has offered Tokyo concessions on South Korean court orders for compensation over wartime forced labor, but it remains to be seen whether the South Korean public will accept reconciliation.

The AP explains what's kept the two neighbors apart, what they're expected to talk about, and why it matters for the region.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Japan effectively colonized the Korean Peninsula between 1910 and 1945, in a regime that imposed Japanese names and language on Koreans and conscripted many into forced labor or forced prostitution in military brothels before and during World War II. Japan gave \$800 million to South Korea's military-backed government under a 1965 accord to normalize relations, which were mainly used on economic develop-

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ment projects driven by major South Korean companies. A semi-government fund set up by Tokyo offered compensation to former "comfort women" when the government apologized in 1995, but many South Koreans believe that the Japanese government must take more direct responsibility for the occupation.

The two sides also have a longstanding territorial dispute over a group of islands controlled by South Korea but claimed by Japan.

Seoul and Tokyo have attempted to establish better ties before. In 2004, leaders began regular visits, but these ended in 2012 after then-South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited the disputed islands. Tensions escalated over the past 10 years as conservative Japanese governments moved to rearm the country while stepping up attempts to whitewash Japan's wartime atrocities, and in 2018 South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japan's Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to compensate forced labor victims. In 2019, Japan, in apparent retaliation, placed export controls against South Korea on chemicals used to make semiconductors and displays used in smartphones and other high-tech devices.

WHAT'S EXPECTED AT THE SUMMIT?

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are to hold a summit and have dinner together during Yoon's March 16-17 visit. Though leaders have met in multilateral settings, including on the sidelines of a United Nations meeting in New York in September, this is the first formal bilateral summit since a meeting in Seoul in 2015.

Kishida is expected to reaffirm Japan's past expressions of remorse over its wartime actions.

Both sides have signaled hopes that this summit will lead to a resumption of regular bilateral visits, although Kishida hasn't yet announced plans for a visit to South Korea. Tokyo is also considering an invitation to Yoon to return to Japan as an observer at the Group of Seven summit Kishida will host in Hiroshima in May.

Yoon will be accompanied by high-profile business leaders who are expected to meet their Japanese counterparts. Masakazu Tokura, chair of the Japan Business Federation, said the two sides are considering establishing a separate, private fund to promote bilateral economy, culture and other key areas of cooperation.

WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE REGION?

Improved ties between South Korea and Japan could pave the way for the two U.S. allies to cooperate more closely on shared concerns related to China and North Korea.

Washington is eager to get its allies on the same page, and appears to have worked intensively to bring about the summit. U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said his country and its two allies had about 40 trilateral meetings and he thinks cooperation in the process helped to build up trust. While Japan increasingly bolstered defense ties with the U.K., Australia, India and the Philippines, challenges in Japan-South Korea relations were obvious and their closer relationship "in the larger context of our strategic alignment ... is a very big deal."

South Korean officials have denied direct pressure from the Biden administration to resolve the historical discord with Tokyo, but the plan is apparently part of South Korean efforts to strengthen security partnerships to counter North Korea, which has been expanding nuclear-capable missiles and issuing threats of preemptive nuclear strikes.

While pushing to expand U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises, the Yoon government has sought Washington's stronger reassurances to swiftly and decisively use its nuclear weapons to protect its ally from North Korea.

Seoul and Tokyo last week also announced plans for talks to restore the country's trade relations, which could relieve pressure from global high-tech supply chains. South Korean officials say stronger economic cooperation with Tokyo has become more crucial in the face of industrial supply chain disruptions and other global challenges.

"The need to strengthen South Korea-Japan cooperation has never been greater in the era of complex crises, brought by uncertainties in global geopolitics, North Korea's continued nuclear and missile testing activity and the disruption in industrial supply chains," South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyundong

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said last week.

HOW ARE JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA ADDRESSING HISTORY?

Experts say that the two countries will have to find an accommodation on history if this round of diplomacy is to achieve lasting results.

Choi Eun-mi, an analyst at South Korea's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said the summit wouldn't change South Korean public opinion if it's all about security and economic matters. "There must be some sort of expression of apologies and self-reflection by Japan, in particular by the Japanese government and the defendant companies," she said.

Seoul made a significant concession prior to the summit, announcing plans to use local funds to pay out compensation from the 2018 court order. South Korea will offer reparations to the plaintiffs through an existing state-run foundation that will raise the money from South Korean companies that benefited from the 1965 accord. It's a major relief for Tokyo, which fears that further South Korean court orders could impose massive compensation demands on hundreds of other Japanese companies that used wartime forced labor.

The plan has met fierce opposition from surviving forced labor victims, their supporters, and opposition politicians, who have demanded compensation directly from Japanese companies and a fresh apology from Tokyo. Only three of 15 forced labor victims who won damages in 2018 are still alive, and all three refused to accept South Korean payments in written notes submitted to the foundation, said their lawyer, Lim Jae-sung.

South Korean officials say the country's law allows for third-party reimbursements, and that they will do their best to persuade the victims to accept the payments.

South Korean officials say they do not expect Nippon Steel or Mitsubishi to immediately contribute to funds for the forced labor victims, and Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said it's up to Japanese companies to decide whether to contribute to the funds voluntarily.

The future of the deal may also rest on whether Kishida's government can win over South Korean public opinion. South Korean officials express hope that Yoon brings back a "sincere response" from Tokyo as bilateral relations improve.

Key dates in Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 20-year rule of Turkey

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is seeking a third consecutive term in office in elections in May, marks 20 years in power on Tuesday.

The 69-year-old, who served as prime minister from 2003-2014 and as president thereafter, started as a reformist who expanded rights and freedoms, allowing his majority-Muslim country to start European Union membership negotiations.

He later reversed course, cracking down on dissent, stifling the media and passing measures that eroded democracy.

The presidential and parliamentary elections set for May 14 could be Erdogan's most challenging yet. They will be held amid economic turmoil and high inflation, just three months after a devastating earthquake that killed tens of thousands.

Here's a look at some of the key dates during Erdogan's rule:

March 27, 1994: Erdogan is elected mayor of Istanbul, running on the pro-Islamic Welfare Party ticket.

Dec. 12, 1997: Erdogan is convicted of "inciting hatred" for reading a poem that the courts deem to be in violation of Turkey's secular principles, and sentenced to four months in prison.

Aug. 14, 2001: Erdogan, who broke away from the Welfare Party with other members of its reformist wing, forms the conservative Justice and Development Party, or AKP.

Nov. 3, 2002: A year after it is founded, AKP wins a parliamentary majority in general elections. Erdogan however, is barred from running due to his conviction.

March 9, 2003: Erdogan is elected to parliament in a by-election after his political ban is lifted.

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March 14, 2003: Erdogan replaces his AKP colleague Abdullah Gul as prime minister.

Oct. 3, 2005: Turkey begins accession talks with the European Union after Erdogan's government introduces a series of reforms.

July 22, 2007: Erdogan wins 46.6% of the votes in general elections.

March 31, 2008: Constitutional Court accepts an indictment seeking the AKP's closure for acts allegedly in violation of secularism. The court eventually rules not to shutter the party but cuts treasury financing for political parties.

October 20, 2008: The first of a series of trials against military officers, lawmakers and public figures begins. The suspects are accused of plotting to overthrow the government, in what turn out to be sham trials based on faked evidence and designed to eliminate Erdogan's opponents. The trials were later blamed on the network of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen.

Sept. 12, 2010: Erdogan wins a referendum on constitutional changes that allow the government to appoint high court judges, curb the powers of the military and ensure presidents are elected by a national vote rather than by parliament.

June 12, 2011: Erdogan wins general elections with a landslide 49.8% of the vote.

May 28, 2013: Nationwide anti-government protests erupt over plans to cut down trees in Istanbul's central Gezi Park. Turkey's largest ever protests result in eight deaths, while the government is accused of using excessive force against protesters.

Aug. 10, 2014: Erdogan wins Turkey's first presidential election held by direct popular vote. Although the post is largely ceremonial, he is accused of exceeding his powers and meddling in the running of the country.

June 7, 2015: The AKP, headed by Ahmet Davutoglu after Erdogan became president, loses its majority in parliamentary elections, and is forced to seek a coalition.

Nov. 1, 2015: AKP regains a parliamentary majority in re-run elections following months of insecurity, including suicide bombings by the Islamic State group and reignition of a decades-long conflict with Kurdish militants.

July 15, 2016: Erdogan's government survives a military coup attempt blamed on followers of U.S.-based cleric Gulen, a former ally. The failed coup results in nearly 290 deaths. The government then embarks on a large-scale crackdown on Gulen's network, arresting tens of thousands and purging more than 130,000 from government jobs. Many media and nongovernmental organizations are closed down and the crackdown then expands to critics, including Kurdish lawmakers and journalists. The EU accession talks, which had made slow progress, are frozen amid the democratic backtracking.

April 16, 2017: Voters in a referendum narrowly approve switching the country's political system from a parliamentary democracy to an executive presidential system, abolishing the post of prime minister and concentrating a vast amount of power in the hands of the president. Critics call the system a "one-man rule."

June 24, 2018: Erdogan wins presidential elections with 52.59% of the vote, becoming Turkey's first president with executive powers, while his party's alliance with a nationalist party secures a majority in parliament.

June 22, 2019: Erdogan's party loses re-run election for Istanbul mayor by a landslide after it contests March elections which the main opposition party's candidate had narrowly won. It's the first time since Erdogan's mayoral win in 1994 that his party and its predecessors lose Turkey's most important city.

Feb. 6, 2023: A powerful earthquake devastates parts of Turkey and Syria, killing more than 48,000 people in Turkey. Erdogan's government is criticized for its poor response to the disaster and for failing to prepare the country for a large-scale quake.

Australia says nuclear subs needed to counter militarization

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's defense minister said Tuesday a deal to buy nuclear-powered attack submarines from the United States was necessary to counter the biggest conventional military buildup in the region since World War II.

Australian officials said the deal will cost up to \$245 billion over the next three decades and create 20,000 jobs. It comes at a time that China is rapidly building up its own military.

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said it had made a huge diplomatic effort for months ahead of Monday's announcement of the deal, including making more than 60 calls to regional and world leaders. Australia had even offered to keep China in the loop, he said.

"We offered a briefing. I have not participated in a briefing with China," Marles said.

Asked by reporters if China had rejected the briefing or responded at all, Marles replied: "I'm not aware of that response."

Without specifically mentioning China, Marles said Australia needed to respond to the military buildup in the Pacific.

"A failure to do so would see us be condemned by history," he said.

China has said the deal poses serious nuclear proliferation risks and stimulates the arms race.

"We urge the U.S., Britain and Australia to abandon the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game, faithfully fulfill their international obligations and do more to contribute to regional peace and stability," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during a daily briefing Thursday.

Marles said Australia intended to increase its military capabilities and to spend more on defense in the future, something it wanted to be transparent about.

"You know, our concern about other military buildups is that they happen in a manner which is opaque, and where neighbors are left uneasy as to why it is occurring," he said. "That is why we have gone to such an effort to make clear exactly why we are taking the steps that we're taking."

U.S. President Joe Biden announced the deal in San Diego along with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Albanese said the agreement "represents the biggest single investment in Australia's defense capability in all of our history."

Australia is buying three, and possibly up to five, Virginia-class boats as part of deal. Under the so-called AUKUS partnership, a future generation of submarines will be built in Britain and in Australia with U.S. technology and support.

Australia estimates the deal will cost it between 268 billion and 368 billion Australian dollars (\$178-\$245 billion).

Biden emphasized the ships would not carry nuclear weapons of any kind. Albanese has said he doesn't think the deal will sour its relationship with China, which he noted had improved in recent months.

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.

Marles on Tuesday appeared eager to move on from that.

"In an operational sense, we are building our relationship with France, with a much greater tempo of military exercises, with much greater access to our bases on the Australian continent but also French bases in the Pacific and indeed in the Indian Ocean," he said.

Alaska oil project approval adds yet another climate concern

By MATTHEW BROWN and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The Biden administration's approval of a massive oil development in northern Alaska commits the U.S. to yet another decadeslong crude project even as scientists urgently warn that only a halt to more fossil fuel emissions can stem climate change.

ConocoPhillips' Willow project would produce 180,000 barrels of oil a day at its peak, and using that crude would result in at least 263 million tons (239 million metric tons) of greenhouse gas emissions over

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30 years.

Demand for oil isn't dropping as the planet heats, and a bitter political dispute over the project, which was approved Monday, has underscored the Democratic administration's struggle to balance economic pressures against pledges to curb fossil fuels. The proposal in the remote region north of the Arctic Circle also highlights the paradox facing the U.S. and other nations: The world's transition to clean energy lags the realities of an economy still largely driven by oil consumption.

"At some point, we have to leave oil and gas and coal in the ground. And for me, that some point is now — particularly in a vulnerable ecosystem like the Arctic," said Rob Jackson, a climate scientist at Stanford University.

For Alaska, the project promises an economic boost after oil production dropped sharply since the late 1980s, and political leaders from both parties in the state united in support of it. Oil has long been the economic lifeblood of the still-young state, with revenues also helping remote communities and villages on Alaska's petroleum-rich North Slope invest in local infrastructure.

But the state has also felt the impacts of the changing climate: coastal erosion is threatening Indigenous villages, unusual wildfires are popping up, sea ice is thinning and permafrost promises to release carbon as it melts.

The International Energy Agency has said new investments in oil and gas drilling must be halted if nations, including the U.S., hope to reach their 2050 goal of net-zero emissions, meaning only as much planet-warming gas is released into the atmosphere as can be absorbed.

The energy sector accounts for 90% of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide and three-quarters of the total human-made greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere.

Yet global demand for crude is expected to continue rising, according to industry analysts and the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Instead of targeting domestic supplies of those fuels — including projects like Willow — energy expert Jim Krane said policymakers need to focus on reducing demand.

"If you target supply in the U.S. without any kind of measures to bring demand down, refiners are just going to pull their oil from overseas," he said.

Targeting supplies also could have broader economic effects since the cost of transportation is one of the drivers of inflation, Krane added.

Electric vehicles offer a potential substitute for gasoline-powered cars and trucks, but so far they've barely dented fossil fuel demand. By 2030, EV is expected to displace 2.7 million barrels of oil a day, according to new findings from Enverus Intelligence Research, a data analysis firm focused on the energy industry.

That's less than 3% of global oil consumption, which in 2030 is anticipated to be about the same as current levels — roughly 100 million barrels a day, said Al Salazar, senior vice president of the research company.

"Demand does not go to zero in a blink-of-the-eye," Salazar said. "It takes time to turn over the entire light duty vehicle fleet."

The Willow project is in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska — a place where Republican U.S. senators have noted drilling should be expected. The Biden administration last year reinstated an Obama-era management plan for the petroleum reserve that limited oil and gas leasing to about 52% of federal lands in the area. That rolled back a Trump-era plan that called for making available for leasing about 82% of the federal lands.

The greenhouse gasses from Willow would equal emissions from about 1.7 million cars. That's only 0.1% of total U.S. emissions. Interior Department officials for years have cited such relatively small emissions on a global scale as justification for approvals of coal mines and oil gas leases.

Jackson said that perspective can't continue if the worst effects of climate change are to be avoided. The planet is "as far from zero emissions as we've ever been" despite the emphasis on renewable energy.

"It's the same as thinking, well, every new car we put on the road or coal plant we build doesn't matter because there are millions of other cars and thousands of other coal plants around the world operating," he said.

Prior to the Willow decision, the administration already had softened its opposition to oil and gas that

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marked the early days of Biden's presidency.

The Democrat initially suspended new oil and gas lease sales, and the administration then fended off a legal challenge to that policy from Republican state attorneys general. But during negotiations over last year's climate bill, the administration agreed to tens of millions of acres of new leasing to get the support of Democratic holdout Sen. Joe Manchin, of West Virginia.

Provisions in the measure link oil and gas leasing to renewable energy development. As a result, the administration plans to offer for sale later this month more than 73 million acres of oil and gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico. In May and June, it will auction 280,000 acres of onshore leases in Wyoming, New Mexico, Montana and other states.

Environmentalists say the Gulf sale could result in drilling that would extract more than 1 billion barrels of oil and large volumes of natural gas over the next 50 years.

"This administration has pledged to oversee a historic transition to clean energy, but actions speak louder than words," said Earthjustice attorney George Torgun, who represents environmental groups that have asked a federal court to stop the Gulf sale.

Kara Moriarty, president and CEO of the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, said the transition to more renewable energy sources will not be like flicking a switch. She predicted the oil and gas industry will continue for decades.

"We will have an industry 30 years from now," she said.

North Korea launches 2 missiles to sea as allies hold drills

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea test-fired two short-range ballistic missiles in another show of force Tuesday, a day after the United States and South Korea began military drills that Pyongyang views as an invasion rehearsal.

The missiles launched from the southwestern coastal town of Jangyon flew across North Korea before landing in the sea off that country's east coast, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. It said both missiles traveled about 620 kilometers (385 miles).

The reported flight distances suggest the missiles target South Korea, which hosts about 28,000 U.S. troops. South Korea's military called the launches "a grave provocation" that undermines stability on the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said Tuesday's launches don't pose an immediate threat to its allies. But it said the North's recent tests highlight the "destabilizing impact" of the North's unlawful weapons programs and that the U.S. security commitment to South Korea and Japan remains "ironclad."

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that officials were still gathering details of the North Korean launches and there were no immediate reports of damage in Japanese waters.

Pyongyang could further escalate its weapons tests over the coming days in a tit-for-tat response to the allies' military drills, which are planned to run until March 23. Last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered his troops to be ready to repel what he called the "frantic war preparations moves" by his country's rivals.

Worries about North Korea's nuclear program have grown sharply after the North test-fired more than 70 missiles in 2022, many of them nuclear-capable weapons, and openly threatened to use them in potential conflicts with the United States and South Korea.

North Korea appears to be using long-stalled talks with Washington and the expanding U.S.-South Korean drills as a chance to enlarge its weapons arsenals to increase its leverage in future dealings with the United States.

The North Korean threats, along with China's increasing assertiveness, have pushed the U.S. to seek to reinforce its alliances with South Korea and Japan. But some experts say a solidified Washington-Seoul-Tokyo cooperation could prompt Pyongyang, Beijing and Moscow to strengthen their own trilateral ties.

China and Russia, embroiled in separate confrontations with the U.S., have repeatedly blocked U.S. and

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its allies' bids to toughen United Nations sanctions on North Korea.

Tuesday's launches were the North's second weapons test this week. On Monday, North Korea said it had test-fired two cruise missiles from a submarine the previous day. It implied the cruise missiles were being developed to carry nuclear warheads, though outside experts debate whether Pyongyang possesses functioning nuclear-armed missiles.

Submarine-launched missile systems are harder to detect and would provide the North retaliatory second attack capability. But experts say it would take years, extensive resources and major technological improvements for the heavily sanctioned nation to build a fleet of submarines that could travel quietly and reliably execute strikes.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Monday that North Korea has been refining its submarine-launch capabilities since its first test in 2016, and the United States was studying Sunday's launches to assess the North's capabilities.

"But of course, we're not going to let any steps North Korea takes deter us or constrain us from the actions that we feel are necessary to safeguard stability on the Korean Peninsula," Sullivan said.

The U.S.-South Korean joint exercises that started Monday include computer simulations involving North Korean aggression and other security scenarios and field exercises. The field exercises would return to the scale of the allies' biggest springtime exercises that were last held in 2018, according to South Korean defense officials.

The two countries have been expanding their drills as North Korean nuclear threats have been growing. U.S.-South Korea drills will proceed normally, regardless of whether "North Korea tries to disrupt them with provocations like missile launches," Jeon Ha Gyu, spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said Tuesday. U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Monday the United States has made clear it harbors no hostile intent toward North Korea and that the allies' longstanding exercises are "purely defensive in nature."

Holding telephone talks for the second consecutive day to discuss the North Korean launches, the chief South Korean and U.S. nuclear envoys stressed Tuesday that the North would face "clear consequences" for its actions, without specifying what those would be. They said the allies will maintain "firm readiness" to respond to any kind of North Korean provocation, according to Seoul's Foreign Ministry.

Later this week, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol is to visit Tokyo for a summit with Kishida, where the North Korean threat is expected to be a major topic. The shared urgency over security is pushing Seoul and Tokyo closer together following years of disputes stemming from Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula before the end of World War II.

Former Rep. Pat Schroeder, pioneer for women's rights, dies

By DOUGLASS K. DANIEL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder, a pioneer for women's and family rights in Congress, died Monday night. She was 82.

Schroeder's former press secretary, Andrea Camp, said Schroeder suffered a stroke recently and died at a hospital in Celebration, Florida, the city where she had been residing in recent years.

Schroeder took on the powerful elite with her rapier wit and antics for 24 years, shaking up stodgy government institutions by forcing them to acknowledge that women had a role in government.

Her unorthodox methods cost her important committee posts, but Schroeder said she wasn't willing to join what she called "the good old boys' club" just to score political points. Unafraid of embarrassing her congressional colleagues in public, she became an icon for the feminist movement.

Schroeder was elected to Congress in Colorado in 1972 and became one of its most influential Democrats as she won easy reelection 11 times from her safe district in Denver. Despite her seniority, she was never appointed to head a committee.

Schroeder helped forge several Democratic majorities before deciding in 1997 it was time to leave. Her parting shot in 1998 was a book titled "24 Years of Housework ... and the Place is Still a Mess. My Life in

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Politics," which chronicled her frustration with male domination and the slow pace of change in federal institutions.

In 1987, Schroeder tested the waters for the presidency, mounting a fundraising drive after fellow Coloradoan Gary Hart pulled out of the race. She announced three months later that she would not run and said her "tears signify compassion, not weakness." Her heart was not in it, she said, and she thought fundraising was demeaning.

She was the first woman on the House Armed Services Committee but was forced to share a chair with U.S. Rep. Ron Dellums, D-Calif., the first African American, when committee chairman F. Edward Hebert, D-La., organized the panel. Schroeder said Hebert thought the committee was no place for a woman or an African American and they were each worth only half a seat.

Republicans were livid after Schroeder and others filed an ethics complaint over House Speaker Newt Gingrich's televised college lecture series, charging that free cable time he received amounted to an illegal gift under House rules. Gingrich became the first speaker reprimanded by Congress. Gingrich said later he regretted not taking Schroeder and her colleagues more seriously.

Earlier, she had blasted Gingrich for suggesting women shouldn't serve in combat because they could get infections from being in a ditch for 30 days. According to her official House biography, she once told Pentagon officials that if they were women, they would always be pregnant because they never said "no."

Asked by one congressman how she could be a mother of two small children and a member of Congress at the same time, she replied, "I have a brain and a uterus, and I use both."

It was Schroeder who branded President Ronald Reagan the "Teflon" president for his ability to avoid blame for major policy decisions, and the name stuck.

One of Schroeder's biggest victories was the signing of a family-leave bill in 1993, providing job protection for care of a newborn, a sick child or a parent.

"Pat Schroeder blazed the trail. Every woman in this house is walking in her footsteps," said Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., who took over from Schroeder as Democratic chair of the bipartisan congressional caucus on women's issues.

Schroeder said legislators spent too much attention on contributors and special interests. When House Republicans gathered on the U.S. Capitol steps to celebrate their first 100 days in power in 1994, she and several aides clambered to the building's dome and hung a 15-foot red banner reading, "Sold."

A pilot, Schroeder earned her way through Harvard Law School with her own flying service. Schroeder became a professor at Princeton University after leaving Congress, but said politics was in her blood and she would continue working for candidates she supported.

For a while, she taught a graduate-level course titled "The Politics of Poverty." She also headed the Association of American Publishers.

Schroeder continued working in politics after moving to Florida, going door to door, speaking to groups and mentoring candidates. She was politically active for issues and candidates across the country and campaigned for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Among other activities she served on the board of the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

Schroeder was born in Portland, Oregon, on July 30, 1940. She was a pilot who paid for college tuition with her own flying service. She graduated from the University of Minnesota before earning her law degree in 1964. From 1964 to 1966, she was a field attorney for the National Labor Relations Board.

She is survived by her husband, James W. Schroeder, whom she married in 1962. Also surviving are their two children, Scott and Jamie, and her brother, Mike Scott, as well as four grandchildren.

Las Vegas water agency seeks power to limit residential use

By GABE STERN Associated Press/Report for America

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — Nevada lawmakers are considering a remarkable shift in allowing the water agency that manages the Colorado River supply for Las Vegas to limit single-family residential use in the desert city and surrounding county.

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It's another potential step in a decades-long effort to ensure one of the driest metropolitan areas in the U.S. has enough water. Already, in Las Vegas ornamental lawns are banned, new swimming pools have a size limit and the water used inside homes is recycled.

While some agencies across the U.S. West tie increased water use to increased cost, Nevada could be the first to give a water agency — the Southern Nevada Water Authority — the power to restrict what comes out of residents' taps in state statute to about 30,000 gallons above the average use. It's aimed mostly at the top 10% of water users that use 40% of the water in the residential sector, spokesperson Bronson Mack said.

"It's a worst case scenario plan," said the bill's sponsor, Democratic Assemblyman Howard Watts of Las Vegas, of the residential limit. "It makes sure that we prioritize the must-haves for a home. Your drinking water, your basic health and safety needs."

The sweeping omnibus bill is one of the most significant to go before lawmakers this year in Nevada, one of seven states that rely on the Colorado River. Deepening drought, climate change and demand have sunk key Colorado River reservoirs that depend on melting snow to their lowest levels on record.

Lawmakers heard testimony for the bill on Monday evening, which also includes converting many homes with unrecyclable septic tanks for wastewater to the county's recyclable sewage system in the coming decades. It also establishes a program to pay at least 50% of the transition as they look to secure more state and federal funds to help with the transition.

Water agency officials stressed during the two-hour hearing that the residential caps would not be used immediately, but rather if conditions become even more dire. The cap would be at about 160,000 gallons annually - an amount that about 20% of the agency's customers use - with the average single-family residence using close to 130,000 gallons annually, per the agency.

The authority hasn't yet decided how it would implement or enforce the proposed limits, Mack said.

The residential use limits received widespread support from water policy experts, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and jurisdictions within the agency's limits, while opposition came from some southern Nevada residents who testified through video from Las Vegas.

"(For) a single-family home, you need to take into consideration: how many adults, family members are in this home?" said Sarah Patton of Las Vegas. "We have grown children that are currently living with us. That is more water use."

Las Vegas relies on the Colorado River for 90% of its water supply. Nevada has lost about 8% of that supply already because of mandatory cuts implemented as the river dwindles further. Most residents haven't felt the effects because Southern Nevada Water Authority recycles a majority of water used indoors and doesn't use the full allocation.

Nevada lawmakers banned ornamental grass at office parks, in street medians and entrances to housing developments two years ago, a move that other cities later adopted. This past summer, Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, capped the size of new swimming pools at single-family residential homes to about the size of a three-car garage.

By the next legislative session in 2025 drought conditions could be much worse, Watts said, and "we have to decide what usage to prioritize" before then. Yet the longer-term goal is for other Nevada to be a leader in responsible use of the Colorado River's dwindling supply— even with deeper cuts looming.

"It's a sign to every other sector across the Colorado River Basin, that we're not going to wait for others," Watts told lawmakers of the potential single-family residential caps. "We take the lead and work to reduce our consumptive use of water."

The main point of opposition for the bill was the conversion of homes with septic systems to the sewage system, a major shift that would lead many homes to reroute their wastewater. Some Clark County residents were dissuaded by the possibility of giving up their septic system or worried about the cost.

"This is too much of a burden for these targeted homeowners," said Michele Tombari who, like others, said spoke fondly of her septic system and did not want to switch. "If you want us to change what was already approved, what we already paid for, you need to pay 100% to have us change that."

Snow that has inundated northern Nevada and parts of California serves as only a temporary reprieve

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from dry conditions. Some states in the Colorado River basin have gridlocked on how to cut water usage.

Water from the Colorado River largely is used for agriculture in other basin states: Arizona, California, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado. Municipal water is a relatively small percentage of overall use.

As populations grow and climate change leaves future supplies uncertain, policymakers are paying close attention to all available options to manage water supplies.

Santa Fe, New Mexico, uses a tiered cost structure where rates rise sharply when residents reach 10,000 gallons during the summer months.

Scottsdale, Arizona, recently told residents in a community outside city limits that it no longer could provide a water source for them. Scottsdale argued action was required under a drought management plan to guarantee enough water for its own residents.

Elsewhere in metro Phoenix, water agencies aren't currently discussing capping residential use, Sheri Trap of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association said in an email. But cities like Phoenix, Glendale and Tempe have said they will cut down on usage overall.

___ AP writer Susan Montoya Bryan contributed reporting from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Stern is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms. Follow him on Twitter: @gabestern326.

Lula meets with Indigenous in Brazil's Amazon, pledges lands

By EDMAR BARROS and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RAPOSA SERRA DO SOL INDIGENOUS TERRITORY, Brazil (AP) — On his first trip to Indigenous land in the Amazon rainforest since taking office, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva expressed support for creating new territories for those communities, but stopped short of announcing any demarcations.

Wearing white cap and dark shirt in the heat, Lula addressed some 2,000 Indigenous people who painted their faces, wore traditional feather headdresses and sang songs to welcome him Monday to the Raposa Serra do Sol region bordering Venezuela and Guyana.

He said he wants quick demarcation of their lands "before other people take over, invent false documents" to claim ownership rights. That has been a common occurrence throughout Brazil's history, which prompted the start of demarcation processes over a half century ago.

"We need to quickly try to legalize every land whose (demarcation) studies are almost finished so the Indigenous can take the land that is theirs," Lula said at the 52nd general assembly of the Indigenous peoples of the State of Roraima.

Yet Lula stopped short of actually announcing any new designations that are much anticipated by Indigenous people and rights activists. Many already had their hopes dashed that new demarcations would take place in the first 30 days of his administration, which began Jan. 1.

Their movement has pressured Lula to demarcate 13 new Indigenous territories that have cleared all regulatory steps and require nothing more than presidential approval to be official. Doing so would mark a sharp change in policy from the previous administration of Jair Bolsonaro, who did not demarcate any land for them during his presidency.

Some of the territories pending a presidential authorization began their demarcation processes decades ago.

Lula authorized the demarcation of Raposa Serra do Sol in 2005, during his first term as president. Different from other reserves in the Brazilian Amazon, Raposa Serra do Sol is mostly tropical savannah. It is home to 26,000 people from five different ethnicities.

Since receiving its protected status, it has been a scene of conflict between rice farmers and Indigenous people and has had sporadic violence, making the territory something of a case study in the challenges of protecting land that is increasingly under pressure from without.

Bolsonaro's relentless push to legalize mining on Indigenous territories rekindled long-standing divisions among Raposa Serra do Sol's local communities about the best path forward for their collective well-

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being. He visited an illegal gold mining camp in the same Indigenous territory in October 2021 and openly encouraged the activity, despite criticism from local Indigenous leaders.

Preparations for Lula's arrival at Raposa Serra do Sol began shortly before daybreak in the Amazon, with Indigenous people of different groups waking early to gather at a community center for their final rehearsal of songs and dances for the president. People of different ages wearing straw skirts lurched backward and forward as drums and chants resounded. Other Indigenous people were back at their tents preparing breakfast for the members of their groups.

Indigenous leaders, including Osmar Lima Batista of the Macuxi people, Leticia Monteiro da Silva of the Taurepang people, and Adailton Waiwai of the Waiwai people, told The Associated Press at the meeting that they expect better days compared with the prior four years, when they believed they did not have a friend in the presidential palace.

All agreed that Lula's first visit to the region since 2010 was not enough, however.

Davi Kopenawa, leader of the Yanomami people, took the microphone during the gathering to tell Lula that his people's needs are greater than those of four years ago.

"After we take the gold miners out, we need to recover our Indigenous health care system, which was destroyed," Kopenawa said. "We need to save the children we have left. I don't want more children dying. We need hospitals in our community. Disease is still strong in the Amazon."

"I don't want mining on Yanomami lands and in the Raposa Serra do Sol territory," he added. "Mining kills us, it kills people in the city, the river, the water of the forest. We don't need heavy mining at our home."

Lula said in his speech that his administration will definitively expel gold miners from Indigenous lands — as it has already begun working to do in the Yanomami territory.

"That gold doesn't belong to anyone. It's there because nature placed it there. It's on Indigenous land," Lula said.

The president was accompanied by Sonia Guajajara, his minister of Indigenous peoples, and Joenia Wapichana, who heads the Indigenous affairs agency.

Lula said there will be a meeting involving leaders of countries of the Amazon rainforest — Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Why another high inflation report may not cause Fed to hike

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government inflation report being released Tuesday is expected to show that price acceleration in the United States remained chronically high in February, putting the Federal Reserve in an unusually tough position.

The Fed had been considered sure to raise its benchmark interest rate by at least a quarter-point when it meets next week. Many analysts even expected an aggressive half-point hike if Tuesday's report for February pointed again to elevated inflation. But that was before last weekend's two major bank failures and a series of emergency measures that the Fed unveiled to try to bolster confidence in the financial system.

With bank share prices cratering Monday and fears of further financial instability roiling markets, most economists now expect the Fed to pause its rate hikes next week to avoid causing any further instability at a delicate moment for the banking system.

At the same time, inflation continues to run far above what the Fed wants. Economists have estimated that Tuesday's report will show that consumer prices rose 0.4% from January to February, according to a survey of economists by the data provider FactSet. That would be slightly less than the increase from December to January but still too fast to be consistent with the Fed's 2% annual inflation target.

Economists have predicted that compared with a year ago, overall inflation rose 6% in February, down from a 6.4% year-over-year jump in January. They have also estimated that so-called core prices, which exclude volatile food and energy costs, rose 5.5% from a year earlier. That would be only slightly below January's annual pace of 5.6%.

Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, said Goldman now thinks the Fed's policymakers will

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pause their rate increases next week. Goldman had previously predicted a quarter-point hike. In a note to clients, Hatzius noted that the Fed, for now, appears even more focused on calming the banking sector and the financial markets than on fighting inflation.

"We would be surprised if, just one week after going to great lengths to support financial stability, policymakers risked undermining their efforts by raising interest rates again," Hatzius wrote in a separate note Monday.

If the Fed does pause its rate hikes this month, Hatzius predicted, it will likely resume them when it next meets in May. Ultimately, he still expects the Fed to raise its key rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to about 5.4% this year, up from the current 4.6%.

The Fed may get some unintentional help in its inflation fight from the aftereffects of the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and New York-based Signature Bank. In response, many small and medium-size banks may pull back on lending to shore up their finances. A lower pace of lending could help cool the economy and slow inflation.

The possibility of a Fed pause underscores the sharp shift in the nation's financial system and economy in barely one week. Last Tuesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell had told the Senate Banking Committee that if hiring and inflation continued to run hot, the Fed would likely raise rates at this month's meeting by a sizeable half-point. That would have marked a re-acceleration in the Fed's efforts to tighten credit. The central bank had raised its benchmark rate by a quarter-point in February, a half-point in December and by three-quarters of point four times before that.

The next day, testifying to a House committee, Powell cautioned that no final decision had been made about what the Fed would do at the March meeting. Still, on Friday, the government reported that employers added a robust 311,000 jobs last month. It was a potential sign of continued high inflation, and it led to predictions of a half-point hike at the Fed's meeting next week.

Later that day, though, Silicon Valley Bank failed, thrusting an entirely new set of concerns onto the Fed.

For Asian Americans, Yeoh, Quan's Oscar wins are theirs too

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Edward Dion Fariñas watches the Academy Awards every year but the Filipino American didn't expect to have such a visceral reaction when hearing Ke Huy Quan and Michelle Yeoh's awards announced.

"I had a squeal come out that I was not expecting," said Fariñas, who was watching Sunday from his Austin, Texas, home, complete with "Everything Everywhere All at Once" themed pastries from a local Asian American-owned bakery.

"I was surprised by how heavily invested I got. It's not even about the acting. It really just kind of lets us feel like we can accomplish things that normally are not in our lane."

Quan's best supporting actor win and comeback story from childhood star of '80s flicks, coupled with Yeoh's historic win as the first Asian best actress winner ever had viewers of Asian descent shedding tears of happiness — and grinning. The "Everything Everywhere All at Once" co-stars bring the total number of Asians who have earned acting Oscars to just six in the awards' 95-year history.

For many Asian Americans, the film's seven Oscars, including Best Picture, feel like a watershed moment — that Hollywood is moving past seeing them only in tropes. It represents an opportunity for optimism after three years of anti-Asian hate brought on by the pandemic.

Written and directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert (known as the Daniels), who won best-directing and best original screenplay Oscars, the story centers on a glammed-down Yeoh as Evelyn Wang, a frazzled laundromat owner preparing for an IRS audit. Meanwhile, she is struggling with an unhappy husband (Quan), her critical father (James Hong) and an openly lesbian daughter (Stephanie Hsu).

When Yeoh said, in accepting her Oscar, that the award was for children who look like her, the message landed "straight to the heart" said Jasmine Cho, who is Korean American.

"Now I'm like looking at when I'm in my 60s," the 39-year-old said. "I want to be like Michelle. She's my forever badass woman role model."

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Cho, of Pittsburgh, is nationally recognized for her cookie portraits of forgotten and famous Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and has drawn social media attention for her tributes to Yeoh and Quan. She hopes to give the cookies to them one day because she's been so inspired by their performances and how they've carried themselves.

"I feel like they already like completely made history with being like the most awarded film and just all the other awards that they've been receiving," Cho said of the possibility the two might not have taken home Oscars. "So yeah, I would have been somewhat disappointed" had they not won. "But in my mind, they already won."

Yer Vang, a Hmong American living in Minneapolis, was moved to tears by Quan and Yeoh's acceptance speeches. She recalls coming out of the theater hoping for this scenario. To actually see it happen was "phenomenal."

Quan's remarks about coming to the U.S. as a Vietnamese refugee and living in a refugee camp resonated particularly because that's what her parents lived through.

"It's crazy because ... that's my mother's story," Vang said.

But all the movie's Oscars (it also won best supporting actress for Jamie Lee Curtis and film editing) mean a lot to Asian Americans, she said. "It does tell the community that we have done enough ... and we deserve to be celebrated, whether in like the highest of courts or just back home."

Norman Chen, CEO of The Asian American Foundation, let out a scream and fist pump for every Oscar the movie picked up. Among the foundation's initiatives are scholarship and fellowship programs with the Sundance Institute. He called the impact of the wins massive.

This is going to elevate the narrative ... to create more future actors, directors, screenwriters" of Asian descent, Chen said.

"The recognition is there finally. Just across society, people will be appreciating more even in education with more interest about Asian and Asian American history. It will change the mindset of Asian Americans being foreigners."

Yeoh's achievement was particularly poignant given the history of anti-Asian discrimination in Hollywood. Merle Oberon, a best actress nominee in 1935 for "The Dark Angel," hid her South Asian heritage and passed for white, according to birth records discovered after her death. In 1937, Chinese American actor Anna May Wong suffered the greatest disappointment of her life when she was rejected to play a lead role of a Chinese villager in "The Good Earth." Luise Rainer, who was white, was cast instead. She went on to earn the best actress Oscar.

The only previous Asian winners of acting Oscars have been Miyoshi Umeki ("Sayonara"), Ben Kingsley ("Ghandi"), Haing S. Ngor ("The Killing Fields") and Yuh-Jung Youn ("Minari"), according to Oscar historians. Only Kingsley's was for a leading role.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once" hopefully sends a message that those days of perceiving Asians as "meek not strong, followers not leaders" are behind us, Chen said.

"This changes that whole mindset for the community — even for our families. I bet you a lot of Asian American families will be more supportive if their kids want to be actors or directors," Chen said. "It's exciting being seen and being appreciated for who we are and where we are."

California court rules for Uber, Lyft in ride-hailing case

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — App-based ride hailing and delivery companies like Uber and Lyft can continue to treat their California drivers as independent contractors, a state appeals court ruled Monday, allowing the tech giants to bypass other state laws requiring worker protections and benefits.

The ruling mostly upholds a voter-approved law, called Proposition 22, that said drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft are independent contractors and are not entitled to benefits like paid sick leave and unemployment insurance. A lower court ruling in 2021 had said Proposition 22 was illegal, but Monday's ruling reversed that decision.

"Today's ruling is a victory for app-based workers and the millions of Californians who voted for Prop 22,"

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said Tony West, Uber's chief legal officer. "We're pleased that the court respected the will of the people."

The ruling is a defeat for labor unions and their allies in the state Legislature who passed a law in 2019 requiring companies like Uber and Lyft to treat their drivers as employees.

"Today the Appeals Court chose to stand with powerful corporations over working people, allowing companies to buy their way out of our state's labor laws and undermine our state constitution," said Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, leader of the California Labor Federation and a former state assemblywoman who authored the 2019 law. "Our system is broken. It would be an understatement to say we are disappointed by this decision."

The ruling wasn't a complete defeat for labor unions, as the court ruled the companies could not stop their drivers from joining a labor union and collectively bargain for better working conditions, said Mike Robinson, one of the drivers who filed the lawsuit challenging Proposition 22.

"Our right to join together and bargain collectively creates a clear path for drivers and delivery workers to hold giant gig corporations accountable," he said. "But make no mistake, we still believe Prop 22 — in its entirety — is an unconstitutional attack on our basic rights."

The California Legislature passed a law in 2019 that changed the rules of who is an employee and who is an independent contractor. It's an important distinction for companies because employees are covered by a broad range of labor laws that guarantee them certain benefits while independent contractors are not.

While the law applied to lots of industries, it had the biggest impact on app-based ride hailing and delivery companies. Their business relies on contracting with people to use their own cars to give people rides and make deliveries. Under the 2019 law, companies would have to treat those drivers as employees and provide certain benefits that would greatly increase the businesses' expenses.

In November 2020, voters agreed to exempt app-based ride hailing and delivery companies from the 2019 law by approving a ballot proposition. The proposition included "alternative benefits" for drivers, including a guaranteed minimum wage and subsidies for health insurance if they average 25 hours of work a week. Companies like Uber, Lyft and DoorDash spent \$200 million on a campaign to make sure it would pass.

Three drivers and the Service Employees International Union sued, arguing the ballot proposition was illegal in part because it limited the state Legislature's authority to change the law or pass laws about workers' compensation programs. In 2021, a state judge agreed with them and ruled companies like Uber and Lyft were not exempt.

Monday, a state appeals court reversed that decision, allowing the companies to continue to treat their drivers as independent contractors.

The ruling might not be the final decision. The Service Employees International Union could still appeal the decision to the California Supreme Court, which could decide to hear the case.

"We will consider all those options as we decide how to ensure we continue fighting for these workers," said Tia Orr, executive director of SEIU California.

Biden OKs Alaska oil project, draws ire of environmentalists

By MATTHEW DALY and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration said Monday it is approving a huge oil-drilling project on Alaska's petroleum-rich North Slope, a major environmental decision by President Joe Biden that drew quick condemnation as flying in the face of his pledges to slow climate change.

The announcement came a day after the administration, in a move in the other direction toward conservation, said it would bar or limit drilling in some other areas of Alaska and the Arctic Ocean.

The approval of ConocoPhillips' big Willow drilling project by the Bureau of Land Management will allow three drill sites including up to 199 total wells. Two other drill sites proposed for the project will be denied. ConocoPhillips Chairman and CEO Ryan Lance called the order "the right decision for Alaska and our nation."

The Houston-based company will relinquish rights to about 68,000 acres of existing leases in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The order, one of the most significant of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's tenure, was not signed by

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her but rather by her deputy, Tommy Beaudreau, who grew up in Alaska and briefed state lawmakers on the project Monday. Haaland was notably silent on the project, which she had opposed as a New Mexico congresswoman before becoming Interior secretary two years ago, until releasing a video Monday evening.

She described Willow as "a difficult and complex issue that was inherited" from earlier administrations. Because ConocoPhillips has held leases in the area for decades, Haaland said officials "had limited decision space" to block the project but focused on minimizing its footprint.

Haaland defended the Biden administration's record on climate change, saying, "I am confident that we are on the right path, even if it's not always a straight line."

Climate activists remained outraged that Biden approved the project, which they say puts his climate legacy at risk. Allowing the drilling plan to go forward marks a major breach of Biden's campaign promise to stop new oil drilling on federal lands, they say.

Monday's announcement is not likely to be the last word, with litigation expected from environmental groups.

The Willow project could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day, create up to 2,500 jobs during construction and 300 long-term jobs, and generate billions of dollars in royalties and tax revenues for the federal, state and local governments, the company said.

The project, located in the federally designated National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, enjoys widespread political support in the state. Alaska's bipartisan congressional delegation met with Biden and his advisers in early March to plead their case for the project, and Alaska Native state lawmakers recently met with Haaland to urge support.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said Monday the decision was "very good news for the country."

"Not only will this mean jobs and revenue for Alaska, it will be resources that are needed for the country and for our friends and allies," Murkowski said. "The administration listened to Alaska voices. They listened to the delegation as we pressed the case for energy security and national security."

Fellow Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan said conditions attached to the project should not reduce Willow's ability to produce up to 180,000 barrels of crude a day. But he said it was "infuriating" that Biden also had moved to prevent or limit oil drilling elsewhere in Alaska.

Environmental activists who have promoted a #StopWillow campaign on social media were fuming at the approval, which they called a betrayal.

"This decision greenlights 92% of proposed oil drilling (by ConocoPhillips) and hands over one of the most fragile, intact ecosystems in the world to" the oil giant, said Earthjustice President Abigail Dillen. "This is not climate leadership."

Biden understands the existential threat of climate change, "but he is approving a project that derails his own climate goals," said Dillen, whose group vowed legal action to block the project.

John Leshy, who was a top Interior Department lawyer in the Clinton administration, said Biden's climate goals aren't the only factor in an environmental review process that agencies must follow.

Leshy, a professor at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco, called the decision on Willow defensible, adding: "I think it reflects a balancing of the things they have to balance, which is the environmental impact and the lease rights that Conoco has."

Christy Goldfuss, a former Obama White House official who now is a policy chief at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said she was "deeply disappointed" at Biden's decision to approve Willow, which the BLM estimates would produce more than 239 million metric tons of greenhouse gases over the project's 30-year life, roughly equal to the combined emissions from 1.7 million passenger cars.

"This decision is bad for the climate, bad for the environment and bad for the Native Alaska communities who oppose this and feel their voices were not heard," Goldfuss said.

The Willow project has been a particularly galvanizing issue for young activists, who flooded TikTok with videos opposing the proposal.

Biden has not commented publicly on the project's approval. However, he talked about climate change with Kal Penn, an actor who served in the White House under President Barack Obama, in an interview

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that was taped last week and will be aired Monday evening on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show."

"We're going faster than anyone has ever gone," Biden said when asked about young people who want him to push harder. He said the energy situation "got really complicated" with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, adding that "we're going to need fossil fuel."

"So it's a matter of transitioning, but it's not like you can cut everything off immediately," Biden said.

Anticipating anger among environmental groups, the White House announced Sunday that Biden will prevent or limit oil drilling in 16 million acres in Alaska and the Arctic Ocean. The plan would 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 the National 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 conservation announcement did little to mollify activists.

"It's a performative action to make the Willow project not look as bad," said Elise Joshi, the acting executive director of Gen-Z for Change, an advocacy organization.

City of Nuiqsut Mayor Rosemary Ahtuanguaruk, whose community of about 525 people is closest to the proposed development, has been outspoken in her opposition, worried about impacts to caribou and her residents' subsistence lifestyles. "My constituents and community will bear the burden of this project with our health and our livelihoods," she said.

But there is "majority consensus" in the North Slope region supporting the project, said Nagruk Harcharek, president of the group Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat, whose members include leaders from across much of that region.

The conservation actions announced Sunday block drilling in the Beaufort Sea and build on President Barack Obama's actions to restrict drilling there and in the Chukchi Sea.

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. Areas to be protected include the Teshekpuk Lake, Utukok Uplands, Colville River, Kasegaluk Lagoon and Peard Bay Special Areas, which serve as habitat for grizzly and polar bears, caribou and migratory birds.

Alaska's Willow oil project is controversial. Here's why.

By BECKY BOHRER, MATTHEW BROWN and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The Biden administration is approving a major oil project on Alaska's petroleum-rich North Slope that supporters say represents an economic lifeline for Indigenous communities in the region but environmentalists say is counter to President Joe Biden's climate goals.

The decision on ConocoPhillips Alaska's Willow project, in a federal oil reserve roughly the size of Indiana, was revealed Monday.

WHAT IS THE WILLOW PROJECT?

The project could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day, according to the company — about 1.5% of total U.S. oil production. Willow is currently the largest proposed oil project on U.S. public land. Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan said the development could be "one of the biggest, most important resource development projects in our state's history."

So far this year, around 498,000 barrels of oil a day have flowed through the trans-Alaska pipeline, well below the late-1980s peak of 2.1 million barrels.

ConocoPhillips Alaska had proposed five drilling sites as part of the project. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management approved three, which it said would include up to 199 total wells. ConocoPhillips Alaska said it welcomed Monday's decision.

The company also agreed to give up rights to about 68,000 acres (27,500 hectares) in existing leases within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, where Willow is located. The action reduces the project's freshwater use and eliminates all infrastructure related to the two rejected drill sites, including approxi-

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mately 11 miles (18 kilometers) of roads, 20 miles (32 kilometers) of pipelines and 133 acres (54 hectares) of gravel, all of which reduces potential impacts to caribou migration and subsistence users, the U.S. Interior Department said.

Using the oil from Willow would produce the equivalent of more 263 million tons (239 million metric tons) of greenhouse gases over the project's 30-year life, roughly equal to the combined emissions from 1.7 million passenger cars over the same time period. It would have a roughly 8% reduction in emissions compared with Houston-based ConocoPhillips' favored approach.

IS THERE SUPPORT FOR WILLOW?

There is widespread political support in Alaska, including from the bipartisan congressional delegation, Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy and state lawmakers.

There also is "majority consensus" in support in the North Slope region, said Nagruk Harcharek, president of the group Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat, whose members include leaders from across much of that region. Supporters have called the project balanced and say communities would benefit from taxes generated by Willow to invest in infrastructure and provide public services.

City of Nuiqsut Mayor Rosemary Ahtuanguak, whose community of about 525 people is closest to the proposed development, is a prominent opponent who is worried about impacts on caribou and her residents' subsistence lifestyles. But opposition there isn't universal. The local Alaska Native village corporation has expressed support.

"Today, the people of Alaska were heard," said U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, a Democrat who also is Yup'ik. "After years of consistent, determined advocacy for this project, from people all across the state and from every walk of life, the Willow Project is finally moving forward."

Ahtuanguak had said that she felt that voices like hers were being drowned out.

WHAT ARE THE POLITICS OF THE DECISION?

Biden's decision pits Alaska lawmakers against environmental groups and many Democrats in Congress who say the project is out of step with his goals to slash planet-warming carbon emissions in half by 2030 and move to clean energy. Environmentalists say approval of the project represents a betrayal by Biden, who promised during the 2020 campaign to end new oil and gas drilling on federal lands. Environmentalist groups had urged the project's rejection.

Biden has made fighting climate change a top priority and backed a landmark law to accelerate expansion of clean energy such as wind and solar power and move the U.S. away from the oil, coal and gas.

He has faced attacks from Republican lawmakers who blame him for gasoline price spikes that occurred after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

DID THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT WILLOW EARLY ON?

Justice Department attorneys in 2021 defended in court an environmental review conducted during the Trump administration that approved the project. A federal judge later found flaws with the analysis, setting aside the approval and returning the matter to the land management agency for further work. That led to the review released last month that laid the groundwork for Monday's announcement.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, an Alaska Republican, said the decision will not only "mean jobs and revenue for Alaska, it will be resources that are needed for the country and for our friends and allies. The administration listened to Alaska voices. They listened to the delegation as we pressed the case for energy security and national security."

WHAT ABOUT GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?

Federal officials under former President Donald Trump claimed increased domestic oil drilling would result in fewer net global emissions because it would decrease petroleum imports. U.S. companies adhere to stricter environmental standards than those in other countries, they argued.

After outside scientists rejected the claim and a federal judge agreed, the Interior Department changed how it calculates emissions.

The latest review, under the Biden administration, received pushback over its inclusion of a suggestion that 50% of Willow's net emissions could be offset, including by planting more trees on national forests to

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capture and store carbon dioxide. Reforestation work on federal lands was something the administration already planned and needed to meet its broader climate goals. The reforestation proposal was dropped from the final decision.

The Willow project "is about producing oil for decades when the U.S. needs to be on a steep reduction path," said Michael Lazarus, a senior scientist at the Stockholm Environment Institute. "I see the political pressure the administration is under, but the science doesn't change."

WHAT ABOUT BIDEN'S PROMISES TO CURTAIL OIL DRILLING?

Biden suspended oil and gas lease sales after taking office and promised to overhaul the government's fossil fuels program.

Attorneys general from oil-producing states convinced a federal judge to lift the suspension -- a ruling later overturned by an appeals court. The administration ultimately dropped its resistance to leasing in a compromise over last year's climate law. The measure requires the Interior Department to offer for sale tens of millions of acres of onshore and offshore leases before it can approve any renewable energy leases.

The number of new drilling permits to companies with federal leases spiked in Biden's first year as companies stockpiled drilling rights and officials said they were working through a backlog of applications from the Trump administration. Approvals dropped sharply in fiscal year 2022.

The Biden administration has offered less acreage for lease than previous administrations. But environmentalists say the administration hasn't done enough.

The decision on Willow, one of the most significant of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's tenure, was signed by her deputy, Tommy Beaudreau, who grew up in Alaska and briefed state lawmakers on the project Monday.

Haaland referred to the project in a video statement on Twitter as a "difficult and complex issue" involving leases issued by prior administrations.

"As a result, we had limited decision space, but we focused on how to reduce the project's footprint and minimize its impacts to people and to wildlife," said Haaland, who had opposed Willow as a New Mexico congresswoman before becoming Interior secretary.

WHAT OTHER ACTIONS IS THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TAKING?

On Sunday, the administration announced that Biden would indefinitely place off limits to future oil and gas leasing nearly 3 million acres (1.2 million hectares) 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 former President Barack Obama's 2016 withdrawal of the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the majority of the Beaufort Sea, the White House said.

The Biden administration also said it plans to consider additional protections for the more than 13 million acres (5.3 million hectares) within the petroleum reserve that are designated as special areas for their wildlife, subsistence, scenic or other values. Details weren't immediately clear. The administration said it would make available the proposed rule for public comment in the coming months.

The Interior Department limited oil and gas leasing in a 2022 decision to 11.8 million of the roughly 23-million-acre (4.8 million of the roughly 9.3-million-hectare) National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and designated the remaining roughly 11 million acres (4.5 million hectares) as closed to leasing.

The petroleum reserve on Alaska's North Slope was set aside a century ago for future oil production.

Do-not-eat listing draws lawsuit from Maine lobster industry

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A coalition representing the Maine lobster industry is suing an aquarium on the other side of the country for recommending that seafood customers avoid buying a variety of lobster mostly harvested in their state.

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Industry groups including Maine Lobstermen's Association are suing the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California for defamation, arguing in a lawsuit filed Monday that their prized catch shouldn't be on a "red list" published by Seafood Watch, a conservation program it operates.

Last year, Seafood Watch put lobster from the U.S. and Canada on its list of seafood to avoid due to the threat posed to rare whales by entanglement in fishing gear used to harvest American lobster, the species that makes up most of the U.S. lobster market.

Endangered North American right whales number only about 340 and they've declined in recent years. But the lobster industry is arguing to the U.S. District Court in Maine that the aquarium's recommendation relies on bad science and incorrectly portrays lobster fishing as a threat to the whales. The lawsuit asks the court to force the aquarium to remove "defamatory statements" from its website and materials, court records state.

"This is a significant lawsuit that will help eradicate the damage done by folks who have no clue about the care taken by lobstermen to protect the ecosystem and the ocean," said John Petersdorf, chief executive officer of Bean Maine Lobster Inc., one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, in a statement.

The aquarium says its recommendations are correct based on the best available evidence. It says right whales are indeed vulnerable to entanglement in fishing gear.

The lawsuit ignores "the extensive evidence that these fisheries pose a serious risk to the survival of the endangered North Atlantic right whale, and they seek to curtail the First Amendment rights of a beloved institution that educates the public about the importance of a healthy ocean," said Kevin Connor, a spokesperson for the aquarium.

Another group, Marine Stewardship Council, last year suspended a sustainability certification it awarded Maine's lobster industry over concerns about harm to whales. The loss of sustainability recommendations has caused some retailers to stop selling lobster.

The U.S. lobster industry is based mostly in Maine. The industry brought about 98 million pounds of lobster to the docks last year. That was less than the previous year, but historically a fairly high number.

GOP leader 'pausing' social media after liking LGBTQ posts

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee Lt. Gov. Randy McNally announced Monday that he is "pausing" all social media activity after revelations that he repeatedly commented on posts of nearly nude photos of a young gay model and other LGBTQ personalities.

McNally, a Republican, initially stated last week that he "had no intention of stopping" when pressed about why he repeatedly commented on racy social media posts by the 20-year-old. He later issued an apology, saying it was not his intention to embarrass his friends, family or members of the legislature.

However, the 79-year-old legislative leader has since received national attention — including being parodied on Saturday Night Live — with critics accusing McNally of being hypocritical. Particularly, McNally supported legislation restricting where certain drag shows can take place.

Some of the posts that have sparked the most uproar include commenting on a photo of the man's backside, where he was wearing only underwear, saying "you can turn a rainy day into rainbow and sunshine." McNally then posted a comment using only heart and fire emojis. In a separate post, McNally posted a heart emoji of the man pulling down his underwear.

"While I see now that I should have been more careful about how my comments and activity would be perceived, my intent was always engagement and encouragement," McNally said in a statement. "For this reason, I will be pausing my social media activity in order to reflect and receive more guidance on the use of social media."

McNally added while he may have made "some mistakes," he disagreed that he had a record of being "anti-gay" and pointed to his opposition of a 2020 law that assured continued taxpayer funding of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies even if those organizations exclude LGBTQ families and others based on religious beliefs.

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Yet McNally then pointed to his support of "traditional marriage" and support of bills that "keep obscenity out of the public sphere."

"There is no contradiction here," he said.

McNally, who is from Oak Ridge, became lieutenant governor in 2017. He has been a state lawmaker since the late 1970s.

AP source: Jimmy Garoppolo, Raiders agree to 3-year deal

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP) — Jimmy Garoppolo has agreed to a three-year, \$67.5 million contract with the Raiders, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Monday, likely answering the question of who will be Las Vegas' starting quarterback next season.

The person spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity because the deal can't be announced until Wednesday.

Garoppolo's contract includes \$34 million in the guaranteed money, the person said.

The Raiders have been linked to Garoppolo almost from the moment coach Josh McDaniels benched nine-year starter Derek Carr with two weeks left in the season. Carr, the Raiders' all-time leader with 35,222 passing yards and 217 touchdown passes, has since signed with the New Orleans Saints.

McDaniels was the Patriots' offensive coordinator when Garoppolo backed up Tom Brady in New England beginning in 2014. With Brady locked in as the starter, Garoppolo was traded to San Francisco during the 2017 season and immediately became the 49ers' starter.

He was effective when healthy, going 38-17 and taking the Niners to the 2019 and 2021 NFC championship games. San Francisco made the Super Bowl in the 2019 season.

But the 31-year-old Garoppolo has had several significant injuries. In 2018, he suffered a season-ending knee injury in San Francisco's third game, and in 2020 he missed eight games with ankle injuries.

The 49ers had planned to trade Garoppolo before last season and start Trey Lance, the third overall pick in the 2021 draft whom San Francisco gave up three first-round picks to acquire. Garoppolo underwent offseason shoulder surgery, killing trade interest in him from other clubs, so the 49ers re-signed him at a reduced deal.

When Lance was injured two games into the season, Garoppolo again took over as the starter. He was having his best year, throwing 16 touchdown passes and four interceptions in 10 games, before going down with a season-ending foot injury.

Rookie Brock Purdy, the last player selected in last year's draft, took over and led the Niners to the NFC championship game, where they lost to Philadelphia. Purdy suffered an elbow injury early in that game and had surgery last week, but after he concludes his rehab, the Niners will have two potential starters on the roster in Purdy and Lance.

Garoppolo joins a Raiders team coming off a 6-11 season, but with an offense that includes wide receivers Davante Adams and Hunter Renfrow and tight end Darren Waller. Las Vegas also has placed the franchise tag on running back Josh Jacobs, who led the NFL in rushing last season.

The Raiders own the seventh pick in the draft and could draft a quarterback with that selection or one in the later rounds. Expected backup Jarrett Stidham agreed to sign with the AFC West rival Denver Broncos.

They have plenty of salary cap space, especially after restructuring defensive end Maxx Crosby's contract to free up \$7.5 million, according to ESPN. Including Garoppolo's deal, Las Vegas has \$27.4 million in cap space, according to [overthecap.com](https://www.overthecap.com).

The Raiders have plenty of needs to address, particularly on the offensive line and throughout the defense.

McConnell released from hospital, headed to inpatient rehab

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell was released from the hospital Monday after treatment for a concussion and will continue to recover in an inpatient rehabilitation facility, a

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spokesman said.

McConnell's office said his doctors discovered over the weekend that he had also suffered a "minor rib fracture" after he tripped and fell at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Washington on Wednesday evening.

"Leader McConnell's concussion recovery is proceeding well and the Leader was discharged from the hospital today," McConnell spokesman David Popp said in a statement. "At the advice of his physician, the next step will be a period of physical therapy at an inpatient rehabilitation facility before he returns home."

The office did not give any additional detail on his condition or say how long McConnell will be out. Concussions can be serious injuries and take time for recovery, and even a single incident of concussion can limit a person's abilities as they recover.

It is unclear how his extended absence will affect Senate proceedings. The Senate returns to Washington Tuesday evening after the weekend off and is scheduled to be in session for the rest of March.

The Kentucky senator, 81, was at a Wednesday evening dinner after a reception for the Senate Leadership Fund, a campaign committee aligned with him, when he tripped and fell.

McConnell's head injury comes almost four years after he tripped and fell at his home in Kentucky, suffering a shoulder fracture that required surgery. The Senate had just started a summer recess, and he worked from home for some weeks as he recovered.

At the start of the COVID-19 crisis, McConnell opened up about his early childhood experience fighting polio. He described how his mother insisted that he stay off his feet as a toddler and worked with him through a determined physical therapy regime. He has acknowledged some difficulty in adulthood climbing stairs.

First elected in 1984, McConnell in January became the longest-serving Senate leader when the new Congress convened, breaking the previous record of 16 years.

McConnell is one of several senators who have been absent lately due to illness or hospitalization. Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., 53, who suffered a stroke during his campaign last year, was expected to remain out for some weeks as he received care for clinical depression. And Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., 89, said earlier this month that she had been hospitalized to be treated for shingles.

HBO's 'The Last of Us' season finale draws in a series high

By KARENA PHAN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "The Last of Us" fans set another rating record for the season one finale of the apocalyptic, mushroom-infected zombie video game adaptation. Despite airing against the Oscars Sunday night, HBO said the season finale drew in 8.2 million viewers.

Viewership for "The Last of Us" has consistently grown throughout the season. The series has not only won over gamers with high expectations but also critics and people who aren't familiar with the game.

The series premiere drew 4.7 million viewers in the U.S., based on Nielsen and HBO data, making for HBO's second-largest debut, behind "House of the Dragon." Outside of the U.S., "The Last of Us" is now the most-watched show in the history of HBO Max in both Europe and Latin America, HBO said.

As viewers watch episodes on the streaming platforms days after the episodes air, the numbers for the series will continue to increase. The series is now averaging 30.4 million viewers across its first six episodes, with the first episode approaching 40 million viewers in the U.S., HBO said.

HBO did concede to the ratings behemoth that is the Super Bowl, dropping the fifth episode of "The Last of Us" on HBO Max and HBO On Demand early last month on the Friday before the big game on Feb. 12. But the ratings for episode five were still strong, with 11.6 million viewers from Friday through Sunday.

The series finale ended with Joel making some difficult and controversial decisions that left viewers wondering what was next for protagonists Ellie (Bella Ramsey) and Joel (Pedro Pascal). While not much has been officially announced about the second season, fans of the video game know about "The Last of Us Part II" and are eagerly anticipating how the game will be adapted for season two.

Illinois enacts mandatory paid leave 'for any reason'

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press/Report for America

CHICAGO (AP) — Illinois will become one of three states to require employers to offer paid time off for any reason after Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed a law on Monday that will take effect next year.

Starting Jan. 1, Illinois employers must offer workers paid time off based on hours worked, with no need to explain the reason for their absence as long as they provide notice in accordance with reasonable employer standards.

Just Maine and Nevada mandate earned paid time off and allot employees the freedom to decide how to use it, but Illinois' law is further reaching, unencumbered by limits based on business size. Similarly structured regulations that require employers to offer paid sick leave exist in 14 states and Washington, D.C., but workers can only use that for health-related reasons.

Illinois employees will accrue one hour of paid leave for every 40 hours worked up to 40 hours total, although the employer may offer more. Employees can start using the time once they have worked for 90 days. Seasonal workers will be exempt, as will federal employees or college students who work non-full-time, temporary jobs for their university.

Pritzker signed the bill Monday in downtown Chicago, saying: "Too many people can't afford to miss even a day's pay ... together we continue to build a state that truly serves as a beacon for families, and businesses, and good paying jobs."

Proponents say paid leave is key to making sure workers, especially low-income workers who are more vulnerable, are able to take time off when needed without fear of reprisal from an employer.

But critics say the law will overburden small businesses already struggling to survive the post-pandemic era amid the high inflation that has gripped the nation for nearly two years.

National Federation of Independent Business Illinois state director Chris Davis said that business owners are best positioned to work with their employees one-on-one to meet their needs.

The new law is "a one-size-fits-all solution to a more intricate problem," he said.

Bill sponsor Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, a Peoria Democrat, said the bill is the product of years of negotiations with businesses and labor groups.

"Everyone deserves the ability to take time off," she said in a statement. "Whether it's to deal with the illness of a family member, or take a step back for your mental health, enshrining paid leave rights is a step forward for our state."

"This is about bringing dignity to all workers," she said at the signing.

Ordinances in Cook County and Chicago that already require employers to offer paid sick leave have been in place since July 2017, and workers in those locations will continue to be covered by existing laws rather than the new state law.

Any new local laws enacted after the state law takes effect must provide benefits that are greater or equal to the state law.

Molly Weston Williamson, paid leave expert at the Center for American Progress, said the law "creates a strong foundation for employers to build from while generating a healthier, more productive workforce."

But Williamson added that while Illinois' law is a step in the right direction, U.S. paid leave laws remain "wildly out of line with all of our economic peers internationally."

"In the United States, federal law does not guarantee anyone the right to even a single paid day off work. Not when you're sick, not when you have a baby, not when your mom has a stroke. Not a single paid day," she said.

Joan Van, a server at an international hotel chain and single mother of three, currently has no paid time off.

But the Belleville parent leader with Community Organizing and Family Issues said that knowing that she will have five days next year brings a smile to her face.

"It's going to help out a lot of people, a lot of mothers, a lot of single mothers at that," she said.

DeSantis sets execution for 'ninja killer' in 1989 murders

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A man convicted of a 1989 double slaying in Florida for which he was dubbed the "ninja killer" is set for execution next month under a death warrant signed Monday by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Barring delays on appeal, the execution of Louis Bernard Gaskin is set for April 12 at 6 p.m., according to the governor's office. It would mark the second execution in Florida this year after a long pause dating back to 2019.

The execution would be only the fourth under DeSantis, a far slower pace than recent Florida governors — and ahead of his widely expected presidential campaign.

Gaskin was convicted of first-degree murder for killing Robert Sturmfels, 56, and Georgette Sturmfels, 55, on Dec. 20, 1989 in their Flagler County home on Florida's northeast coast. He was also convicted of armed robbery, burglary and the attempted murder of another couple that same night nearby.

He was dubbed the "ninja killer" because he wore all-black ninja clothing during the crimes. Gaskin shot his victims with a .22-caliber rifle, investigators say. Property that he stole from the Sturmfels home — a clock, two lamps and a videocassette recorder — was found at his residence and were intended to be Christmas gifts for his girlfriend.

Local media reported at the time that Gaskin quickly confessed to the crimes and told a psychologist before his trial that he knew what he was doing.

"The guilt was always there," Gaskin told him. "The devil had more of a hold than God did. I knew that I was wrong. I wasn't insane."

Jurors voted 8-4 in 1990 to recommend the death sentence, which the judge accepted. Florida law now requires a unanimous jury vote for capital punishment, although that could be changed this year by the state Legislature.

Gaskin, now 56, has filed numerous appeals over the years but by 2020 both the Florida Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court had cleared the way for his death warrant to be signed, Attorney General Ashley Moody said in court documents.

The state Supreme Court set a briefing schedule for all filings in any new Gaskin appeals to be completed by March 31.

Jurors see cellphone data of XXXTentacion's accused killers

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Jurors in the trial of three men accused of murdering rising rap star XXXTentacion concluded their fourth day of deliberations Monday by reviewing almost 1,200 text messages and several videos and photos seized from two of their cellphones.

Some of the videos and photos showed the defendants flashing fistfuls of \$100 bills hours after the June 18, 2018, shooting of XXXTentacion outside a suburban Fort Lauderdale motorcycle dealership. He was killed by two armed robbers who stole \$50,000 he was carrying in a Louis Vuitton bag.

There was also a photo of a story from a news website about the shooting, photos from shopping and dating apps, an apparently random photo of then-first lady Melania Trump, videos of one defendant in a pedicab with a woman and a Father's Day greeting.

The jurors made their request in the afternoon, asking to see the data from the phones of alleged shooter Michael Boatwright, 28, and the accused getaway driver and ringleader Dedrick Williams, 26, from the day before and day of the shooting.

Williams sent and received more than 950 text messages during that time and Boatwright had more than 200. Jurors had to crowd near a projection screen at the front of the courtroom to read them; they could not be read from the gallery.

The jurors did not ask for any data from the phones of alleged second gunman Trayvon Newsome, 24, or alleged co-conspirator Robert Allen, 26. Allen testified against his former friends after pleading guilty

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last year to second-degree murder.

Boatwright, Williams and Newsome are charged with first-degree murder and armed robbery and face mandatory life sentences if convicted. Prosecutors did not seek the death penalty. The jurors have deliberated about 15 hours since getting the case late Wednesday at the end of four-weeks of testimony. Deliberations will resume Tuesday.

XXXtentacion, whose real name was Jahseh Onfroy, had just left Riva Motorsports, where he had been looking at motorcycles to purchase, when his BMW was blocked by an SUV that swerved in front.

Surveillance video showed that two masked gunmen emerged and confronted the 20-year-old rapper at the driver's window, and one shot him repeatedly. They then grabbed the bag with the money, got back into the SUV and sped away. The friend was not harmed.

Allen testified that the men set out that day to commit robberies and went to the motorcycle shop to buy Williams a mask. There they spotted the rapper and decided to make him their target. Allen and Williams went inside the shop to confirm it was him.

They then went back to the SUV they had rented, waited for XXXtentacion to emerge and ambushed him, according to testimony. Prosecutors said surveillance video from the dealership, cellphone data and the videos of the men flashing money ties them to the shooting.

The men's attorneys said Allen is lying and that their DNA was not found on the artist. Attorneys for some of the men said that while the money-flashing videos were "stupid," they don't prove their clients were actually involved in the shooting and robbery.

The rapper, who pronounced his name "Ex ex ex ten-ta-see-YAWN," was a platinum-selling rising star who tackled issues including prejudice and depression in his songs. He also drew criticism over bad behavior and multiple arrests, including charges that he severely beat and abused his girlfriend.

Netanyahu allies in Israel plow ahead on legal overhaul

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli parliament on Monday advanced a bill that would make it harder to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the corruption charges against him, as it plowed ahead with a broader plan to overhaul the country's legal system in defiance of mass protests.

Lawmakers in the Knesset gave preliminary approval during a late-night vote on the bill, which would allow the parliament to declare a prime minister unfit to rule only for physical or mental reasons.

The body was expected to vote later on a measure that would allow the Knesset to overrule Supreme Court rulings and enact laws that had been struck down. Both bills require additional votes before being enshrined into law.

The steps were the latest in a series of moves by Netanyahu's coalition to overhaul Israel's legal system. The prime minister and his allies say the effort is aimed at reining in an activist court. Critics say the drive would upend the country's democratic checks and balances and concentrate power in the hands of Netanyahu and his parliamentary majority.

Netanyahu and his ultranationalist and religious coalition allies have pledged to plow ahead with the legal changes despite demonstrations by tens of thousands of Israeli protesters over the past two months. Business leaders, legal experts and retired military leaders have joined the protests, and Israeli reservists have threatened to stop reporting for duty if the overhaul passes.

In a late-night vote, the Knesset moved forward a bill that would protect Netanyahu from calls to oust him, replacing current law that opens the door for a leader to be removed under other circumstances. The new bill would require approval by three-quarters of the government, and could be overridden by the prime minister.

The measure has personal importance to Netanyahu, who returned to power late last year after Israel's fifth election in under four years. He is on trial on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, and denies the allegations. The proceedings have dragged on for nearly three years.

Good governance groups and other critics have called on the country's attorney general to deem Netanyahu unfit for office.

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Speaking to members of his Likud party on Monday, Netanyahu lashed out at the Israeli media, saying they are broadcasting a "never ending tsunami of fake news" against him. He reiterated his claim that the legal overhaul will strengthen Israeli democracy.

Opposition lawmaker Orna Barbivai said the bill was "a disgrace, which says the the prime minister is above the law."

Israel's Palestinian minority, which makes up some 20% of the population, has been largely absent from the protests, in part because they suffer from discrimination in Israel and and because of Israel's treatment of their Palestinian brethren in the West Bank and Gaza.

One loser in 'Everything Everywhere' romp: Oscar bait

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When Daniel Kwan was accepting one of the many awards for "Everything Everywhere All at Once" at Sunday night's Academy Awards, he took a moment to assure his young son that what was happening was, to be sure, odd.

"This is not normal," said Kwan, who directed the film with his creative partner, Daniel Scheinert. "This is kind of crazy."

"Not normal" and "kind of crazy" are, increasingly, reasonable ways to describe Oscar best picture winners. Three years ago, Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite," a masterful Korean genre movie and class satire, became the first non-English language film to win Hollywood's top prize. Last year, "CODA," a modest and heartwarming indie drama released in August, took best picture, making history for the deaf community.

If those films set out with little expectation of Oscar glory, the googly-eye-paved road for "Everything Everywhere All at Once" was even more unlikely. It's not a hard and fast rule, but, historically speaking, movies with butt plug fights and hot dog fingers don't win Oscars. They certainly don't win seven of them.

As a story about family and immigrant life, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" may be just as sentimental and old-fashioned, at heart, as plenty of Oscar winners before it. But it might be — and proudly so — the weirdest best-picture winner in the 95-year history of the Academy Awards. It's a long ways from "Patton," at least.

There was much to reflect on what has and hasn't changed in movies since that 1971 best picture winner during a ceremony that opened with Navy fighter jets flying overhead and saw best supporting actor winner Ke Huy Quan, whose family fled Vietnam as war refugees, emotionally speak about the surrealism of the American dream.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once," for which Michelle Yeoh became the first Asian best actress winner, is unquestionably an Asian American milestone. But for many reasons it's a distinctly un-Oscar-like movie that, like "CODA" and "Parasite," never — in any multiverse — expected any of this.

"It feels like we're in our movie sometimes," Scheinert said in an interview ahead of the Oscars. "At some point we're going to get pulled out of this joke and be back to our own lives and be like, 'Oh, wouldn't that be cool? Too bad.'"

Yet it was striking just how resoundingly the blissfully bonkers "Everything Everywhere All at Once" trounced the competition. With acting wins for Yeoh, Quan and Jamie Lee Curtis, it's just the third film to win three acting Oscars, along with "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "Network." No film has ever won more "above the line" Academy Awards.

At the same time, much of the old guard was either absent or went home emptyhanded. Tom Cruise, whose "Top Gun: Maverick" was nominated for best picture, was a no show. So was James Cameron, whose "Avatar: The Way of Water" wasn't considered a real challenger. Twenty-five years ago, it was Cameron who was "king of the world" at the Oscars, with "Titanic."

"Maverick" won just for sound, "Avatar" for effects. The puny results for two films that have together collected nearly \$4 billion in box office might have taken some viewers out of the broadcast. Academy voters signaled early in the ceremony that blockbusters weren't on the menu, picking Curtis for supporting actress over Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"), who would have been the first Marvel performer to win an Oscar.

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Steven Spielberg and "The Fabelmans" was also entirely shutout. Though nominated for seven awards, his most autobiographical film and the one he campaigned hardest for, didn't win anything. Best director went to the Daniels, who at 35, are the second-youngest winners ever.

The Oscars, more than ever, belong to underdogs. And the biggest loser might be Oscar bait.

Certainly, many of the winners were conventional academy picks. Best actor winner Brendan Fraser's prosthetic-aided comeback performance in "The Whale" ticked many of the standard boxes. And it would be unfair to label Spielberg thoughtful memory piece — which somehow lost the "mom" narrative to the Daniels' film — as awards-driven.

But Sunday's Oscars suggested Hollywood — at least for the time being — is looking for Oscar movies that don't seem too much like Oscar movies. Some of that could be attributed to the changed makeup of the academy, which has diversified and now numbers more than 10,000. That includes far more international voters, a subtle sea change that likely helped push the German-language WWI saga "All Quiet on the Western Front" to four Oscars and "Naatu Naatu" of the Indian sensation "RRR" to best song.

But even the acting winners, while Hollywood veterans, were all first timers. The wins for Yeoh, Quan and Fraser may have all partly been to redress past wrongs to them by the industry. Fraser had been largely forgotten, and a victim of alleged abuse by a prominent Hollywood Foreign Press Association member. Yeoh, a massive star in Hong Kong, had found herself pigeonholed in Hollywood. Quan, an indelible face of the 1980s, had given up acting after years of struggle to find work.

The Oscar telecast, emceed by Jimmy Kimmel, was fairly traditional, as the academy looked to quell the drama of last year's show. So it would be easy to miss that the ground underneath the Academy Awards is shifting — and not just the carpet formerly colored red.

But it's more than a quirky blip when a couple of idiosyncratic, sensitive guys with an absurdist sense of humor win best picture for their only feature film beside the farting corpse one. "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the Daniels' second film after 2016's "Swiss Army Man," may have struck a chord because of how it channels our dizzying digital overload into multiple dimensions.

"The world is changing rapidly and I fear our stories are not keeping that pace," Kwan said on the Dolby Theatre stage, referring to the speed of the internet versus the slow-moving apparatus of cinema.

The Oscars tend to seesaw between trends. The much-debated 2018 winner "Green Book" followed the landmark win for "Moonlight" the year prior. Barry Jenkins' film was the first A24 best-picture winner, and now "Everything Everywhere All at Once" — A24's biggest box-office hit with \$107.4 million in box office — is the specialty label's second. A24 swept all of the top awards Sunday, a first for any studio in Oscar history.

Backstage at the Oscars, Kwan told reporters that their "shotgun blast of joy and absurdity and creativity" ultimately comes out of his own navigation through dark times and depression.

"And I really hope that the next generation can watch a movie like ours and be just, like, oh, there's another way to look at the bleakness and another way to kind of face it head on," said Kwan.

The victory for "Everything Everywhere All at Once" came as Hollywood and the Oscars continue to find their footing after several years of pandemic and the scandal of last year's broadcast. While the industry has tried to revive moviegoing, originality has been in short supply in theaters. On Oscar weekend at the box office, a "VI" defeated a "III."

But "Everything Everywhere All at Once," a mad rush of originality with "Raccacoonie" strapped to its head, is surely beloved for daring to be different. And at the Oscars, its win might not be "not normal," as Kwan said, after all. It might be the new normal.

AP source: Patriots plan to re-sign CB Jonathan Jones

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — The Patriots have taken a step toward maintaining some stability in their secondary, agreeing to terms on a new contract to retain free agent cornerback Jonathan Jones.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press on Monday the 29-year-old

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intends to sign a two-year deal worth a maximum value of \$20 million, with \$13 million guaranteed. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because new contracts can't officially be signed until Wednesday.

Jones thrived last season after switching from primarily defending slot receivers to playing on the outside. He started 16 games, tying for the team lead with four interceptions. He led all Patriots with 11 pass breakups.

With veteran safety Devin McCourty announcing his retirement last week, Jones who has spent his entire seven seasons in New England since signing as an undrafted free agent in 2016, becomes the longest-tenured player in the Patriots secondary.

Biden administration lets Ukrainians who fled war stay in US

Associated Press By REBECCA SANTANA

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is allowing thousands of Ukrainians who fled their homeland when Russia invaded a year ago to stay in the United States longer, the administration said Monday. The decision provides relief to Ukrainians whose one-year authorization to remain in the U.S. was set to expire soon.

The Homeland Security Department said the extension is for certain Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members who were let into the U.S. before the Uniting for Ukraine program started.

Ukrainians who came in under the Uniting for Ukraine program generally got two years of humanitarian "parole" in the U.S. whereas those who arrived before them generally got permission to stay only for one year. Resettlement agencies have estimated that there are about 20,000 Ukrainians in the one-year group.

Thousands of Ukrainians came to America last year fleeing the war.

The U.S. government used a program called humanitarian parole to admit them into the country. That program is a way to allow people from other countries to enter the United States on an emergency basis due to an urgent humanitarian situation. But it is usually for a finite amount of time, like a year or two years, and must be renewed for people to stay longer.

In recent years, humanitarian parole has been employed as a quick fix to deal with the fallout from the many world crises that have occurred as the U.S. refugee system that was dismantled by the previous administration was being built back up.

Now numerous groups are seeing their permission to remain in the United States expiring in coming months, including tens of thousands of Afghans.

That has led to intense anxiety for thousands of people who fled war in their homeland and don't know whether they'll be kicked out of the U.S. when their humanitarian parole status expires. The uncertainty can also be difficult for the businesses that employ them and need to make sure their employees are properly authorized to remain in the country.

Ukraine and immigration have both been hot button topics among Republican politicians who aren't enthusiastic about continuing aid to the war and have accused the Biden administration of not doing enough to control migration at the southern border. But even in that toxic political environment, there's been little movement to force Ukrainians to return home, reflecting widespread acceptance that it's still too dangerous for them there.

The Homeland Security Department said the announcement specifically refers to Ukrainians who came into the U.S. on humanitarian parole status from February 24, 2022 through April 25, 2022. They do not need to file any paperwork with the government to get the extension. The department will review cases of Ukrainians that fall in this category over the next four weeks to vet them for the extension, starting with those who came to the U.S. the earliest.

Many groups that work with people who come to the U.S. after being forcibly displaced from their countries had been advocating for the extension. In a statement the head of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Krish O'Mara Vignarajah said the extension would provide relief to thousands of anxious Ukrainians.

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"For this earliest-arrived group of Ukrainians, the continued legal right to live, work, and access resettlement assistance in the U.S. is absolutely crucial to their well-being," she said. The organization also called on the administration in the future to not wait until so close to the deadline to extend "critical humanitarian protections," and noted that many of the thousands of Afghans who came into the country on humanitarian parole will start seeing their protections expire this summer. ___

Follow Santana on Twitter @ruskygal.

How this little see-through fish gets its rainbow shimmer

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — You can see right through this little aquarium fish from Thailand: Its skin is almost completely transparent. But when the light hits it just right, its body flickers with shimmering rainbow colors.

Now, scientists have figured out how this fish — called the ghost catfish — creates its iridescent glow.

That glow comes from within, according to a study published Monday in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. As light passes through the fish's skin, it hits tiny structures in the muscle that turn the light into a colorful spectrum.

The ghost catfish — sometimes known as the glass catfish — is a small species native to rivers in Thailand, averaging just a few inches (centimeters) long. It's sold around the world as an aquarium fish.

Other creatures are also iridescent, creating the shimmering rainbow effect where colors shift as you move. Usually, they have shiny outer surfaces that reflect the light — like a hummingbird's feathers or a butterfly's wings, explained Arizona State University biologist Ron Rutowski, who was not involved with the research.

But the ghost catfish has no scales, said senior author Qibin Zhao, a physicist at China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University, who became fascinated by the fish after seeing it in an aquarium store.

Instead, it has tightly packed structures in the muscles that can bend light into rainbow hues, which researchers found after shining different lights and lasers onto its body in the lab. As the ghost catfish swims, those muscles relax and tighten, sending off a glinting range of colors.

And the very see-through skin, which lets in around 90% of outside light, is essential: "We wouldn't be able to see the colors if the skin of the fish is not so transparent," Zhao said in an email.

Some species use their iridescence to attract mates or give off warning signals, but it's not clear whether the ghost catfish's colors serve a purpose, Rutowski said.

Imprisoned Navalny learns documentary about him wins Oscar

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny learned Monday from his lawyer that a film detailing his poisoning and political activism won the Oscar for best documentary feature.

The 46-year-old politician was attending a court hearing via video link from the prison when his attorney broke the news to him about the documentary, "Navalny," by director Daniel Roher, according to his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh. She called it "the most remarkable announcement of an (Oscar) win in history."

Yarmysh did not report what Navalny's initial reaction was to the Oscar win.

According to Yarmysh, Navalny faced a court hearing in Kovrov, a town near the prison in the Vladimir region east of Moscow. President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critic participated in the hearing on a complaint he filed against Russian penitentiary officials.

At a daily conference call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the Oscar win, saying that he hasn't seen the film and thus "it wouldn't make sense to say anything" about it. He added that "Hollywood sometimes does not shun politicizing its work."

Russian state TV channels largely ignored the win.

Monday's hearing was on one of the many lawsuits the defiant Navalny has filed against prison administrators over what he alleges are violations of his rights. Two more hearings were scheduled, but those were postponed until later dates.

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The documentary portrays Navalny's career of fighting official corruption, his near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent in 2020 that he blames on the Kremlin, his five-month recuperation in Germany and his 2021 return to Moscow, where he was immediately taken into custody at the airport. He was later sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison and last year was convicted and given another nine-year term.

Navalny has faced unrelenting pressure from authorities. He spent several weeks in isolation in a tiny "punishment cell" and last month was placed in a restricted housing unit for six months. He is effectively deprived of phone calls or visits from his family.

At the ceremony Sunday night in Los Angeles, Roher accepted his Oscar by saying he dedicated it to Navalny and to 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," he said.

Navalny's wife, Yulia, also spoke, saying: "My husband is in prison just for telling the truth. My husband is in prison just for defending democracy. Alexei, I am dreaming of the day you will be free and our country will be free. Stay strong, my love."

His daughter Dasha told reporters that the only way the family is able to stay in touch with him is through letters, with defense lawyers able to visit him occasionally. His health is deteriorating, which is worrying, she said.

Lyubov Sobol, Navalny's longtime ally, said in an interview with The Associated Press that the documentary's success represented "an important signal that the world sees the efforts to fight for democracy in Russia, the world supports brave and courageous people who have challenged Vladimir Putin and have been fighting the unequal battle with evil, which is now tormenting the entire world and Ukraine in the first place."

"It's a very important victory and I was unspeakably glad," Sobol said.

Another Navalny ally, Maria Pevchikh, wrote on Instagram: "Alexei, this is your award. It's not about the film. It's about the fact that what you're doing cannot leave anyone indifferent. Be it in Russia, in Hollywood, or anywhere else. (You're) a true hero."

School pulls test question equating politics to race, gender

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — Virginia's largest school system is removing a test question given to a college-level social studies class that equated liberals and conservatives with specific racial and gender demographics.

The question appeared on a test given to students of an AP Government class at Fairfax County Public Schools' Online Campus.

The multiple-choice question asked students, "Which of the following is an accurate comparison of liberals versus conservatives?"

The potential answers for "liberals" included "Young, white males;" "Middle aged, urban lesbian;" "Colleged-educated black male professional" and "White, upper-middle class suburban male."

The potential answers for "conservatives" included "East Coast, Ivy League educated scientists;" "Southern male migrant laborer;" "Catholic, midwestern middle-aged male" and "West coast, Hispanic teacher."

Rory Cooper, a Fairfax County parent and school system critic who posted the question on Twitter, said it is offensive.

"It's one thing for adults to analyze demographic trends," he said. "It's another to tell students that their identity defines their political philosophy."

The school system said in a statement that the question will be removed from future tests because it "did not meet the division's high expectations." It also said all test questions administered to students in the AP Government Online Campus class will now be reviewed.

The statement said the question was "designed to assess 12th graders' understanding of American political ideology."

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The test is part of an AP, or Advanced Placement, class that allows high-school students to earn college credit if they score well on a final exam.

While the question was part of an AP class, it was not created by the College Board, which administers the AP program nationally.

In a tweet, the College Board said the question "is antithetical to the content and format of an AP question." Virginia Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears weighed in as well, criticizing the assumptions the question makes about who is liberal and who is conservative. She has frequently bristled at outsiders' political assumptions about Black women that are at odds with her stance as a conservative Republican and military veteran.

"Tests like these create division, low morale, fights in our schools," she wrote in one tweet.

The question is just the latest in a series of critiques that have been levied against public educators. Conservative activists have questioned curricula that they say promote progressive ideology over education fundamentals.

The debate has been particularly intense in Virginia, where Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin has made education reform a priority and has sought to change how schools deal with transgender students.

Earlier this year, Republican Attorney General Jason Miyares announced an investigation of the school system after reports that high schools withheld letters of commendation on standardized tests from some students on the theory that it would hurt the feelings of students who didn't receive them.

Agents stop crowd at Texas border crossing amid asylum woes

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A large group of migrants in Mexico who were poised to barge into the U.S. over the weekend were blocked from crossing a bridge leading from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to El Paso, Texas, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman said.

The migrants were "posing a potential threat to make a mass entry," and physical barriers were put up to restrict their entry at the Paso Del Norte International Bridge on Sunday afternoon, spokesman Roger Maier said in a statement to The Associated Press on Monday.

Barricades also were used in El Paso for a short time Sunday afternoon at other border crossings including the Bridge of Americas and the Stanton-Lerdo bridge, Maier said.

Video of the scene at the Paso Del Norte bridge on Sunday showed hundreds of migrants brush past Mexican National Guard officers on the Mexican side, some carrying children on their shoulders. Many appeared to be Venezuelan, by their accents.

Shouting "We want to get through!" the migrants ran up to the center line of the bridge, where U.S. authorities had erected concrete and plastic barriers strung with concertina wire.

The migrants were stopped by the barrier, and remained on the Mexican side, shouting "Open up for us!" to the U.S. officers. After a time, the migrants ran back toward the Mexican side.

Traffic was reopened and flowing in both directions as of Sunday evening, Maier said. It wasn't immediately known what caused the attempted mass crossing. A message seeking comment was left with the mayor's office in El Paso.

The rush across the bridge may have been sparked by false rumors, said Camilo Cruz, who works with the U.N. migration office in Ciudad Juarez.

Cruz said there was "a rumor that they were going to let them cross massively, particularly people who arrived with children."

Cruz said the rumors are a recurrent problem. About a month ago, messages began circulating "that there were going to be buses on the U.S. side to take them to Canada ... and when they arrived, they were told it was a lie."

The worst thing, Cruz said, is that migrants often leave the shelters where they are staying to attend such mass crossing attempts, only to find the shelters full when they return.

Many of the migrants on Sunday appeared to be asylum seekers. One woman held out what appeared to be an appointment slip at the barricade. Migrants seeking asylum, a legal immigration pathway for people fleeing persecution in their own country, have been frustrated by newly-implemented limits on

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those showing up at the southwest border, as many Venezuelans do.

There has been frustration with the U.S. government's CBPOne mobile app for making appointments to apply for asylum, which has been overloaded since the Biden administration introduced it Jan. 12. New appointments are available each day at 6 a.m., but migrants find themselves stymied by error messages.

Also causing frustration is a pandemic rule, scheduled to end May 11, that denies migrants a chance to seek asylum on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19. Under the public health rule, known as Title 42, Mexico recently began taking back Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who crossed.

In addition, the Biden administration has said it will generally deny asylum to migrants who show up at the U.S. southern border without first seeking protection in a country they passed through.

After two historic US bank failures, here's what comes next

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and KEN SWEET Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two large banks that cater to the tech industry have collapsed after a bank run, government agencies are taking emergency measures to backstop the financial system, and President Joe Biden is reassuring Americans that the money they have in banks is safe.

It's all eerily reminiscent of the financial meltdown that began with the bursting of the housing bubble 15 years ago. Yet the initial pace this time around seems even faster.

Over the last three days, the U.S. seized the two financial institutions after a bank run on Silicon Valley Bank, based in Santa Clara, California. It was the largest bank failure since Washington Mutual went under in 2008.

How did we get here? And will the steps the government unveiled over the weekend be enough?

Here are some questions and answers about what has happened and why it matters:

WHY DID SILICON VALLEY BANK FAIL?

Silicon Valley Bank had already been hit hard by a rough patch for technology companies in recent months and the Federal Reserve's aggressive plan to increase interest rates to combat inflation compounded its problems.

The bank held billions of dollars worth of Treasuries and other bonds, which is typical for most banks as they are considered safe investments. However, the value of previously issued bonds has begun to fall because they pay lower interest rates than comparable bonds issued in today's higher interest rate environment.

That's usually not an issue either because bonds are considered long term investments and banks are not required to book declining values until they are sold. Such bonds are not sold for a loss unless there is an emergency and the bank needs cash.

Silicon Valley, the bank that collapsed Friday, had an emergency. Its customers were largely startups and other tech-centric companies that needed more cash over the past year, so they began withdrawing their deposits. That forced the bank to sell a chunk of its bonds at a steep loss, and the pace of those withdrawals accelerated as word spread, effectively rendering Silicon Valley Bank insolvent.

WHAT DID THE GOVERNMENT DO SUNDAY?

The Federal Reserve, the U.S. Treasury Department, and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation decided to guarantee all deposits at Silicon Valley Bank, as well as at New York's Signature Bank, which was seized on Sunday. Critically, they agreed to guarantee all deposits, above and beyond the limit on insured deposits of \$250,000.

Many of Silicon Valley's startup tech customers and venture capitalists had far more than \$250,000 at the bank. As a result, as much as 90% of Silicon Valley's deposits were uninsured. Without the government's decision to backstop them all, many companies would have lost funds needed to meet payroll, pay bills, and keep the lights on.

The goal of the expanded guarantees is to avert bank runs — where customers rush to remove their money — by establishing the Fed's commitment to protecting the deposits of businesses and individuals and calming nerves after a harrowing few days.

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Also late Sunday, the Federal Reserve initiated a broad emergency lending program intended to shore up confidence in the nation's financial system.

Banks will be allowed to borrow money straight from the Fed in order to cover any potential rush of customer withdrawals without being forced into the type of money-losing bond sales that would threaten their financial stability. Such fire sales are what caused Silicon Valley Bank's collapse.

If all works as planned, the emergency lending program may not actually have to lend much money. Rather, it will reassure the public that the Fed will cover their deposits and that it is willing to lend big to do so. There is no cap on the amount that banks can borrow, other than their ability to provide collateral.

HOW IS THE PROGRAM INTENDED TO WORK?

Unlike its more byzantine efforts to rescue the banking system during the financial crisis of 2007-08, the Fed's approach this time is relatively straightforward. It has set up a new lending facility with the bureaucratic moniker, "Bank Term Funding Program."

The program will provide loans to banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions for up to a year. The banks are being asked to post Treasuries and other government-backed bonds as collateral.

The Fed is being generous in its terms: It will charge a relatively low interest rate — just 0.1 percentage points higher than market rates — and it will lend against the face value of the bonds, rather than the market value. Lending against the face value of bonds is a key provision that will allow banks to borrow more money because the value of those bonds, at least on paper, has fallen as interest rates have moved higher.

As of the end of last year U.S. banks held Treasuries and other securities with about \$620 billion of unrealized losses, according to the FDIC. That means they would take huge losses if forced to sell those securities to cover a rush of withdrawals.

HOW DID THE BANKS END UP WITH SUCH BIG LOSSES?

Ironically, a big chunk of that \$620 billion in unrealized losses can be tied to the Federal Reserve's own interest-rate policies over the past year.

In its fight to cool the economy and bring down inflation, the Fed has rapidly pushed up its benchmark interest rate from nearly zero to about 4.6%. That has indirectly lifted the yield, or interest paid, on a range of government bonds, particularly two-year Treasuries, which topped 5% until the end of last week.

When new bonds arrive with higher interest rates, it makes existing bonds with lower yields much less valuable if they must be sold. Banks are not forced to recognize such losses on their books until they sell those assets, which Silicon Valley was forced to do.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES?

They're very important. Legally, the FDIC is required to pursue the cheapest route when winding down a bank. In the case of Silicon Valley or Signature, that would have meant sticking to rules on the books, meaning that only the first \$250,000 in depositors' accounts would be covered.

Going beyond the \$250,000 cap required a decision that the failure of the two banks posed a "systemic risk." The Fed's six-member board unanimously reached that conclusion. The FDIC and the Treasury Secretary went along with the decision as well.

WILL THESE PROGRAMS SPEND TAXPAYER DOLLARS?

The U.S. says that guaranteeing the deposits won't require any taxpayer funds. Instead, any losses from the FDIC's insurance fund would be replenished by a levying an additional fee on banks.

Yet Krishna Guha, an analyst with the investment bank Evercore ISI, said that political opponents will argue that the higher FDIC fees will "ultimately fall on small banks and Main Street business." That, in theory, could cost consumers and businesses in the long run.

WILL IT ALL WORK?

Guha and other analysts say that the government's response is expansive and should stabilize the banking system, though share prices for medium-sized banks, similar to Silicon Valley and Signature, plunged Monday.

"We think the double-barreled bazooka should be enough to quell potential runs at other regional banks and restore relative stability in the days ahead," Guha wrote in a note to clients.

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Paul Ashworth, an economist at Capital Economics, said the Fed's lending program means banks should be able to "ride out the storm."

"These are strong moves," he said.

Yet Ashworth also added a note of caution: "Rationally, this should be enough to stop any contagion from spreading and taking down more banks ... but contagion has always been more about irrational fear, so we would stress that there is no guarantee this will work."

South Carolina women cap wire-to-wire No. 1 run in AP Top 25

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

South Carolina joined an exclusive group Monday, going wire-to-wire as No. 1 in consecutive years in The Associated Press Top 25 women's basketball poll.

The defending national champion Gamecocks (32-0) became the third school to be the top team in the poll for the entire season in back-to-back years, equaling UConn and Louisiana Tech.

The Gamecocks, who are the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament, have been atop the poll for 38 straight weeks, which is the second longest run behind UConn's record 51-week streak (2008-10). Led by Aliyah Boston, the Gamecocks were once again a unanimous choice by the 28-member media panel.

"We have the best player in college basketball that puts our program in a position to be number one in consecutive seasons," South Carolina coach Dawn Staley said.

Indiana switched places with Iowa in the final poll, moving back up to second after landing its first No. 1 seed in an NCAA tourney. Virginia Tech and Stanford, the other two top seeds, were fourth and fifth in the final Top 25.

UConn, which won the Big East Tournament last week, switched places with Maryland to follow the Cardinal. It's the first time since 2006 that the Huskies didn't finish the season in the top five in the poll. They have been in the top 10 in the final poll every year since 1994.

Utah, LSU and Villanova rounded out the top 10 teams.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Louisiana Tech had its 36-week run at No. 1 from 1980-82 while UConn's was from 2008-10. The Huskies have gone wire-to-wire five other times. Texas (1985-86), Tennessee (1997-98) and Baylor (2011-12) are the only other teams to go one full season at No. 1.

JUMPING BACK IN

Iowa State ran through the Big 12 Tournament, winning three games in three days to re-enter the poll at No. 17.

"These are moments they're going to remember," Iowa State coach Bill Fennelly said. "It's not just winning. They'll remember what this environment was like their whole life. We beat a great team, and it was a great three days for us."

Middle Tennessee fell out of the rankings.

CONFERENCE SUPREMECY

The Pac-12 finished the season with six teams in the Top 25, the most of any conference. The Big Ten was next with five while the ACC had four. The Big 12 and SEC each had three and the Big East two. The Mountain West and the West Coast Conference each had one.

Eagles' Jason Kelce set to return for 13th season

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce tweeted on Monday that he would return for a 13th NFL season.

Kelce has long been the heart of the Eagles and one of the top centers in the league. He played against his brother, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, in the Super Bowl. The Chiefs beat the Eagles 38-35 for the NFL title.

Kelce has been as durable as they come with the Super Bowl putting him at 149 consecutive games played. The 35-year-old Kelce was a sixth-round pick in the 2011 draft and is a five-time All-Pro.

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"I have put much thought into whether it makes sense to play another season," Kelce wrote. "After talking it over with my wife and many other friends and family, I have decided to return for another year. Thank you to all my supporters and detractors for fueling me, I ain't done yet!"

The Eagles responded with a tweet of Kelce wearing a Batman mask from a game last season. Kelce was a free agent and can't officially sign with the Eagles until Wednesday. The Eagles also tweeted a clip that said Kelce was back.

Kelce is a big fan favorite and has done it all outside the football field such as singing the national anthem at a 76ers game, partying with the Phanatic and pounding a beer to a roaring ovation at a Phillies playoff game.

But the moment that endeared him for life to the Philly faithful came at the 2018 Super Bowl parade when he dressed as one of Philadelphia's famed Mummers and the ultimate underdog delivered a fiery, profane speech that whipped the crowd into a frenzy.

"No one likes us! No one likes us! No one likes us! We don't care," Kelce exclaimed. "We're from Philly! No one likes us! We don't care!"

Kelce made a cameo appearance this month on "Saturday Night Live" when Travis hosted.

Gun laws, campus policies perplex college sports programs

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

At Alabama, one of the team's best players allegedly delivered a gun that was used in a fatal shooting. At New Mexico State, a player avoided charges for shooting and killing a student in what he said was self-defense, even though he was carrying a gun in violation of school rules.

At Michigan State, sports were suspended after gun violence on campus left three students dead. At LSU, the team's leading wide receiver was arrested, but not charged, for carrying a gun through the French Quarter in New Orleans.

The headlines over the past few months illustrate the challenge for athletic departments in determining how gun laws in their states and regulations at their schools should be applied to their programs and communicated to their players. An Associated Press analysis of more than a dozen schools in the NCAA tournaments shows a wide range of policies that govern guns at those schools and uneven efforts to regulate them.

"I have no idea," Michigan State basketball coach Tom Izzo told AP when asked what he should say to players who legally possess a gun. "Whatever the law is, you can't supersede the law on your team or in your program."

Mississippi State coach Chris Jans, when asked about his own team's gun policy: "That's a good question. Not sure I know the correct answer to that right now."

The NCAA has no gun policy on its books, calling it a law-enforcement issue. That means rules for sports teams, if they exist, are derived from a mixture of state laws, university policies and, in some cases, supplements to those policies in the student-athlete handbooks. In some instances, coaches implement their own team rules. But as cases across the country have shown — just in the past four months alone — there is confusion, mixed messages and what some perceive as seat-of-the-pants decision-making on issues that can have life-or-death consequences.

Marquette coach Shaka Smart said he's been "yelled at by my superiors" over the years when he brings up sensitive topics such as guns to his players. So, he says, he treads lightly on the subject.

"Now, should you be driving around with a gun in your glove compartment or whatever?" Smart said. "I'm not passing judgment on anyone anywhere else as it relates to that. But no, our players should not be doing that and I should not be doing that. And so I don't, and they don't."

Guns are prohibited in buildings on the Marquette campus in Milwaukee. At Kansas State, concealed weapons are allowed on campus, so long as they are legally owned.

"We have to explain to them why we feel like one decision may be, in this moment in time, a little more prudent than another decision in another moment of their life," K-State coach Jerome Tang said. "Like,

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later on in life, if they want to get a license, that's fine. But right now, in this moment, it may not be as wise for you."

The AP's analysis found that in many instances, school policies differ from state to state, and sometimes from campus to campus within the same state. Most student-athlete handbooks simply reiterate school policy regarding weapons.

In Texas, open carry is not allowed at either the University of Houston or at the University of Texas in Austin, the site of a 1966 mass shooting from the clock tower on campus. But concealed carry is allowed in some areas of each campus, the listings of which are available on the school websites.

The NCAA bans guns on the premises of its championship events, presumably meaning the Final Four sites — in Dallas (women) and Houston (men) — will be gun free.

In Alabama, a state law that went into effect this year made it legal to openly carry a gun without a permit. Still, guns are prohibited on campus. Police say Alabama star Brandon Miller delivered a gun to a teammate and another person who are charged with the Jan. 15 fatal shooting of 23-year-old Jamea Harris.

Miller has not been charged with a crime and has continued to play for his team, which is the overall top seed in the tournament that gets into full swing Thursday. But the school's handling of Miller's status in the aftermath of the shooting underscores the confusion over the topic.

There was more than a month between the killing and police testimony that Miller had brought the gun to his teammate, Darius Miles, who was removed from the team after he was charged, then later indicted, in Harris' death.

"Our role in a criminal investigation is to support law enforcement, not to conduct our own investigation -- and not to interfere with their efforts," athletic director Greg Byrne said in an ESPN interview.

At New Mexico State, campus officials appeared unprepared to deal with a shooting that resulted in the death of a student from University of New Mexico. NMSU forward Mike Peake said he was acting in self-defense when he shot and killed Brandon Travis last November while the Aggies were on a road trip in Albuquerque.

Guns are prohibited on New Mexico State's campus and on school road trips. Still, police say Peake brought the gun with him on the team bus; it took the school 16 days to permanently suspend him from the team after the shooting.

"I don't know if it's a rule you talk about with the players, that you can't bring a gun on the bus," said Rus Bradburd, a former coach and current professor at New Mexico State whose book, "All the Dreams We've Dreamed," tells the story of gun violence and basketball in Chicago. "But do you need to write that down? It's like, I always wear pants to a faculty meeting, but that's not anywhere in the bylaws. It's sort of understood."

LSU receiver Malik Nabers was disciplined by the school (no specifics were given) but will not miss games next season after being arrested for illegally carrying a weapon on Bourbon Street last month. Had the incident happened on a busy street in Texas, where permits are not required to carry a concealed weapon, he wouldn't have been arrested in the first place.

"Are we concerned about guns with the student athletes? Yeah, we are," an LSU employee familiar with the situation told AP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject. "There's a prevalence of guns everywhere right now. It is something we address specifically among a number of other issues."

Last fall at Virginia, the football team canceled the season's final game after a former member of the team, Christopher Darnell Jones Jr., was charged with murdering three players and wounding two students on campus. Authorities later found guns in his dorm room on the campus where, with few exceptions, weapons are not permitted.

It illustrated the impossibility of monitoring every student at any campus, and magnified the plight of sports leaders whose programs can be thrust into the spotlight in the aftermath of gun violence.

"The violence is right there with drug use and other sorts of things we hope to guide them away from," said Mike Marlow, the athletic director at Northern Arizona, where guns are not allowed. "You hope that you have the type of culture in place that discourages the behavior, even if there is some legality to it."

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Alabama, Houston top final AP Top 25 ahead of March Madness

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

The overall No. 1 seed for March Madness is No. 1 in the final AP Top 25, too.

Alabama, fresh off an SEC Tournament title to go with its regular-season crown, ascended to the top spot Monday, earning 48 of 61 first-place votes to jump Houston, which lost in the American Athletic Conference final without star guard Marcus Sasser. Alabama also spent a week at No. 1 last month.

"We set goals over the summer: regular season, (league) tournament, obviously a national championship," Crimson Tide guard Jahvon Quinerly said. "I'm going to make sure our guys are ready to go no matter who we match up with."

That will be Texas A&M-Corpus Christi or Southeast Missouri State, who meet in a First Four game Tuesday night. The winner will play the Crimson Tide on Thursday in Birmingham, an hour down the road from their Tuscaloosa campus.

The top seed in the South Region, Alabama would face West Virginia or Maryland for a spot in the Sweet 16 with a win.

And how sweet that would be for a team that's gone through the ringer: former teammate Darius Miles and another man have been indicted on capital murder charges for a January shooting, an investigator has testified star freshman Brandon Miller was asked by Miles to bring the gun that night and police have also said Jaden Bradley was at the scene.

"To beat the teams we had to beat to get here was not easy," Alabama coach Nate Oats said last week. "So proud of the guys, proud of their effort, proud they were able to get really focused. Got a lot of mental toughness."

Houston still received nine first-place votes and was No. 2 after losing to Memphis in the final of the AAC tourney, where Sasser hurt his groin in the semifinal round. He did not play in the championship and his status will be watched closely leading up to the Cougars' NCAA opener against Northern Kentucky.

Purdue, seeded first in the East Region, earned three first-place votes and was third in the AP poll after the regular-season Big Ten champion won its conference tournament, too. Kansas, which expects to have Bill Self back for the NCAA tourney after a medical scare, was fourth after receiving the No. 1 seed in the West.

Texas routed the Jayhawks in the finals of the Big 12 Tournament and rounded out the top five.

Marquette remained at No. 6 after its Big East tourney title. UCLA earned one first-place vote and was seventh after losing in the Pac-12 Tournament final to Arizona, which was No. 8. Gonzaga and UConn rounded out the top 10.

"We have a special team. We're not going to do what our past teams have done, which was to maybe get caught up in the wallow of losing," said Huskies coach Dan Hurley, whose team fell to the Golden Eagles in the Big East tourney semifinals. "We're going to get our minds right very quickly and get ready to make a run next week."

RISING AND FALLING

Duke made the biggest jump in the final poll after beating Virginia for the ACC Tournament title, climbing nine spots to No. 12 — the highest the Blue Devils have been since the third week of the season. First-year coach Jon Scheyer has them seeded fifth in the East in the NCAA Tournament.

UCLA, seeded second in the West, fell five spots to No. 7 in the final poll.

IN AND OUT

Memphis was hardly receiving votes last week, but rolling to the AAC tourney title put Penny Hardaway's crew into the poll for the first time this season at No. 24. Florida Atlantic, the Conference USA regular-season and tourney champ, returned at No. 25 after spending the first four weeks in the poll in school history in January and February.

The Tigers and Owls made the AP poll at the expense of Creighton, which was routed by Xavier in the Big East semifinals, and Kentucky, which fell to Vanderbilt in the SEC Tournament quarterfinal round.

CONFERENCE WATCH

Widely considered the toughest league in the nation, the Big 12 had two teams in the top five and five

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in the Top 25. The league has seven schools heading to the NCAA Tournament after Oklahoma State was left on the bubble.

The SEC, which tied the Big Ten for the most NCAA bids with eight, had four teams in the final Top 25. The Big East and ACC had three apiece, though the Big East had two in the top 10 and the leading ACC team was Duke at No. 12.

___ 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

New this week: 'Ted Lasso,' U2 and 'The Boston Strangler'

By The Associated Press undefined

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

MOVIES

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

— A new documentary on Netflix, "Money Shot: The Pornhub Story" arriving Wednesday, takes a look at the phenomenon of Pornhub and the accusations that the pornographic website hosted and profited from videos of rape and underage sex. The filmmakers speaks to lawyers, Pornhub employees who were told that "nothing was wrong" and sex workers to delve into the complex topic. "Our hope is that this film generates important conversations about sex and consent, both on the internet and out in the world," director Suzanne Hillinger said.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

MUSIC

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

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

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

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

— Elvis Presley famously loved comic books and now the late singer is the star of his very own animated

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

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

— Alicia Rancilio

VIDEO GAMES

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

— John Cena is back in the ring for WWE 2K23, the latest edition of 2K Sports' long-running pro wrestling series. The "Peacemaker" actor is featured in this year's Showcase mode, which puts you in the trunks of the big lug during the biggest matches of his career. You can also choose from dozens of other WWE stars, from legends like Hulk Hogan to current headliners like Roman Reigns, or create your own rookie brawler from scratch. The 2023 model also introduces WarGames, a fan favorite in which teams of three or four compete in two rings covered by a steel cage. Chaos ensues Friday on PlayStation 5/4, Xbox X/S/One and PC.

The meaning behind the blue ribbons worn at the Oscars

By The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Small and subtle, the blue ribbons worn by many celebrities at the Oscars nonetheless had an important message: support refugees.

According to a statement from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, donning the #WithRefugees ribbons Sunday "sends a powerful visual message that everyone has the right to seek safety, wherever, whenever they are."

The ribbons were made by Knotty Tie Co., which the agency says provides employment, training and education to refugees resettled in the Denver area.

"In many of the films nominated at festivals and awards ceremonies this season, the human themes of conflict, separation and loss are present," the agency said in the statement, citing movies like "Avatar: The Way of Water" and "Marcel the Shell with Shoes On."

"Through effective storytelling, these films help erode discrimination and misunderstandings, offer new perspectives and help to build compassion for people forced to flee," the statement continued.

The number of displaced people globally now tops 103 million, a figure augmented by significant factors like Russia's war in Ukraine, other conflicts around the world and climate change.

Best supporting actor Ke Huy Quan, born in Vietnam, referenced his own story of being a refugee during his acceptance speech.

"My journey started on a boat. I spent a year in a refugee camp," Quan said. "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."

Like other U.N. agencies, UNHCR has a long history of celebrity engagement — most famously, Angelina

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Jolie was the refugee agency's lone special envoy until parting ways last year.

Best actress nominee Cate Blanchett is a goodwill ambassador for UNHCR. But on Friday, U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric put in a plug for a goodwill ambassador from a different agency — the U.N. Development Programme. When asked whether he had a favorite for best picture, he demurred.

"No, but I do hope that the UNDP's own goodwill ambassador Michelle Yeoh wins best actress, and we wish her all the best," he said of the eventual winner.

Pfizer buys Seagen for \$43B, boosts access to cancer drugs

By TOM MURPHY and MICHELLE CHAPMAN Associated Press

Pfizer is spending about \$43 billion to reach deeper into new cancer treatments that target tumor cells while sparing surrounding healthy tissue.

The pharmaceutical giant said Monday it will pay \$229 in cash for each share of Seagen Inc. Pfizer then plans to let the biotech drug developer "continue innovating," except with more resources than it would have alone, Pfizer Chairman and CEO Albert Bourla told analysts.

"We are not buying the golden eggs," he said. "We are acquiring the goose that is laying the golden eggs."

Bothell, Washington-based Seagen Inc. specializes in working with antibody-drug conjugate, or ADC, technology. Its key products use lab-made proteins called monoclonal antibodies that seek out cancer cells to help deliver a cancer-killing drug while sparing surrounding tissue.

Cancer treatments are a priority for Pfizer. They brought in \$12 billion in revenue for the drugmaker last year. But Pfizer has only marketed a couple first-generation ADC treatments, a spokeswoman said.

Seagen has four treatments on the market. It also has a pipeline of drugs under development that includes potential treatments for a form of lung cancer and advanced breast cancer.

"We think this really changes dramatically the oncology presence of Pfizer, makes it one of a kind," Bourla said.

Seagen's top seller, Adcetris, treats lymph system cancers. It brought in \$839 million in sales last year, a 19% increase over the previous year.

Seagen also has a deal with Pfizer's Array BioPharma to develop, make and sell the breast and colorectal cancer treatment Tukysa. It brought in \$353 million in sales for Seagen last year.

The company, which changed its name from Seattle Genetics in 2020, saw total revenue grow about 25% last year to nearly \$2 billion. Seagen also shaved its loss to \$610 million from \$674 million in 2021.

The drug developer predicts about \$2.2 billion in sales for this year.

Pfizer booked about \$100 billion in total revenue last year and has been flush with cash thanks to sales of its COVID-19 vaccine and treatment, Comirnaty and Paxlovid.

Bourla said earlier this year that the company planned to use its "extraordinary firepower" to buy products that will deliver \$25 billion in incremental revenue by 2030.

The deal announced Monday and some previous acquisitions will help Pfizer account for most of that. But Bourla emphasized on Monday that the company expects Seagen's contributions to extend beyond the end of the decade.

New York-based Pfizer Inc. has already spent \$11.6 billion on migraine treatment developer Biohaven Pharmaceutical. It also spent \$5.4 billion on sickle cell disease treatment maker Global Blood Therapeutics and bought Arena Pharmaceuticals for another \$6.7 billion.

The drugmaker needs more revenue sources in part because it faces the expiration of patents protecting drugs like its breast cancer treatment Ibrance from cheaper competition in the coming years.

Pfizer said Monday it will pay for Seagen mostly through \$31 billion in new, long-term debt.

Both companies' boards have unanimously approved the deal. But regulators still need to look at it, and Seagen shareholders will have to approve it.

The companies expect to complete the transaction in late 2023 or early 2024.

Shares of Pfizer rose 2% to \$40.26 after markets opened Monday, while Seagen's stock soared more than 15% to nearly \$200. Broader indexes edged up slightly.

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When filling out March Madness bracket, who should you pick?

By NOAH TRISTER AP Sports Writer

If you're like most of the country, you probably didn't count on a No. 8 seed reaching the national title game last year — or a No. 15 seed making it to the Elite Eight.

Thank you North Carolina and Saint Peter's, who made sure there's nowhere to go but up trying to pick a winning bracket in 2023.

This season, of course, picking the March Madness bracket comes with its own set of potential pitfalls. How do you account for injuries at Houston and UCLA? Can defending champ Kansas make another run after losing handily in the Big 12 Tournament final? Is this the year you can trust the Big Ten?

Here's one way to go with the bracket:

SOUTH REGION

First Four: Texas A&M Corpus Christi over Southeast Missouri State.

First round winners: Alabama, West Virginia, San Diego State, Virginia, Creighton, Baylor, Utah State and Arizona.

Maryland was terrific at home this season and not very good on the road. At a neutral site, the Terrapins get a tough first-round matchup against a West Virginia team ranked 17th by Ken Pomeroy.

Second round winners: Alabama, Virginia, Baylor, Arizona.

The seeds hold in round two. Bob Huggins could have some tricks up his sleeve against the Crimson Tide, but Alabama should have an advantage playing in Birmingham.

Regional semifinal winners: Alabama, Baylor.

Tony Bennett's Virginia team seems like the ideal group to slow down a run-and-gun team like Alabama, but first the Cavaliers have to get past the first round, which is never a certainty. Time to hedge a bit by putting Virginia in the Sweet 16 but having the Crimson Tide advance.

Regional champion: Alabama.

The Crimson Tide play fast and shoot a lot of 3s, and they're also one of the top defensive teams in the country. Turnovers could be an issue, but they have enough different ways to win that they'll do something their football team couldn't this year — reach the Final Four.

EAST REGION

First Four: Texas Southern over Fairleigh Dickinson.

First round winners: Purdue, Memphis, Duke, Tennessee, Providence, Kansas State, Southern California, Marquette.

At times this season the Big Ten felt like Purdue and about 11 bubble teams. That holds true in the first round of this region, with the Boilermakers advancing but Michigan State bowing out early against USC.

Second round winners: Purdue, Tennessee, Kansas State, Marquette.

Tennessee-Duke is a marquee second-round matchup between two of the better offensive rebounding teams around. As well as the Blue Devils have played recently, the Volunteers are ranked in the top five by Pomeroy and No. 8 in the country at ShotQuality.com.

Regional semifinal winners: Tennessee, Marquette.

Zakai Zeigler's injury will catch up with the Volunteers eventually, but first they oust Purdue, avenging their overtime loss to the Boilermakers in the 2019 Sweet 16. (A refresher: Carsen Edwards was fouled on a 3-pointer in the final seconds and made two free throws to force OT.)

Regional champion: Marquette.

What a season for Shaka Smart, who coached Marquette to regular-season and tournament titles in the Big East. The Golden Eagles will force turnovers, and unlike some of Smart's teams in the past, this is an efficient group offensively.

MIDWEST REGION

First Four: Mississippi State over Pittsburgh.

First round winners: Houston, Iowa, Drake, Kent State, Mississippi State, Xavier, Texas A&M, Texas.

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Yes, that matchup between Texas and Texas A&M in the second round is happening. Also, Drake will be a popular upset pick after rolling through the Missouri Valley Tournament.

Second round winners: Houston, Drake, Mississippi State, Texas.

Texas is trying to follow in the footsteps of Steve Fisher's 1989 Michigan team, which won the national title under an interim coach. It'll be less of a surprise if the Longhorns pull it off, since we've already seen them win the Big 12 Tournament under Rodney Terry.

Regional semifinal winners: Houston, Mississippi State.

Yes, if this comes to fruition, Houston could make the Final Four by beating three double-digit seeds in four games.

Regional champion: Houston.

Obviously, the groin injury to Marcus Sasser is a big concern, but the Cougars should be able to make it through the first weekend even if he's not at full strength, and assuming he returns before too long, Houston is the best team in this region.

WEST REGION

First Four: Nevada over Arizona State.

First round winners: Kansas, Illinois, Saint Mary's, UConn, TCU, Gonzaga, Northwestern, UCLA.

Rick Pitino vs. UConn certainly brings back some Big East memories. It's a tough draw for 13th-seeded Iona.

Second round winners: Illinois, Saint Mary's, Gonzaga, Northwestern.

The Big Ten always seems like a polarizing league in this event, so here's a prediction: Zero Big Ten teams reach the Elite Eight, but Illinois and Northwestern take out the top two seeds in the West. Let the hot takes fly.

Regional semifinal winners: Saint Mary's, Gonzaga.

The West Coast Conference's moment of glory.

Regional champion: Gonzaga.

The Zags come into this tournament on a roll and without the huge expectations of seasons past. Pencil them in for yet another Sweet 16 — and a Final Four as well.

FINAL FOUR

Semifinal winners: Alabama, Houston.

If Alabama makes it this far, the scrutiny may be even more intense for a program that's been in the news for a lot of the wrong reasons lately. Former Alabama player Darius Miles and another man have been indicted on capital murder charges for the January shooting death of 23-year-old Jamea Harris. A police investigator testified last month that Miles texted Crimson Tide star Brandon Miller to bring him his gun that night. Miller has not been charged and has continued to play.

Houston-Gonzaga would be a fascinating matchup, but the Zags still aren't great defensively. The Cougars are the more well-rounded team.

So that would set up an Alabama-Houston title game, with the Crimson Tide happy to push the tempo and the Cougars perfectly comfortable in a rock fight.

The Cougars are good enough defensively to beat the Crimson Tide, and 40 years after Phi Slama Jama's heartbreaking loss to N.C. State in the title game, Houston wins it all.

March Madness top teams bring talent and, for some, baggage

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Kansas and Alabama are no strangers to playing for national championships.

For the Jayhawks, another high-expectations trip to March Madness is a rite of spring. For the Crimson Tide, well, this path to glory travels through some unfamiliar ground — the basketball court.

Alabama rolls in as the top overall seed in an NCAA Tournament that feels both familiar and foreign this season. Yes, there are plenty of heartwarming stories and unbelievable upsets to come when the action begins Tuesday with the first of four play-in games.

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But this was also a season clouded with police blotters at Alabama and Texas, injuries at Houston and UCLA, some unsightly losses at Kansas, and enough twists and turns at the top of the field to make this as unpredictable a bracket as ever.

"I'm not sure we would've predicted this," Alabama coach Nate Oats said of the top seeding that belongs to the Crimson Tide for the first time.

Alabama's ability to set aside distractions — namely, the inevitable questions that will be directed at its star, Brandon Miller, and others about an ongoing murder case against a former member of the team — could have as big an impact on the Crimson Tide's chances as anything.

But all these teams, especially at the top, have their issues.

It starts with Houston, the 1 seed in the Midwest, which was cruising along until Saturday, when its star guard, Marcus Sasser, fell awkwardly and left the game with a groin injury.

Sasser didn't play in his team's conference title game and Houston lost. How quickly he gets back to form could dictate whether the Cougars make the Final Four, which will take place at NRG Stadium, not far from their home arena.

Or take the Jayhawks, who looked like the top overall seed for a time. Two double-digit losses to Texas knocked them down a few notches. They are top seeded, but will play in the West, not the Midwest — one of those rare teams that might have preferred a possible trip down the road to Kansas City over a flight to Las Vegas for the Sweet 16. Not helping the situation was the recent illness of coach Bill Self, who was feeling chest tightness and checked himself into the hospital before the Big 12 Tournament. He was released Sunday and is expected to be with the Jayhawks this week.

"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.

There are issues one notch down the bracket, too.

No. 2 UCLA has been dealing with injuries all season. Most recently, guard Jaylen Clark (Achilles) and big man Adem Bona (shoulder) have gone down. Clark won't be back; Bona might. It takes a hunk out of a team that still has the core of a roster that lost to Gonzaga on a buzzer-beater from near midcourt at the Final Four two years ago.

Another 2 seed, Texas, has had months to bounce back from the firing of coach Chris Beard, whose fiancée called in a domestic dispute that led to the coach's arrest. Charges were eventually dropped. By then, Rodney Terry had taken over the team and it found its footing, though the ugliness of the episode is bound to be rehashed during basketball's biggest month.

Back among the No. 1 seeds, Purdue has a 7-foot-4 playmaker, Zach Edey, leading the way and also has a little baggage of its own. Coach Matt Painter's program has now made the tournament 14 times in his 18 years but has advanced as far as the Elite Eight only once. This is the first time one of Painter's teams has come in as a top seed, though.

The coach is as aware as anyone how a trip to the Final Four might just cover up a lot of those old blemishes.

"Obviously, I know," Painter said, "you get judged on what you do in the tournament."

Is DeSantis darkening Florida's sunny open-records laws?

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Florida has long been known for sunshine -- not only the warm rays that brighten its beaches but also the light of public scrutiny afforded by some of the nation's strongest meetings and records laws.

Although years of rollbacks have gradually clouded the impact, advocates are ringing alarms that this year presents the greatest threat to transparency yet in the state that coined the name "Sunshine Law" for its open-government rules.

Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, weighing a presidential bid, is pursuing a home-state agenda that could make it harder for people to learn what public officials are doing or to speak out against them. In an unprecedented move for the Sunshine State, DeSantis has claimed an executive right to keep key

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government records secret. He's also seeking to weaken a nearly 60-year-old national legal precedent protecting journalists and others who publish critical comments about public figures.

Florida's Republican-led Legislature appears eager to carry out his vision. As their annual session began last week, lawmakers filed dozens of bills that would add to the state's lengthy list of open-government exceptions.

"The state of sunshine is in peril," warned Barbara Petersen, executive director of the Florida Center for Government Accountability, who has been tracking the state's public access laws for three decades.

DeSantis, who is expected to launch a presidential bid following the session, has thrilled conservative activists nationwide by leaning into fights against the GOP's perceived political adversaries: public health officials, so-called "woke" leaders in business and public education — and the press.

Former President Donald Trump, a potential rival and fellow Floridian, also is well-known for lambasting the press — describing the U.S. media as "the enemy of the people." Such criticism often plays well within the modern-day Republican Party, where mainstream media are perceived to side with the interests of Democrats and liberals.

But it runs contrary to Florida's historic reputation as a place where reporters — and curious members of the public — can unearth government data and documents that shed light on the decisions made by elected officials.

Florida's law making government records open to public inspection dates to 1909, long before similar measures emerged in many other states. It added a Sunshine Law requiring public meetings in 1967. Then, in 1992, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment guaranteeing a public right to access records and meetings. A decade later, as lawmakers were adding exemptions, voters approved another a constitutional amendment making it harder for legislators to approve future exceptions.

Florida newspapers launched the first "Sunshine Sunday" in 2002 to highlight the importance of public access to government information. That one-day event has since grown to an annual Sunshine Week observed nationally by media and First Amendment advocates.

As this year's Sunshine Week began Sunday, lawmakers in state capitols were pursuing a mixture of proposals — some excluding more government records from public inspection; others increasing the ability of people to keep an eye on their government. But nowhere, perhaps, have Sunshine Week issues garnered as much attention as in Florida — due largely to DeSantis' powerful platform to voice his complaints about the media.

Last month, DeSantis hosted a livestreamed "panel discussion on defamation" while attempting to build support for his plan to make it easier to bring defamation lawsuits against the media or people who post things on the internet about public officials and employees.

"You smear somebody, it's false, and you didn't do your homework, you're going to have to be held accountable for that," DeSantis said while concluding the event. "Hopefully, you'll see more and more of that across the country."

DeSantis is seeking to undercut a 1964 U.S. Supreme Court decision that shielded news outlets from libel judgments unless proven that they were published with "actual malice" — knowing that something was false or acting with "reckless disregard" to whether it was true. Florida legislation to carry out DeSantis' plan would make it unnecessary to prove "actual malice" when the allegedly defamatory statements don't relate to the reason why someone is a public figure.

Other provisions of the legislation would presume anonymous statements in news stories are false for the purposes defamation lawsuits and would treat accusations of racial, sexual or gender discrimination as intrinsically defamatory.

Petersen said such provisions appear to be a first nationally and could have a freezing effect on free speech.

But Republican state Rep. Alex Andrade, who is sponsoring the bill, said it is "a sincere attempt to try and fix the problems that exist in this type of law."

"This bill would make it easier for someone who's actually been harmed by a defamatory statement to

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pursue justice in Florida courts," Andrade said.

The defamation legislation is just one of several DeSantis administration policies prompting concern among media organizations.

Earlier this year, a Florida trial judge upheld DeSantis' assertion of "executive privilege" in refusing to turn over information requested under the state's public-records law about his screening of potential state Supreme Court nominees. That case is being watched by national media organizations as it's being appealed.

The Florida Constitution contains no specific mention of "executive privilege." Neither does the U.S. Constitution, though courts have upheld the president's prerogative to withhold documents to protect the confidentiality of advice received in the decision-making process. Governors in Oklahoma, Tennessee and Washington also have previously asserted the privilege.

Another DeSantis administration policy has slowed access to some public records. Television station WKMG reported last month that public records requests to some state agencies were being routed for review to the governor's office, sometimes delaying their release by weeks or months.

Public protests at the Capitol also have been limited. Under a DeSantis administration rule that took effect March 1, demonstrations at the Capitol Complex are only permitted outdoors. Requests to use space in the Capitol Complex must come from state agencies, the Legislature or judiciary, must be "consistent with the agency's official purpose" and cannot include displays with "gratuitous violence or gore" that are "patently offensive to prevailing standards in the community."

Florida's open-government reputation already was fading before DeSantis took office in 2019, but that trend has gained steam. In his first year, lawmakers expanded the list of personal details forbidden to be disclosed about various public officials. Last year, DeSantis signed a law shielding information about candidates for college and university presidencies.

This year, roughly five-dozen bills already have been filed proposing more open-government exemptions, Petersen said. Some of those would prohibit the agency that provides security for DeSantis from disclosing the governor's travel arrangements — even after the fact.

Though DeSantis said he doesn't support it, another bill filed this year would require bloggers to file periodic reports with the state if they are paid for posts about the governor, lieutenant governor, cabinet members or legislative officials.

The cumulative effect is that "open government and public records laws are very much under the gun right now," said Bobby Block, executive director of the First Amendment Foundation, a Florida nonprofit that advocates for the public's right to open government.

"Every year, we're seeing the vast sweep of the original intention chiseled away — sometimes bit by bit, other times chuck by chuck," Block said, "and it's definitely not the way it used to be."

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 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.

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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 NCAAs for the first time since 2010.

HOW TO WATCH

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.

UK: Tens of thousands of doctors kick off 3-day strike

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Tens of thousands of junior doctors went on strike across England on Monday to demand better pay, kicking off three days of widespread disruption at the U.K.'s state-funded hospitals and health clinics.

Junior doctors — who are qualified but in the earlier years of their career — make up 45% of all doctors in the National Health Service. Their walkout means that operations and appointments will be canceled for thousands of patients, and senior doctors and other medics have had to be drafted in to cover for

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emergency services, critical care and maternity services.

The British Medical Association, the doctors' trade union, says pay for junior doctors has fallen 26% in real terms since 2008, while workload and patient waiting lists are at record highs. The union says burnout and the U.K.'s cost-of-living crisis are driving scores of doctors away from the public health service.

The union said newly qualified medics earn just 14.09 pounds (\$17) an hour.

"All that junior doctors are asking is to be paid a wage that matches our skill set," said Rebecca Lissman, 29, a trainee in obstetrics and gynaecology. "We love the NHS, and I don't want to work in private practice, but I think we are seeing the erosion of public services."

"I want to be in work, looking after people, getting trained. I don't want to be out here striking, but I feel that I have to," she added.

Other health workers, including nurses and paramedics, have also staged strikes in recent months to demand better pay and conditions. NHS figures show that more than 100,000 appointments have already been postponed this winter as a result of the nurses' walkouts.

Stephen Powis, medical director of NHS England, said the 72-hour strike this week is expected to have the most serious impact and will cause "extensive disruption."

He said some cancer care will likely be affected, alongside routine appointments and some operations.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters on Sunday it was "disappointing that the junior doctors' union are not engaging with the government." The doctors' union said officials have refused to engage with their demands for months, and that a recent invitation to talks came with "unacceptable" preconditions.

The doctors' strike this week will coincide with mass walkouts by tens of thousands of teachers and civil servants on Wednesday, the day the government unveils its latest budget statement.

A wave of strikes has disrupted Britons' lives for months, as workers demand pay raises to keep pace with soaring inflation, which stood at 10.1% in January. That was down from a November peak of 11.1%, but is still the highest in 40 years.

Scores of others in the public sector, including train drivers, airport baggage handlers, border staff, driving examiners, bus drivers and postal workers have all walked off their jobs to demand higher pay.

Unions say wages, especially in the public sector, have fallen in real terms over the past decade, and a cost-of-living crisis fueled by sharply rising food and energy prices has left many struggling to pay their bills.

Today in History: March 14, Eli Whitney patents cotton gin

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 14, the 73rd day of 2023. There are 292 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 14, 1794, Eli Whitney received a patent for his cotton gin, an invention that revolutionized America's cotton industry. On this date:

In 1879, physicist Albert Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany.

In 1939, the republic of Czechoslovakia was dissolved, opening the way for Nazi occupation of Czech areas and the separation of Slovakia.

In 1951, during the Korean War, United Nations forces recaptured Seoul.

In 1962, Democrat Edward M. Kennedy officially launched in Boston his successful candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts once held by his brother, President John F. Kennedy. (Edward Kennedy served in the Senate for nearly 47 years.)

In 1964, a jury in Dallas found Jack Ruby guilty of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, and sentenced him to death. (Both the conviction and death sentence were overturned, but Ruby died before he could be retried.)

In 1967, the body of President John F. Kennedy was moved from a temporary grave to a permanent memorial site at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

In 1980, a LOT Polish Airlines jet crashed while attempting to land in Warsaw, killing all 87 people aboard,

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including 22 members of a U.S. amateur boxing team.

In 1990, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies held a secret ballot that elected Mikhail S. Gorbachev to a new, powerful presidency.

In 1995, American astronaut Norman Thagard became the first American to enter space aboard a Russian rocket as he and two cosmonauts blasted off aboard a Soyuz spacecraft, headed for the Mir space station.

In 2011, Neil Diamond, Alice Cooper, Tom Waits, Darlene Love, Dr. John and Leon Russell were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

In 2015, Robert Durst, a wealthy eccentric linked to two killings and his wife's disappearance, was arrested by the FBI in New Orleans on a murder warrant a day before HBO aired the final episode of a serial documentary about his life. (Durst would be convicted in the shooting death of his friend, Susan Berman; he died in January 2022 while serving a life sentence in California.) Ten years ago: During his first full day as pontiff, Pope Francis stopped by his Vatican hotel to pick up his luggage and pay the bill himself. Some 10,000 workers from across the European Union protested outside a summit of EU leaders in Brussels, demanding they end years of austerity and focus instead on curbing runaway unemployment with more spending. A nearly 19-hour standoff in Herkimer, New York, came to an end inside a cluttered, abandoned bar as police SWAT teams killed the suspect in four fatal shootings. The NHL's realignment plan was approved by the league's board of governors.

Five years ago: Tens of thousands of students across the country walked out of their classrooms to demand action on gun violence and school safety; the action came a month after the shooting that killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Stephen Hawking, the best-known theoretical physicist of his time, died at his home in Cambridge, England, at the age of 76; he had stunned doctors by living with the normally fatal illness ALS for more than 50 years. President Donald Trump chose Larry Kudlow, a longtime fixture on the CNBC business news network, to be his top economic aide.

One year ago: Russia and Ukraine opened a new round of talks even as Moscow's forces pounded away at Kyiv and other cities across the country in a punishing bombardment the Red Cross says has created "nothing short of a nightmare" for civilians. Leon Scharzbaum, a survivor of the Nazis' death camp at Auschwitz and a lifelong fighter for justice for the victims of the Holocaust, died at 101. Country music legend Dolly Parton announced she was pulling out of the nominations for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, saying she hadn't "earned that right." (She would later reverse course and accept induction into the hall.)

Today's Birthdays: Former astronaut Frank Borman is 95. Actor Michael Caine is 90. Composer-conductor Quincy Jones is 90. Actor Raymond J. Barry is 84. Country singer Michael Martin Murphey is 78. Rock musician Walt Parazaider (payr-ah-ZAY'-dur) (formerly with Chicago) is 78. Actor Steve Kanaly is 77. Comedian Billy Crystal is 75. Actor-writer-comedian-radio personality Rick Dees is 72. Country singer Jann Browne is 69. Actor Adrian Zmed is 69. Prince Albert II, the ruler of Monaco, is 65. Actor Laila Robins is 64. Actor Tamara Tunie (tuh-MAH'-ruh TOO'-nee) is 64. Producer-director-writer Kevin Williamson is 58. Actor Elise Neal is 57. Actor Gary Anthony Williams is 57. Actor Megan Follows is 55. Rock musician Michael Bland is 54. Country singer Kristian Bush is 53. Actor Betsy Brandt is 50. Actor Grace Park is 49. Actor Daniel Gillies is 47. Actor Corey Stoll is 47. Actor Jake Fogelneist is 44. Actor Chris Klein is 44. Actor Ryan Cartwright (TV: "Kevin Can Wait") is 42. Actor Kate Maberly is 41. Singer-musician Taylor Hanson (Hanson) is 40. Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, is 39. Actor Jamie Bell is 37. Rock musician Este Haim (HY'-uhm) (Haim) is 37. NBA star Stephen Curry is 35. Actor Ansel Elgort is 29. Olympic gold medal gymnast Simone Biles is 26. Actor James Freedson-Jackson (Film: "The Strange Ones") is 21.