

Groton Daily Independent

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Coming up

Saturday, Nov. 11

- Girls JH Jamboree at Roscoe
- Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
- Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.

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



**2024 DOG LICENSES DUE BY
12/29/2023**

Fines start January 1, 2024



Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog
Proof of rabies shot information is RE-REQUIRED!!

Email proof to city.
kellie@nvc.net, fax to
(605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!!
Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

World in Brief

Ghost Guns: A federal appeals court has ruled the Biden administration lacked authority for its 2022 regulation on "ghost guns," supporting gun owners and manufacturers who deemed it "unlawful."

Xi in California: President Biden and China's President Xi Jinping are set to meet in California on Wednesday aiming to stabilize relations amid increasing competition between the two nations, according to the Biden administration.

Trump's Trials: Donald Trump's \$250 million civil fraud case in New York faces complications as a prior lawsuit involving a Marvel Entertainment CEO adds complexity to allegations of misleading property valuations in his ongoing trial.

Philippine Feud: Chinese vessels "recklessly harassed" Philippine Coast Guard boats, risking collision, as they attempted to resupply a South China Sea outpost, with one ship firing a water cannon, the Philippines said Friday.

Fetterman Backlash: Senator John Fetterman was booed by veterans supporting an Israel-Hamas cease-fire outside the U.S. Capitol following recent backlash for his pro-Israel stance amid the conflict.

War in Ukraine: Ukraine's military showcased the destruction of a Russian rocket system using a U.S.-made HIMARS in a video posted on its social media, highlighting the effectiveness of these weapons supplied by the U.S. since the start of the invasion.

War in Gaza: Israel's decision to allow for four-hour humanitarian pauses daily to allow aid into Gaza and for civilians to leave has been described as "very cynical and cruel" by the U.N. special rapporteur on the Palestinian territories.

Trump Denied: Federal Judge Aileen Cannon has rejected Donald Trump's request to postpone the trial date for the classified documents case in Florida, with the possibility of reconsideration during a scheduling conference scheduled for March 1.

GHS Interns Series

Profeta interns at Rosewood Court

by Dorene Nelson

Kate Profeta, a senior at Groton Area High School, is interning at Rosewood Court, an independent senior living facility. "I like to visit with the residents and help them with some basic daily tasks," Profeta explained.

"I participate in dance and work here at Rosewood," she listed. "It is not just an internship for me since it is also my part-time job."

"My work here and the great experience I have had helped me decide on my future," Profeta admitted. "I plan to attend Lake Area Technical College in Wauertown to become a medical assistant."

"I have always enjoyed working with and helping others, so this job convinced me that I was making the right decision about my future plans," she stated. "Becoming a medical assistant is a two-year program."

"I have worked here for three years as my summer job so I feel comfortable with my decision about becoming a medical assistant," Profeta smiled. "Some days this job is easier than other days when a resident is unhappy or confused."

"Knowing what to say and understand what they need or want is really the only hard part of this job," she admitted. "Some of the residents have no family left to visit them so I try to fill that need."

"The best part of working here is interacting with the residents, talking to them, and cheering them up when they're sad," Profeta explained.

Kate is the daughter of Sherri Profeta.



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ALL OVER ROOFING

RAISING THE ROOFING STANDARDS,
ALL OVER YOUR TOWN!
FREE HAIL STORM ESTIMATES!

605.759.0000
1205 6TH AVE SW SUITE 2, ABERDEEN, SD 57401



Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen and Talent Contest on Sunday, November 26th at 4:00pm. The Groton Chamber voted to gift Snow Queen \$100 in Chamber Bucks for the winner of the Mystery Frosty competition.



2023 Frosty Clues

I....

11.) Have worked at a newspaper
and as a janitor before

Groton Post No. 39 American Legion

Annual Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



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Groton Area Veteran's Day Program



Bruce Babcock and Steve Dresbach presented the colors at the Groton Area School Veteran's Day Program. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Faith Flihs and Emma Schinkel were the Masters of Ceremony at the program. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Laila Roberts gave the introductory remarks for the Honor Quilts for Viet Nam Veterans. She mentioned that the quilts were made by Karen Wolter. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Members of the All State Chorus sang the "Star Spangled Banner," directed by Amy Warrington. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The Middle School Band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, played, "This is My Country."

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



The High School Band, under the direction of Amy Warrington, sang, "We Honor You."

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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This is the group of Junior Kindergarten through third grade directed by Amy Warrington. The JK/kindergarten and first grade sang, "America! Land of the Free" and the second and third grade sang, "I'm a Grand Old Flag w/ I Love that Grand Old Flag." (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The Middle School Choir, under the direction of Amy Warrington, sang, "Oh Thee I Sing." (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The fourth and fifth grade group, under the direction of Amy Warrington, sang, "We Remember." (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jayden Schwan played "Taps" at the end of the program. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM Video)

The Veteran's Day Program was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The video is archived under "Other Events."

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This quilt was presented to Steve Dresbach. His story was read by Faith Traphagen. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



This quilt was presented to the sister of Lori Oliver, Valerie. Lori's story was read by Elizabeth Fliehs. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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This quilt was presented to Roger Overacker. His story was read by Emily Overacker. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



This quilt was presented to Richard Taylor. His story was read by Cadence Feist. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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This quilt was presented to Neil Wagner. His story was read by Gretchen Dinger. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The High School Band played the "Service Songs," under the direction of Desiree Yeigh.
(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM Video)

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NSU Volleyball

Northern State Secures the Postseason Following Friday Victory

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University volleyball team moved into fifth in the NSIC standings following a 4-set victory over Minnesota State Friday evening. The win solidifies their place in the NSIC postseason with one game remaining in the regular season tomorrow. In addition, NSU avenged a loss to the Mavericks suffered earlier this season.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, MSU 1

Records: NSU 18-8 (10-7 NSIC), MSU 13-12 (8-9 NSIC)

Attendance: 521

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves opened the match with a 25-23 victory before falling 25-22 in the second set

Northern then rattled off 25-22 and 25-21 wins to seal their tenth league victory of the season

NSU hit a match leading .221 and led the teams with 88 digs, 54 assists, nine blocks, and eight aces

They added 56 kills to the Mavericks 58 and held Minnesota State to a .188 attack percentage

Four Wolves notched double figure kills in the balanced offensive attack led by Hanna Thompson and Natalia Szybinska with 14 apiece

Keri Walker was dealing, dishing out 51 total assists, averaging 12.75 per set with an added 14 digs and three blocks

Abby Meister hit all ends of the floor racking up 30 digs and a team leading three aces; she averaged 7.5 digs per set

Both Reese Johnson and Sara Moberg had stellar evenings for NSU adding 15 and 12 digs respectively

Finally, Eliza Bauers led the team in offensive efficiency hitting .375 with seven kills and a team leading six blocks

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Natalia Szybinska: 14 kills, 3 blocks

Hanna Thompson: 14 kills, 2 blocks

Morissen Samuels: 10 kills, 4 digs

Abby Brooks: 10 kills, 3 blocks

Keri Walker: 51 assists, 14 digs, 3 blocks

Abby Meister: 30 digs, 3 aces

UP NEXT

Northern will face No. 14 Minnesota Duluth in the regular season finale today. First serve is set for 2 p.m. from Wachs Arena.

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NSU Men's Basketball

No. 21 Wolves Unable to Blank No. 1 Bearcats to Kick-off 2023-24

St. Joseph, Mo. – The No. 21 Northern State University men's basketball rallied back in the second half of their 2023-24 season opener, however came up short versus No. 1 Northwest Missouri State. Efficiency was the key in the contest as the Bearcats shot 44.2% from the floor to the Wolves 34.0% and gave up just five turnovers to the Wolves 13.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 47, NWMSU 65

Records: NSU 0-1, NWMSU 1-0

Attendance: N/A

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern tallied 20 points in the first and 27 points in the second, shooting a game high 36.4% from the floor in the final 20 minutes

The Wolves tallied 31 rebounds, six assists, six made 3-pointers, three steals, and two blocks in the loss

They scored 11 second chance points off ten offensive boards, as well as nine points off the bench, eight points in the paint, and five points off turnovers

The Bearcats capitalized off the Wolves mistakes, scoring 15 points off turnovers

NSU shot 34.0% from the floor, 26.1% from the 3-point line, and 52.9% from the free throw line in the game

Jackson Moni and Josh Dilling scored in double figures, notching 20 and 11 points respectively, while Dilling pulled down a team leading seven boards

Kobe Busch led NSU off the bench with six points, six rebounds, and one steal, while Trey Longstreet dished out a team leading four assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Jackson Moni: 20 points, 2 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal

Josh Dilling: 11 points, 7 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal

UP NEXT

Northern returns to action today from St. Joe, facing off against the host Missouri Western State. Tip-off time is set for 5:30 p.m. between the Wolves and Griffons.

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NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Drop Season Opener Against No.10 Central Missouri

Claremore, Okla. – The Northern State women's basketball team fell to No. 10 Central Missouri in the season opener, 71-55 Friday afternoon. The Wolves matched the Jennies in the third quarter with 18 points; however, the early lead by the Jennies kept the win out of reach for the Wolves.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 55, UCM 71

Records: NSU 0-1, UCM 1-0

Attendance: 256

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State tallied 12 points in the first quarter, 14 in the second, 18 in the third, and 11 in the fourth, while No. 10 Central Missouri recorded 17 in the first quarter, 13 in the second, 18 in the third, and 23 in the fourth

NSU notched 34 points in the paint, five points off the bench, 17 points off turnovers, and four second-chance points

The Wolves shot well in the contest, notching marks of 44.2% from the floor, 21.4% from the 3-point line, and 60.0% from the foul line

In addition, Northern tallied 29 rebounds, 14 assists, eight steals, and one block

Madelyn Bragg led the Wolves offense scoring a career high 19 points total, hitting 9-of-14 from the floor
Bragg and Rianna Fillipi recorded six rebound each, while Brynn Alfson notched five

NORTHERN STATE STATSTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 19 points, 64.3 FG%, 6 rebounds, 2 assists

Rianna Fillipi: 13 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists, 3 steals

Alayna Benike: 9 points, 75.0 FT%, 3 assists

UP NEXT

The Northern State women return to action today, November 11 from Claremore, Oklahoma to face-off against Rogers State. Tip-off is set for 4 p.m. on Saturday against the Hillcats.

We the People

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



Justice Van Devanter of Wyoming: A "Mainstay" on the Court

The odds were against Willis Van Devanter ever winning an appointment to the Supreme Court. Widespread talk that he suffered from "pen paralysis," an affliction that subverted his production, made President William Howard Taft "hesitant" to nominate the Wyoming transplant to fill a vacancy on the nation's High Court.

By David Adler

Various factors, however, convinced President Taft to overcome his reluctance. In 1911, he named Van Devanter to the Court, where he served for 26 years. Geographic considerations persuaded Taft that he needed to add a Westerner to the Court, which lacked representation from anyone west of the Mississippi. Van Devanter boasted solid conservative credentials and an impressive record of public service, including a stint as Chief Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court. Plus, he had been a judge for eight years on the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. Most of all, there were the unrelenting efforts of Wyoming's beloved U.S. Senator Francis Warren to promote the Equality State and elevate his good friend into a seat at the Judicial Palace.

President Taft, who had held a variety of offices in his lengthy career, including the Chief Justiceship of the U.S. Supreme Court, expressed admiration for Van Devanter's track record. Van Devanter was the model for those who believed then, and believe now, that a Supreme Court Justice ought to possess experience beyond the law school classroom, the professoriate and the bench. In a word, he was steeped in governmental experience and presented a breadth of public service rare for a Justice, at any time in our history.

Van Devanter served in all three branches of government and held various local government offices. Born and raised in Marion, Indiana, he attended law school at the University of Cincinnati. In 1884, he moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory, wisely taking advantage of the opportunities created by his brother-in-law's (John Lacey) appointment as Chief Justice of the territory. Van Devanter's pursuit of legal and political prominence was in full sprint. He established himself as a loyal Republican and earned a reputation as a first-rate lawyer, representing railroads and the cattle industry. He became a close friend and indispensable aide to Francis Warren who, as Wyoming's Governor and later U.S. Senator, relied on Van Devanter's advice and organizational skills. Van Devanter served in the territorial legislature and revised the territory's statutes. On October 11, 1890, months after Wyoming achieved statehood, Van Devanter became the first Chief Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court, although he resigned a year later to return to private practice.

Van Devanter continued to expand his resume. An avid outdoorsman who had once hunted with Buffalo Bill Cody, he was in 1897 appointed assistant attorney general in the Department of Interior, where he handled federal land claims and tribal matters. He taught law classes at George Washington University and was appointed by President William McKinley to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, where he served until appointed by President Taft to the Supreme Court.

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Taft's concerns about Van Devanter's paralysis of the pen, demonstrated by his low productivity on the 8th Circuit, caused the President, at one point, to withdraw his name from consideration for a nomination to the Court. But Senator Warren's frantic maneuvers, aided by Van Devanter's concession that he was behind in his work—a deficit, he pleaded, that was the result of his own illness and that of his wife—persuaded Taft to proceed. But Taft's worries were confirmed by Justice Van Devanter's low production on the Court. Van Devanter was described by colleagues as meticulous and devoted to detail in his analyses at the Court's weekly conferences, and admired for his insightful questions at oral argument, but writing proved extremely difficult for him.

Taft and Van Devanter became close friends. Van Devanter's colleagues valued him, despite his low output, which illustrates how a Justice can play an important role in the work of Court, countering a poor public reputation. Chief Justice Hughes said of Van Devanter, "his careful and elaborate statements at conference were of greatest value. If these statements had been taken down stenographically, they would have served with little editing as excellent opinions. His perspicacity and common sense made him a trusted advisor in all sorts of matters." As Chief Justice, Taft once referred to Van Devanter as his "mainstay" on the Court.

Van Devanter was the first of a group of Court appointees who became known as the Four Horsemen, along with George Sutherland, Pierce Butler, and James McReynolds. He was viewed by scholars, eventually, as the dominant, behind-the-scenes spokesman for the anti-New Deal bloc of Justices who thwarted President Franklin D. Roosevelt's ambitious legislative programs to lift the country from the depths of the Great Depression. Justice Van Devanter was unwilling to adjust the Constitution to crises of the times, although his defenders applauded his hostility to economic regulation of private enterprise.

At the end of the 1937 Term, Van Devanter, 78 years old and exhausted by the Court's internal strife and public criticism, announced his resignation from the High Bench. He assumed senior status and spent his final days in New York, overseeing criminal trials.

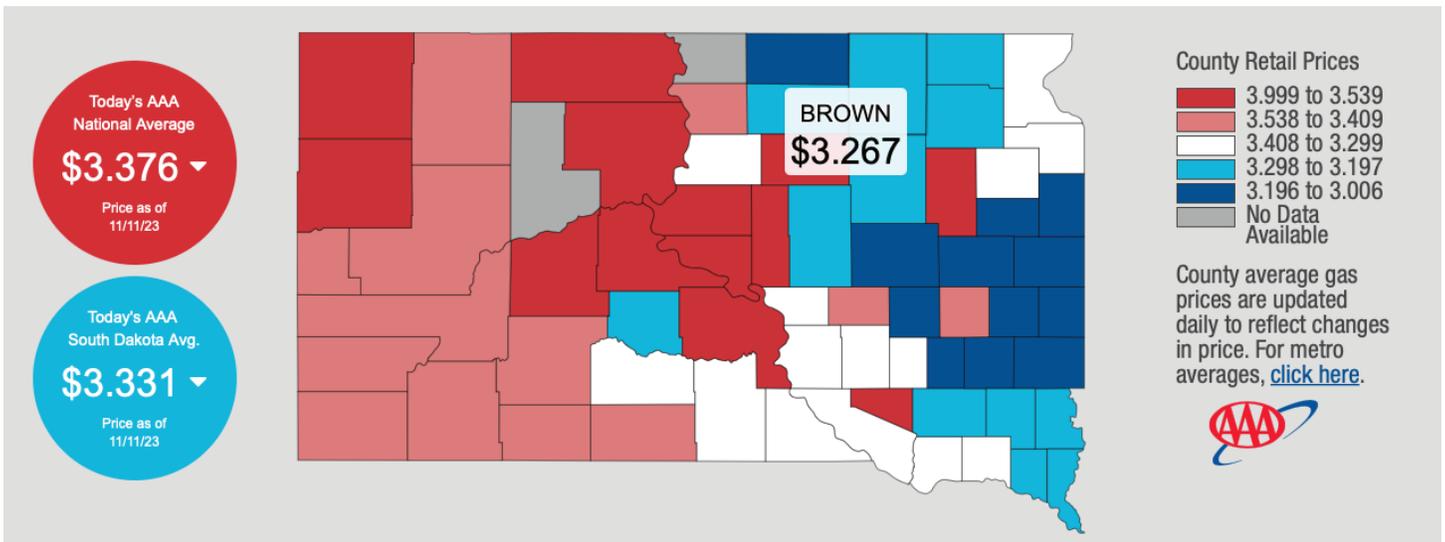
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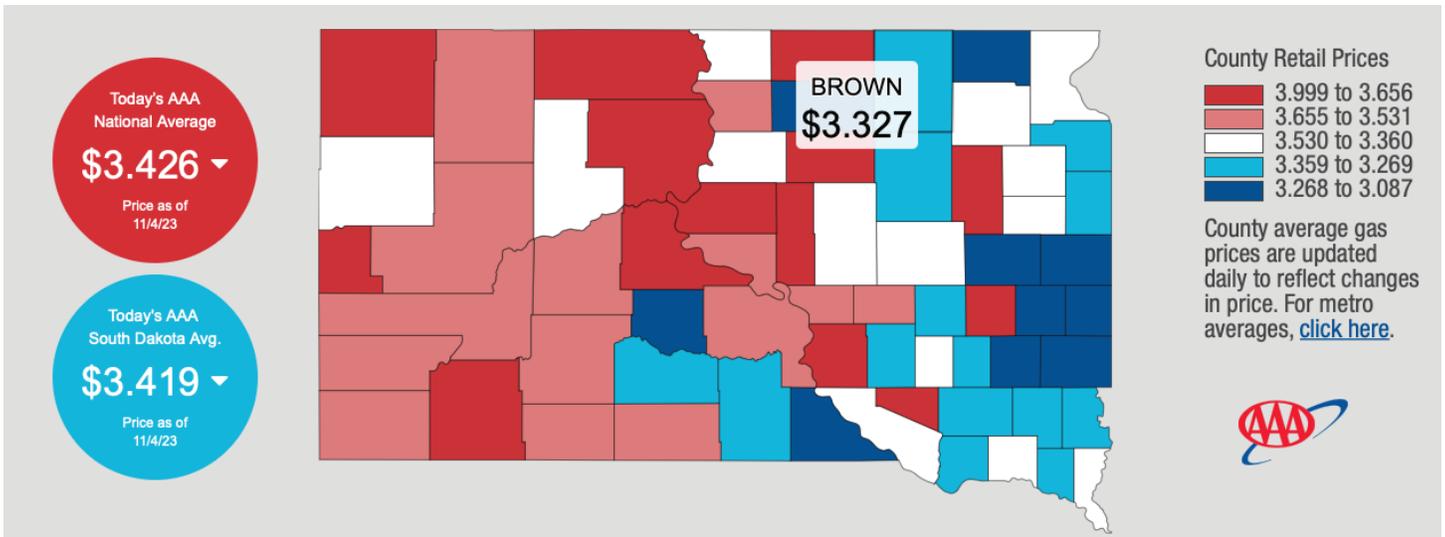
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.331	\$3.481	\$4.011	\$4.269
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.341	\$3.496	\$4.000	\$4.279
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.419	\$3.585	\$4.066	\$4.417
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.660	\$3.864	\$4.332	\$4.362
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.644	\$3.824	\$4.335	\$5.153

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Drought Classification

None

D0 (Abnormally Dry)

D1 (Moderate Drought)

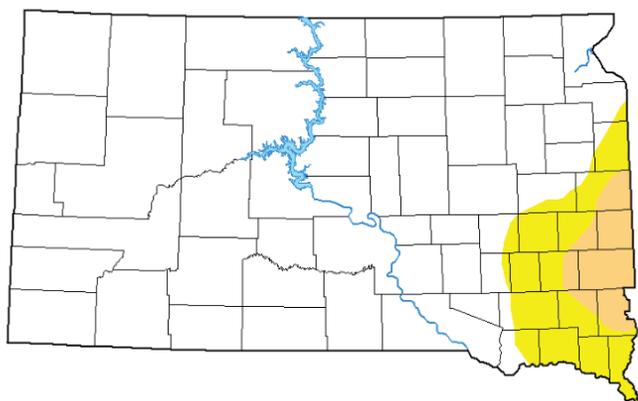
D2 (Severe Drought)

D3 (Extreme Drought)

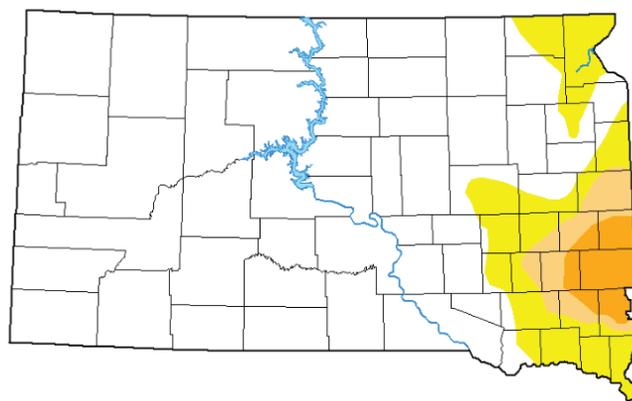
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

No Data

Drought Monitor



November 7



October 31

Dry conditions persisted across the High Plains where temperatures are above normal, with Wyoming and Colorado seeing temperatures of 3-8 degrees above normal. The eastern boundary experienced near- or slightly-above-normal temperatures, except for North Dakota where temperatures were 3 or more degrees below normal. South Dakota and northeastern Nebraska continued to see improvements as remnants of the past week's precipitation aid in dry conditions. There were 1-category improvements along the eastern South Dakota and northeastern Nebraska borders. Areas in South Dakota are so wet that producers have reported issues with planting winter crops.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Critics allege CO2 pipelines 'farm the government' for climate money while helping oil industry

Summit says project isn't for oil recovery but acknowledges 'another carrier' could use it

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 10, 2023 5:00 PM

Plans to capture carbon dioxide emitted by ethanol plants, ship it via pipelines and store it underground are viewed by some as a way to fight climate change.

The process is one way to keep carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, where it acts as a heat-trapping greenhouse gas.

But critics say the process known as carbon capture and sequestration could also aid oil production.

In a process called enhanced oil recovery, CO2 can be injected into aging oil wells to make it less thick, help it flow better, and cause the oil to expand toward wells.

Silvia Secchi, an environmental impacts researcher and professor at the University of Iowa, said oil extraction runs contrary to the goals of carbon sequestration, and to the goals of federal tax credits for sequestration projects. Those credits — up to \$85 per metric ton of annual sequestered carbon — are supposed to motivate companies to help mitigate climate change.

"These people farm the government," Secchi said. "They don't care about climate change."

That's a belief shared by the lawyer representing over 1,000 landowners in four states who are opposed to carbon pipeline projects using eminent domain — the power to access private property for public use, provided the owner is given just compensation.

"Their climate change mask is being removed," said the Omaha-based lawyer, Brian Jorde. "Do you honestly believe the majority of that CO2 will not be used for enhanced oil recovery? This is all the biggest joke on the taxpayer."

Both of the multi-state carbon pipeline proposals that include South Dakota have had their permit applications rejected by state regulators, due in part to landowner opposition. One company, Navigator CO2, has since withdrawn its proposal. The other company, Summit Carbon Solutions, plans to adjust its route and reapply.

Summit plans and possibilities

Summit's pipeline could permanently store up to 18 million tons of carbon dioxide annually; at \$85 per ton, that would equal \$1.5 billion per year from the sequestration tax credit. The pipeline would capture carbon dioxide emitted from more than 30 ethanol plants in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska and transport it for sequestration in North Dakota.

In August, North Dakota's Department of Mineral Resources said more CO2 will be needed to sustain oil production in the state for the long term.

However, Summit says its project will not be used for enhanced oil recovery.

"The permits we have filed, which specifies exactly what we are requesting from regulators, note clearly that our project is about the permanent sequestration of CO2," the company's website reads. "Additionally, Summit Carbon Solutions' sequestration site outside of Bismarck, North Dakota, is entirely separate and apart from the Bakken or other areas where enhanced oil recovery is possible."

Yet project maps show the sequestration area is near the oilfields of western North Dakota.

During a September permit hearing in Iowa, Jimmy Powell, Summit's chief operations officer, left open the

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possibility that CO2 transported in the pipeline to North Dakota could be used to extract oil in the future. "If another carrier decided to use, or ask us to transport CO2 for another purpose, like enhanced oil recovery, then that's a possibility," Powell said.

Powell also said the project is "maintaining 10% of the capacity of the pipeline for other shippers." He said that's something the project is doing as a "common carrier."

A common carrier, as defined by federal law, is to be available for hire, at a rate deemed reasonable, by any company that needs to move commodities the pipeline ships. Additionally, the pipeline is to provide service on a non-discriminatory basis.

Being defined as a common carrier is an important designation because it is required for the project to use eminent domain, which Summit needs to complete the project. The company filed eminent domain actions against dozens of landowners earlier this year but withdrew them, at least temporarily, after the company's permit application was denied. The company says it has voluntary access agreements called easements with nearly 75% of the project's affected landowners.

Summit is a member of the Renewable Fuels Association. In response to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2020 call for input on increasing agricultural production, the association submitted a letter that addressed ways the renewable fuels industry works to reduce carbon emissions, including carbon capture and sequestration.

"These technologies include using the carbon dioxide emissions to extract other forms of energy from the ground, such as through enhanced oil recovery," the letter said. It continued, "only a handful of plants are capable of supplying carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery efforts given their location with respect to EOR [enhanced oil recovery] activity."

Summit's ties to the oil industry include a \$250 million project commitment last year from Continental Resources, a petroleum and natural gas exploration and production company.

Jason Hill, a bioenergy professor and researcher at the University of Minnesota, said people should understand that while ethanol producers once had to fight to get their product sold at gas stations against the interests of the oil industry, things have changed since electric vehicles hit the market.

"Petroleum and ethanol now have the same interest, and it's liquid fuels," Hill said.

A bridge to electric, or to ethanol

Silvia Secchi said biofuels producers once branded themselves as "a bridge to electric vehicles," but behind the scenes, the industry has been lobbying to ensure a future for liquid fuels, "making that bridge as long as possible."

Hill said the destination of the "bridge" has also changed: "What ethanol is, is a bridge to more ethanol."

Poet, a Sioux Falls-based ethanol producer, said liquid fuels and internal combustion engines will be necessary for the foreseeable future.

"There's a multitude of opinions around the growth of electric vehicles, but over time the world will need more low-carbon biofuels for sustainable aviation fuel, heavy trucking and other hard-to-decarbonize transportation sectors," Poet said in a written statement.

Poet was a partner in the Navigator CO2 pipeline project.

During the regulatory hearing in South Dakota on the Navigator proposal, lawyers for that company brought in Michael Harrison, vice president of commercial operations for Valero Renewable Fuels Company. That's a biofuel subdivision of Valero, a company that operates 15 oil refineries and describes itself as the world's largest independent refiner.

Harrison explained that electric vehicles are "a much bigger threat than ethanol to us."

He added that "California is hostile to all liquid fuels." California, the country's largest auto market, has approved a plan to phase out new gas cars by 2035. Additionally, the Biden administration has a goal of all newly manufactured light-duty vehicles being electric by 2027 and all vehicles by 2035. And General Motors announced it would phase out gas-powered vehicles by 2035.

Harrison said liquid fuel producers can use carbon capture and sequestration to lower the carbon emis-

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sions score of biofuel-blended gas, so it can be sold in places with strict emissions standards – keeping liquid fuels in those markets longer.

“That’s why it’s necessary for us to get the sequestration done, so we can compete on the world market,” he said.

Securing a future for ethanol

Sabrina Zenor, a spokeswoman for Summit, told South Dakota Searchlight during the company’s September hearing with state regulators – which failed to result in a permit – that ethanol could make up for lost demand from electric vehicles with bio-aviation fuel, which could be produced at a proposed Gevo plant in Lake Preston.

The Gevo plant, if constructed, would buy ethanol from regional ethanol plants and use that to create bio-aviation fuel, giving ethanol another market, she explained.

Gevo recently issued a press release saying that without a carbon sequestration pipeline in South Dakota, the company may seek opportunities in states that are more open to those projects.

“Let me be clear, Gevo does not want to leave South Dakota. We have a strong commitment to the state, our investments in Lake Preston, and to the local producers. We are just here to state the facts,” said CEO Patrick Gruber in the release.

The release went on to say carbon sequestration would boost demand for corn, create new jobs, help ensure a future for ethanol, and turn the Midwest into America’s hub for bio-aviation fuel.

During Summit’s September permit hearing, Zenor told South Dakota Searchlight the project is less about climate change and more about supporting the ethanol industry – a view that was echoed by Summit’s Jimmy Powell during the Iowa hearing.

“The purpose is to help the ethanol plant partners that we have contracted with, to capture their CO2 before it is emitted, transport it to North Dakota and sequester it subsurface, which will allow them to significantly reduce their carbon intensity, which will then give them access to low carbon fuel markets,” Powell said. “Hopefully sustain the livelihood of their businesses and the demand for corn.”

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

New bills raise debate over ethanol’s environmental impact, with implications for the climate

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 10, 2023 4:58 PM

South Dakota’s congressional delegation wants the federal government to measure the environmental impact of biofuels in a way that some researchers say is unlikely to help mitigate climate change.

Sen. John Thune and Rep. Dusty Johnson, both Republicans, recently reintroduced similar bipartisan bills in the Senate and House, with Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, cosponsoring the Senate legislation. The bills would require the Environmental Protection Agency to prioritize a particular model for assessing the environmental impact of biofuels.

“We should be using the best science available and that’s exactly what this bill does,” Johnson said in a press release.

The delegation wants the EPA to make the Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Transportation model — or GREET — the primary model for determining biofuel’s impact on the climate. That information would then be used by the EPA to help determine the volume of biofuels mandated to be mixed into the nation’s fuel supply, which is called the renewable fuel standard.

The model was developed by Argonne National Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy and is already one of the models used to help inform the EPA’s renewable fuel standard.

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The bill's supporters say biofuels are good for the environment.

"It's past time for the EPA to update its greenhouse gas modeling for all biofuels, which would more accurately reflect the emissions reductions achieved by ethanol, biodiesel, and sustainable aviation fuel," Thune said in a press release.

Biofuels industry leaders also support prioritizing the GREET model.

"It is a well-established and well-understood model that is regularly updated through a consensus, peer-reviewed approach," said a statement from Erin Branick, of South Dakota-based Poet, the world's largest biofuel producer. "The model is based solely on nonpartisan scientific analysis."

The legislation is also supported by Gevo (a would-be South Dakota bio-aviation fuel producer), the National Corn Growers Association, the American Coalition for Ethanol, the Renewable Fuels Association and the National Oilseed Processors Association.

Other models

Meanwhile, Jason Hill, a bioenergy professor and researcher at the University of Minnesota, emphasized the need to use multiple models, "which is what the EPA is currently doing," rather than relying primarily on the GREET model.

"That model doesn't account for things like the economic repercussions of certain policies," he said. "For example, how more fuel production lowers fuel prices, and people then use more fuel."

The bills say that within 90 days of their passage, and then every five years, the EPA would be required to adopt the latest version of the GREET model.

The agency currently relies on several models to gauge the impacts of biofuels to determine the renewable fuel standard. Models include FASOM, which simulates biofuel policy impacts on agriculture; CARD, which examines biofuel policies' effects on agricultural markets; the EPA's MOVES model, which predicts emissions from mobile sources; and other land-use models that help evaluate biofuel production's impact on land changes.

Silvia Secchi, an environmental impacts researcher and professor at the University of Iowa, said the GREET model overlooks the climate implications of crop production, particularly concerning land-use changes like converting grasslands to cropland to produce more corn and soybeans for biofuels.

Branick, of Poet, pushed back on that assertion.

"Land use change is often overestimated by some with an agenda," Branick said. "The total acreage of land devoted to corn agriculture has remained unchanged for nearly a century, and to claim that bioethanol production increases land-use change is simply disconnected from reality."

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Agriculture show corn acreage has risen steadily since the 1990s, from roughly 70 million acres to more than 90 million acres nationally, and from about 3 million acres to more than 6 million acres in South Dakota. Corn is the most widely grown crop in South Dakota, and most of it is sent to ethanol plants.

Hill recently co-authored a study examining farmers' profits and the health and environmental costs of growing corn in the Midwest, where about 20% of the world's corn is grown. It found that the health and environmental costs — like ammonia inhalation and water pollution — of current management practices are \$25.6 billion per year, exceeding farmer profits, which averaged \$4.3 billion per year from 2013 to 2022. Ammonia inhalation is related to ammonia-based fertilizers, which can also be washed during a rainfall event into wetlands, creeks and rivers.

CO2 pipelines

Under the renewable fuel standard, fuels are evaluated using "carbon intensity" (CI) metrics, and GREET helps determine a biofuel's CI score. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change by trapping heat in the atmosphere.

To improve the CI score of ethanol, projects worth billions aim to build pipelines to trap carbon dioxide emissions from ethanol plants. The projects are eligible for tax credits from the federal government that

are intended to incentivize underground carbon storage, known as sequestration.

Two such proposals in South Dakota have had their permits rejected by regulators due in part to land-owner opposition, but one of the pipeline projects plans to reapply after adjusting its route.

Hill said carbon from the pipelines could also be used for enhanced oil recovery, promoting fossil fuel use. Carbon dioxide can be injected into aging oil wells, where it mixes with the oil underground, makes it less thick and helps it flow better. It also causes the oil to expand, pushing it toward the wells where it can be collected.

Hill said the federal tax credits for carbon sequestration could end up incentivizing more oil production if the GREET model becomes the "gold standard."

"The model they want would give the projects tax credits for the CO2 being pumped underground, but overlook the environmental consequences of extracting more oil," Hill said. He said any honest CI score would take that variable into account.

The remaining company proposing a carbon pipeline in South Dakota, Summit Carbon Solutions, says its project will not be used for oil recovery. But a company executive acknowledged during a regulatory hearing that the pipeline would be a common carrier, which means it could be used by other companies interested in transporting CO2 for oil recovery. Maps show the project's sequestration site is near the oilfields of western North Dakota.

The Renewable Fuels Association has acknowledged that some carbon capture projects, due to their proximity to oil fields, could supply CO2 for enhanced oil recovery.

Neither the Senate nor the House bill requiring the EPA to prioritize the GREET model has had a committee hearing.

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

Less rain results in a cleaner Big Sioux River, report says

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 10, 2023 4:45 PM

SIoux FALLS — Less precipitation means less pollution is running into the Big Sioux River, according to a 2023 water quality report.

"We had a significantly less amount of rain than 2022, and that has resulted in better numbers," said Rachel Kloos, with Friends of the Big Sioux River.

The organization shared the report Wednesday with a crowd of about 50 at Augustana University. The Big Sioux River watershed, spanning eastern South Dakota, northwestern Iowa and southwestern Minnesota, drains approximately 5,300 square miles in South Dakota and an additional 3,000 square miles in Minnesota and Iowa. The Big Sioux River is the watershed's primary watercourse, running from northeastern South Dakota to Sioux City.

The report says May-to-September rainfall in Sioux Falls dropped from 17.47 inches in 2022 to 9.03 inches this year.

"You can see a pretty strong correlation between the amount of rainfall and water quality," Friends of the Big Sioux River's Emily Oyos said. "A very direct correlation."

Otherwise, the results reveal many of the same problems as past years, according to the group's managing director, Travis Entenman. That means spikes in E. Coli levels after rainfall, dirtier samples toward the river's southern reaches, and a continued gradual rise in nitrate levels.

To help with the E. Coli problem, the group advocates for the increased use of riparian buffers, which are grassland areas along the river and connected creeks that help filter polluted runoff before it reaches the water.

The report shows the quality of water in the Big Sioux River deteriorates as it flows southward. Monitoring sites at Newton Hills and Akron, Iowa, report higher levels of sediment and nitrates. The variation highlights

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how upstream activities can impact downstream communities and ecosystems, according to Entenman. Although nitrate levels — largely attributed to fertilizers — in the Big Sioux River watershed are increasing, they remain within safe limits on average.

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

Veterans' health care coverage expanded by Biden administration

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - NOVEMBER 10, 2023 6:15 AM

Ahead of Veterans Day, Biden administration officials said Friday the Department of Veterans Affairs will expand health care coverage for certain groups of veterans and their families and create new programs meant to make care more accessible.

The VA will make coverage of certain toxic burn pit-related conditions available sooner than anticipated. Family members of veterans who served at North Carolina's Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune from 1953-1987 will be eligible to have the costs of treating Parkinson's disease. And all World War II veterans will be eligible for no-cost health care, including at nursing homes, the department said in a series of news releases.

The administration will also create a new graduate medical education program to help expand health care availability for veterans in rural, tribal and other underserved communities, the department said. And the VA will spend \$5 million on an advertising campaign aimed at having more veterans sign up for services.

"As we head into Veterans Day, we're reminded of the fundamental promise that our country makes to anyone who signs up to serve in the military: If you fight for us, we'll fight for you," Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Tanya Bradsher told reporters on a Thursday call in advance of the announcements.

The administration announced five changes meant to expand veterans' benefits.

The VA will speed up coverage for burn pit exposure that was part of a bipartisan law passed last year.

The law, which provides health care benefits to veterans exposed to toxic chemicals from burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan and certain other veterans, was written to be phased in over no more than 10 years.

But President Joe Biden is directing the VA to make all affected veterans eligible for expanded benefits by early next year, according to a White House fact sheet.

The Camp Lejeune Family Member Program will be expanded to cover Parkinson's disease. The program, which covers a host of conditions related to the contaminated drinking water at the base, did not previously include Parkinson's.

Veterans of World War II who served anytime from Dec. 7, 1941, to the end of 1946, are entitled to no-cost VA health care, meaning no co-pays or monthly premiums, the department said. That includes care at nursing homes.

To expand availability, the department is also creating a pilot program to reimburse residents and residency programs, including those outside of VA facilities, that serve veteran patients. The program would fund 100 physicians in rural, tribal and underserved communities, according to a VA news release.

And to encourage veterans to take advantage of their benefits, the department is planning a national advertising campaign focused on "some of the most tangible, cost-saving benefits" veterans are entitled to, according to the VA.

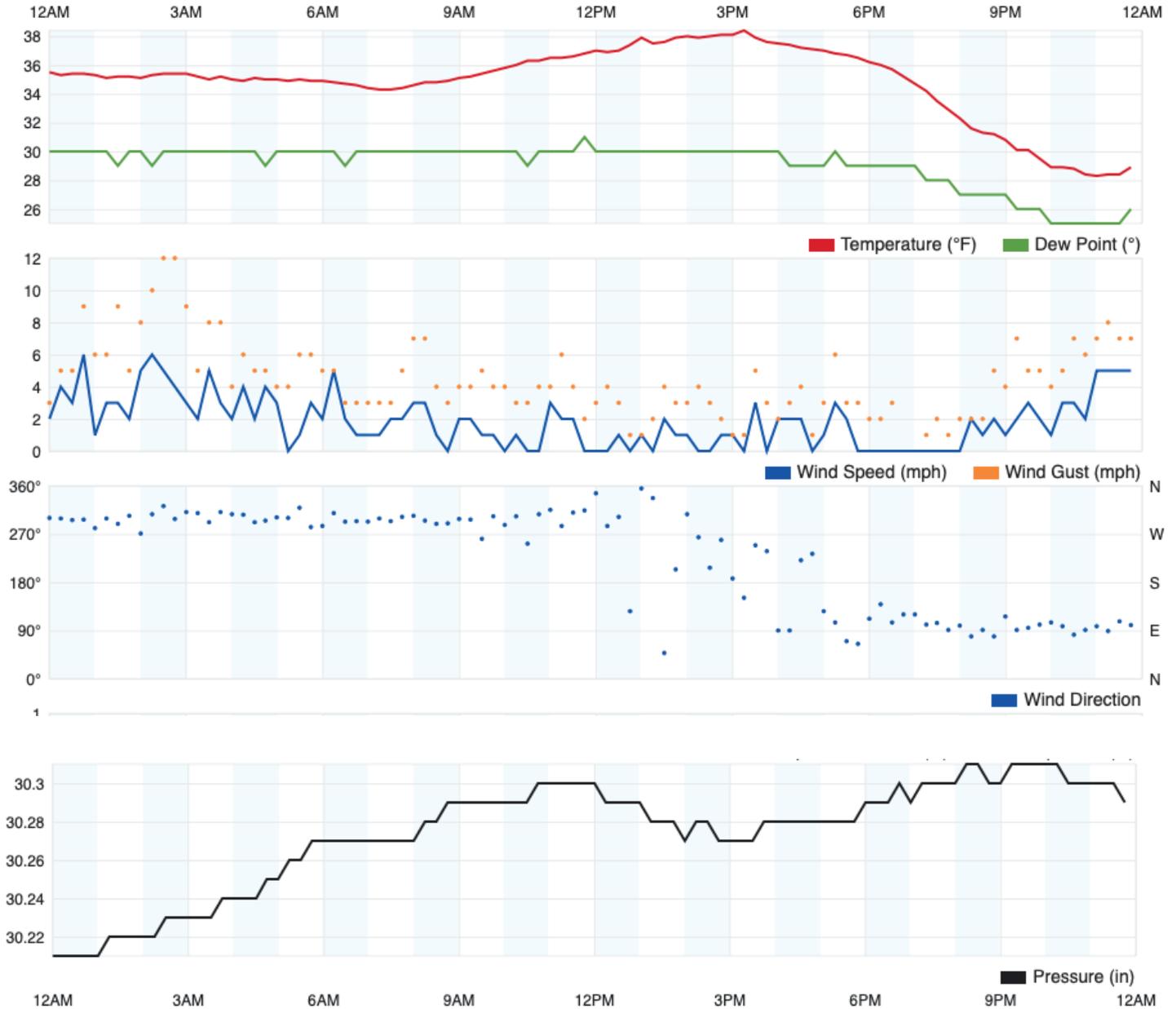
The multimedia campaign will tout the low-cost or no-cost health care, education, home loan and memorial service programs, the VA said.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sat Nov 11	Sun Nov 12	Mon Nov 13	Tue Nov 14	Wed Nov 15	Thu Nov 16	Fri Nov 17
46°F	58°F	57°F	60°F	58°F	54°F	52°F
27°F	29°F	42°F	33°F	38°F	33°F	30°F
E	SSW	SSE	S	S	W	W
10 MPH	19 MPH	19 MPH	17 MPH	9 MPH	18 MPH	13 MPH

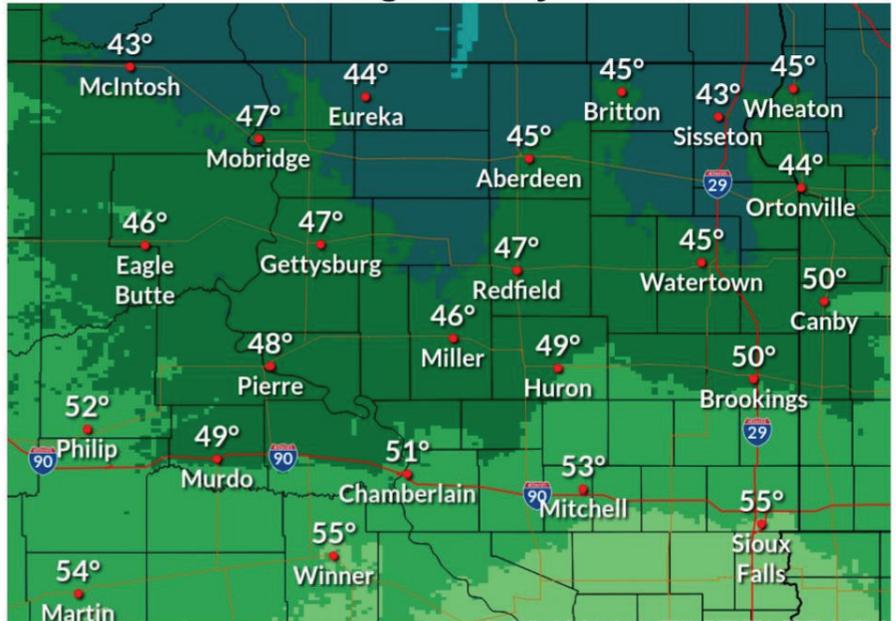


Increasing Sunshine & Milder Today

November 11, 2023
3:34 AM

Highs Today

- Cold front Sunday will result in Northwest Winds (30-40 mph wind gusts)
- Highs Sunday: Upper 50s
- Temperatures above normal next week (10-20 degrees above normal)



We will see a steady trend of warming temperatures across the region over the next few days. Dry conditions can be expected otherwise.

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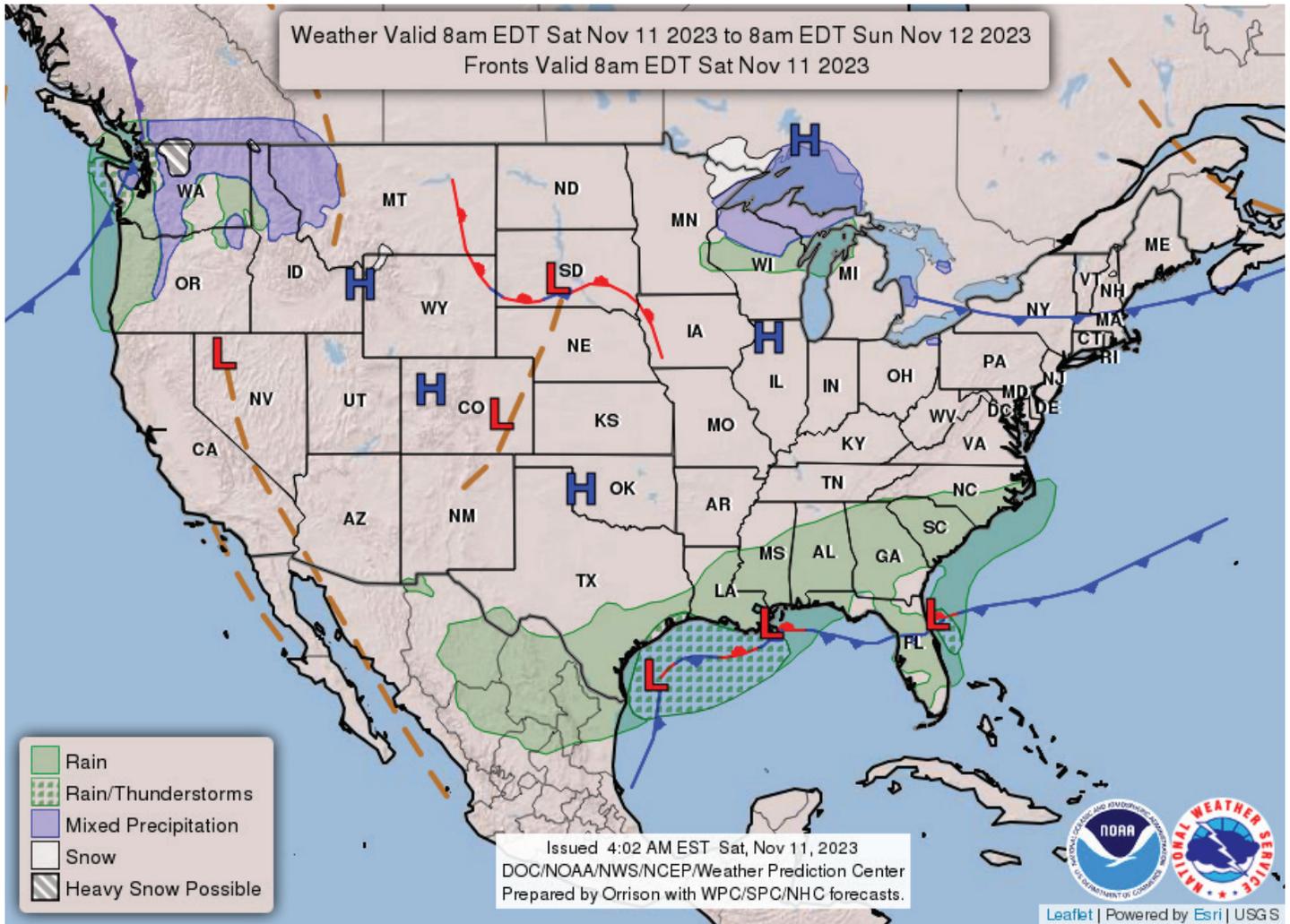
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 38 °F at 3:17 PM
Low Temp: 28 °F at 11:10 PM
Wind: 13 mph at 2:19 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 44 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 70 in 1912
Record Low: -8 in 1966
Average High: 45
Average Low: 21
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.33
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.17
Average Precip to date: 20.80
Precip Year to Date: 23.15
Sunset Tonight: 5:08:38 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:25:34 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 11th, 1982: Wet snow and winds gusting to over 50 mph snapped almost a thousand power lines and poles. Snowfall amounts were 4 to 6 inches but ranged to nearly a foot or more in Brookings County. A wind gust of 75 mph was recorded in McCook County. Several semi-trucks jackknifed on ice-covered roads, and numerous other automobile accidents were reported due to the snow and strong winds.

November 11th, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 14 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota on November 11th and 12th, causing driving difficulties throughout the region. Many vehicles became stuck in the snow or slid into ditches. There were also several accidents, and many events were canceled. Some snowfall amounts include 14.0 inches in Miller; 13.8 inches near Mellette; 12.5 inches in Highmore; 11.5 inches near Iona; 11 inches in Wilmot; 10 inches in Aberdeen, near Bryant, and Artichoke Lake MN; 9.5 inches in Clark; and 9.0 inches in Clear Lake, near Onida, and Webster.

1911 - The central U.S. experienced perhaps its most dramatic cold wave of record. During the early morning temperatures across the Central Plains ranged from 68 degrees at Kansas City to 4 above North Platte NE. In Kansas City, the temperature warmed to a record 76 degrees by late morning before the arctic front moved in from the northwest. Skies become overcast, winds shifted to the northwest, and the mercury began to plummet. By early afternoon it was cold enough to snow, and by midnight the temperature had dipped to a record cold reading of 11 degrees above zero. Oklahoma City also established a record high of 83 degrees and record low of 17 degrees that same day. In southeastern Kansas, the temperature at Independence plunged from 83 degrees to 33 degrees in just one hour. The arctic cold front produced severe thunderstorms and tornadoes in the Mississippi Valley, a blizzard in the Ohio Va

1940 - An Armistice Day storm raged across the Great Lakes Region and the Upper Midwest. A blizzard left 49 dead in Minnesota, and gales on Lake Michigan caused ship wrecks resulting in another 59 deaths. Up to seventeen inches of snow fell in Iowa, and at Duluth MN the barometric pressure reached 28.66 inches. The blizzard claimed a total of 154 lives, and killed thousands of cattle in Iowa. Whole towns were isolated by huge snowdrifts. (David Ludlum)

1955 - An early arctic outbreak set many November temperature records across Oregon and Washington. The severe cold damaged shrubs and fruit trees. Readings plunged to near zero in western Washington, and dipped to 19 degrees below zero in the eastern part of the state. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A deepening low pressure system brought heavy snow to the east central U.S. The Veteran's Day storm produced up to 17 inches of snow in the Washington D.C. area snarling traffic and closing schools and airports. Afternoon thunderstorms produced five inches of snow in three hours. Gale force winds lashed the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast. Norfolk VA reported their earliest measurable snow in 99 years of records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought snow to parts of the Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado ranged up to 10 inches at Summitville. Evening thunderstorms produced large hail in central Oklahoma and north central Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Veteran's Day was an unseasonably warm one across much of the nation east of the Rockies. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Southern and Central Plains to the southern half of the Atlantic coast. Thirty-four cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Saint Louis MO with a reading of 85 degrees. Calico AR and Gilbert AR reported record highs of 87 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

I MUST KNOW THEM!

Years ago there was a king who would leave his palace and walk through the streets of his city dressed as though he was one of his subjects. His guards feared for his life and often would try to stop him. Said one, "You must not do silliness for security's sake!"

"But," he replied, "I can't rule my people unless I know them and how they live."

What a comfort to know that our God knows us and understands us from having lived a human life in and through His Son, Jesus. Whatever we face He has faced and whatever path we travel He has traveled. Jesus learned life's secrets in the school of experience and can now bring us His encouragement, strength, insight, and guidance.

We often forget that Jesus gained His knowledge of life's ways because He was here among "us." And He is now with His Father and remembers what it is like to be lonely and rejected, abandoned and fearful, alone and afraid, weary, and worn out. He understands what it means to be tempted and tried, scorned and rejected, bullied and beaten, and even forsaken by His very own "disciples in training."

And it is because He passed through all of these experiences that now, in Heaven, He can be touched with our problems, and give us His help, hope, and healing, empathy and understanding, sympathy and strength. Remember, He endured and survived whatever His Father brought into His life, and His Father – our Heavenly Father – will do the same for us!

Prayer: We are grateful, Father, that You know us, understand us, and now intercede for us. This gives us the confidence to hold on to You tightly and never give up. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. Hebrews 4:14-16



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 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 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
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 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
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/05/2023 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Fall Dinner, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- 11/11/2023 Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 11/26/2023 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
- 12/02/2023 Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.10.23

13 33 59 68 70 8

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$245,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.08.23

1 3 23 45 52 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,100,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 22 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.10.23

6 18 28 31 42 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 37 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.08.23

9 17 20 27 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$49,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 37 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.08.23

5 20 22 27 63 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 6 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.08.23

14 21 33 39 62 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$220,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 6 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

South Dakota earns 100-79 victory against UT Rio Grande Valley

By The Associated Press undefined

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Lahat Thioune had 24 points in South Dakota's 100-79 victory over UT Rio Grande Valley on Friday night.

Thioune also contributed 10 rebounds for the Coyotes (2-0). Kaleb Stewart scored 19 points while shooting 6 for 17 (3 for 8 from 3-point range) and 4 of 5 from the free throw line. Max Burchill had 13 points and went 5 of 6 from the field.

Elijah Elliott led the Vaqueros (1-1) in scoring, finishing with 30 points and seven steals. UT Rio Grande Valley also got 26 points and 11 rebounds from Ahren Freeman. In addition, Hasan Abdul-Hakim had seven points, seven assists and two blocks.

The Associated Press created this story using technology provided by Data Skrive and data from Sportradar.

Maly matches career-high with 30 points and No. 22 Creighton women beat South Dakota in home opener

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Morgan Maly matched a career-high with 30 points, Emma Ronsiek added 16 points and No. 22 Creighton beat South Dakota 81-55 on Friday.

Creighton (2-0) won its second straight game in the series with South Dakota after losing six in a row.

Creighton scored 29 points in the first quarter, with five 3-pointers, to build a 15-point lead. The Bluejays led by as many as 20 points in the second quarter before South Dakota scored the opening five points of the second half to get within 45-35.

Creighton answered with a 19-2 run for a 64-37 lead. Maly started the run with seven straight Creighton points, and she also had two 3-pointers.

Maly, who also scored 30 points against Providence in January, was subbed out with 3:06 remaining in the fourth. Maly was 10 of 19 from the field and she also grabbed 10 rebounds.

Lauren Jensen had 11 points and a team-high six assists for Creighton. Molly Mogensen and Mallory Brake each scored 10 points. Mogensen also had nine rebounds.

Tori DePerry led South Dakota (1-1) with 13 points. Grace Larkins had nine points and 13 rebounds. DePaul transfer Kendall Holmes, who scored 14 points in an 85-57 season-opening win over Northern State, was held to six points on 2-of-8 shooting.

South Dakota was picked third in the Summit League preseason poll, just behind Creighton.

Creighton hosts Green Bay on Thursday. South Dakota plays Northern Colorado on Tuesday.

Get alerts and updates on AP Top 25 basketball throughout the season. Sign up here AP women's college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-womens-college-basketball-poll> and <https://apnews.com/hub/womens-college-basketball>

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL SDHSAA Playoffs

Class 11A Championship: Dell Rapids 42, West Central 6

Class 11AA Championship: Pierre T F Riggs High School 35, Yankton 7

Class 11B Championship: Hot Springs 13, Elk Point-Jefferson 7

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

1.2 million chickens will be slaughtered at an Iowa farm where bird flu was found

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

An additional 1.2 million chickens will be slaughtered to prevent the spread of the bird flu after the virus was confirmed on an Iowa egg farm in the second massive case this week.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship announced the latest bird flu infection at a farm in Taylor County Friday, and Iowa's governor immediately declared a disaster there to make sure the state has the resources to respond quickly.

The Iowa case is just the latest one in the outbreak that began early last year and has prompted officials to kill a total of nearly 63 million birds. Earlier this week, 1 million chickens were killed on a Minnesota egg farm. But the vast majority of the cases, or nearly 58 million birds, occurred last year.

Anytime a case of bird flu is found the entire flock is killed to help keep the highly contagious virus from spreading to another farm.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been finding fewer wild birds carrying the virus this year, which suggests that some ducks and geese may be developing immunity. Farmers also have been working hard to keep the virus off their farms, and the government has been trying to respond quickly anytime bird flu is found.

Iowa remains the hardest hit state in the nation, with more than 17 million birds killed there since the outbreak began. The state is the nation's leading egg producer and egg farms tend to have the most birds. In one case last year, 5 million chickens were slaughtered on a single Iowa egg farm.

Nebraska comes next with more than 6.7 million birds killed, followed by Colorado's 6.26 million and Minnesota's 5.6 million.

Most of the recent cases this fall have been found in Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa along one of the major migratory paths ducks and geese follow as they fly south for winter. The virus is spread easily by the droppings of those wild birds that can be tracked onto farms, and there has been an expected uptick in cases since the fall migration began.

Poultry and egg farmers try to keep the virus from reaching their farms by requiring workers to shower and change clothes before they enter barns. Trucks are also sanitized before they enter the farm, and separate sets of tools are kept for each barn.

The losses last year contributed to higher egg and poultry prices, but those prices have dropped significantly this year.

Bird flu isn't believed to be a threat to food safety because officials slaughter all the birds on farms where the disease is found before they can enter the food supply, and properly cooking poultry and eggs to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (73.89 degrees Celsius) will kill any viruses. Infections in humans are rare and usually come only in people with prolonged exposure to sick birds.

Body of South Dakota native who's been missing for 30 years identified in Colorado

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The body of a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, man who has been missing 30 years was identified in Colorado, where deputies have long been trying to put a name to the suspected homicide victim.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office used genetic testing and a titanium rod in his leg to identify Jerry A. Mikkelson's body this week, KELO-TV reported.

Law enforcement believe Mikkelson was killed in Wyoming before his body was dumped off a forest service road in Colorado in October 1987.

Mikkelson left Sioux Falls after graduating from high school in 1981. A relative eventually reported him missing, but police did not investigate because he was around 24 years old at the time and authorities did not suspect foul play.

"The officer informed (the relative) since Jerry was an adult there was nothing police could do," Sioux Falls police spokesperson Sam Clemens told the station. "No police report was made, just the info that (relative) left. At that point, there was no indication anything was wrong or anything criminal occurred, so there was no police investigation."

Colorado deputies have not indicated how Mikkelson died.

One year after liberation, Ukrainians in Kherson hold on to hope amid constant shelling

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — One year since Ukraine retook the city of Kherson from occupying Russian forces, residents have grown accustomed to hearing outgoing fire from the left bank of the Dnieper river, where Russian troops are positioned. They know that familiar crackle means they have seven seconds to find a shelter, or a sturdy wall to hide behind.

Their lives are mostly limited to the comfort of home and the necessity of the supermarket. Many shops are still shuttered. Municipal workers wear bullet-proof vests and wait to be dispatched to sweep up the rubble from yet another impact.

Between lulls of artillery fire coming from the river, which marks the contact line between battling armies in the Kherson region, Ukrainians venture out to buy food, bicycle down grassy residential lanes or convene in the few restaurants that dare to remain open.

Marking the anniversary of Russia's defeat on Nov. 11 is a bittersweet occasion, many residents say, as Ukraine's counteroffensive grinds on without producing the spectacular gains many had hoped for. But those who stay are steadfast in their belief that one day normal life will return.

"When you have lived under occupation, you know what freedom means," said Grigori Malov, who owns one out of three restaurants still operating in the city. "It's why we have a special attitude toward the continued shelling. We can withstand it because we know how it could be worse."

The flight of Russian troops from Kherson under prolonged Ukrainian assault a year ago was one of Ukraine's biggest successes in the war and was seen as an inflection point. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy triumphantly walked the streets of the newly liberated city back then, hailing Russia's withdrawal as the "beginning of the end of the war." Many hoped it would serve as a springboard for more advances into occupied territory.

Today, both sides are locked in a stalemated battle of attrition.

On Saturday, a rainy and cloudy day, the atmosphere was muted and few residents came out to mark the occasion, fearing Russian attacks. A handful of people came draped in Ukrainian flags and stood for a while at a monument in front of the administrative building, then walked away.

Malov didn't work during the nine months he lived under Russian occupation. After the city fell back to Ukrainian control, he opened his eatery, which contains a cafe on the top floor and a restaurant in the basement, to help bring the city back to life. Residents celebrate birthdays, clinking glasses, as the fighting continues only a few kilometers away.

Ukrainian soldiers, resting between front-line stints, are frequent patrons, and come to Malov's restaurant to eat bowls of pasta or cheesy pizzas and to share a laugh. Sometimes Malov even organizes stand-up comedy nights, when he can find an entertainer.

"I think we are fulfilling an important function, we are giving people the opportunity to relax," he said. "Now it's even more important than before."

The sounds of incoming and outgoing fire resound continuously and residents have to organize their days in anticipation of them. They are most frequent in the morning and late afternoon, residents said. Air raid alarms echo almost incessantly, at all hours of the day.

Between 40-80 shells of different varieties land in Kherson city on a daily basis, said Oleksandr Tolokonnikov, a spokesperson for the Kherson Regional State Administration.

"Every day people must take into consideration the shelling," he said. Tolokonnikov was in the city on

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Nov. 12, one day after it was retaken, and recalled the joy of the crowds welcoming Ukrainian forces back. A few days later, the shelling started, and it hasn't stopped since, he said.

Security concerns aside, he says earning an income is another challenge for Ukrainians living in Kherson. There are no jobs for the nearly 71,000 residents in the city, which had a prewar population of 300,000. Most of those who remain are elderly, he said.

Dmytro and Olena were a rare sight: a young couple on a date. They went to the Kherson regional administrative building to hold up the Ukrainian flag and take photos ahead of the anniversary of the city's liberation.

"It's not safe in the city, maybe, but we are at home, we don't want to move anywhere else," said Olena. "We are spending time at home, we are trying to live, work and not leave."

They spoke on the condition that only their first names be used. Their families are still living under occupation on the left bank of the river, they said.

Konstantin Krupenko supervised municipal workers as they cleaned the streets, clearing fallen autumn leaves ahead of the anniversary celebration. The men wore bulletproof vests, smoking in between hauling bags of foliage. Over the summer, Krupenko lost one of his workers who was struck by shrapnel from a Grad rocket. Another worker suffered a concussion.

Clearing leaves is an unusual task for municipal workers in Kherson, Krupenko said. Usually they are dispatched to remove rubble from explosion sites.

"Sometimes it's big, sometimes it's smaller, on houses," he said, matter-of-factly describing their work routine.

"Day after every day, there is something."

Gaza's main hospital goes dark in intense fighting as Israel's attacks put it at odds with allies

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's prime minister pushed back Saturday against calls from Western allies to do more to protect Palestinian civilians, as troops encircled Gaza's largest hospital where doctors said five patients died, including a premature baby, after the last generator ran out of fuel.

Israel has portrayed Shifa Hospital as Hamas' main command post, saying militants were using civilians as human shields there and had set up elaborate bunkers underneath it. In recent days, fighting near Shifa and other hospitals in the combat zone of northern Gaza has intensified and supplies have run out.

"There is no electricity. Medical devices stopped. Patients, especially those in intensive care, started to die," said Mohammed Abu Selmia, the director of Shifa, speaking by phone over the sound of gunfire and explosions.

Abu Selmia said Israeli troops were "shooting at anyone outside or inside the hospital," and prevented movement between the buildings in the compound.

The claim that Israeli troops were the sole source of fire could not be verified independently. Asked about reports of troops firing into the Shifa courtyard, Peter Lerner, an Israeli military spokesman, would only say that troops are "in the midst of ongoing intense fighting against Hamas in the vicinity of the area in question." He said the military takes all feasible measures to prevent harm to civilians.

Five patients died after the generator shut down, including a premature baby, said Medhat Abbas, a spokesman for the Health Ministry. He said Shifa had cared for 37 premature infants in total.

Israel has been opening the main road leading south each day for several hours to allow civilians to flee. On Saturday, the military for the first time announced a brief pause in combat as part of an evacuation window, specifically naming the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya next to Gaza City.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the responsibility for any harm to civilians lies with Hamas, repeating long-standing allegations that the militant group uses civilians in Gaza as human shields. He said that while Israel has urged civilians to leave combat zones, "Hamas is doing everything it can to prevent them from leaving."

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His statement came after French President Emmanuel Macron pushed for a cease-fire and urged other leaders to join his call, telling the BBC there was "no justification" for Israel's ongoing bombing.

Following Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel, in which at least 1,200 people were killed, Israel's allies have defended the country's right to protect itself. But now into the second month of war, there are growing differences in how many feel Israel should conduct its fight.

The U.S. has been pushing for temporary pauses that would allow for wider distribution of badly needed aid to civilians in the besieged territory where conditions are increasingly dire. However, Israel has so far only agreed to the brief daily periods during which civilians are able to flee the area of ground combat in northern Gaza and head south on foot along the territory's main north-south artery.

Since these evacuation windows were first announced a week ago, more than 150,000 civilians have fled the north, according to U.N. monitors. On Saturday, the military announced a new evacuation window, saying civilians could use the central road and a coastal road. Tens of thousands more remain in northern Gaza, many sheltering at hospitals and overcrowded U.N. facilities.

Palestinian civilians and rights advocates have pushed back against Israel's portrayal of the southern evacuation zones as "relatively safe," noting that Israeli bombardment has continued across Gaza, including airstrikes in the south that Israel says target Hamas leaders, but that have also killed women and children.

The U.S. and Israel also have diverging views on what a post-war Gaza should look like. Netanyahu and military leaders have said this needs to be dictated solely by Israel's security needs, such as ensuring no threats emerge from the territory. Israel has said a key goal of the war is to crush Hamas, a militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, speaking to reporters Friday during a tour of Asia, laid out what he said were fundamental principles for a post-war Gaza, some of which seemed to run counter to Israel's narrow approach.

Blinken said these principles include "no forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, no use of Gaza as a platform for launching terrorism or other attacks against Israel, no diminution in the territory of Gaza, and a commitment to Palestinian-led governance for Gaza and for the West Bank, and in a unified way."

FIGHTING AROUND HOSPITALS

Concern has grown in recent days as fighting through the dense neighborhoods of Gaza City has come closer to hospitals, which Israel claims are being used by Hamas fighters.

On Saturday, Palestinians said Israeli troops were within view of Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest. Israel has said Hamas' main command center is located underneath the hospital, claims Hamas and Shifa staff deny.

Thousands of civilians had been sheltering in the Shifa compound in recent weeks, but many fled Friday after several nearby strikes in which one person was killed and several were wounded.

Abbas, the Health Ministry spokesman, told the satellite television channel Al Jazeera that there are still 1,500 patients at Shifa, along with 1,500 medical personnel and between 15,000 and 20,000 people seeking shelter.

"The complex now lacks food, water and electricity," he said. "Intensive care units have stopped working."

Abdallah Nasser, who lives near Shifa, said by phone that the Israeli military was advancing deep into the city from its southern and northern flanks.

"They are facing stiff resistance, but they are advancing," he said.

Mohammed al-Masri, one of thousands still sheltering at the hospital, said that from a higher floor he could see Israeli troops approaching from the west. "They are here," he said. "They are visible."

Thousands have fled Shifa and other hospitals that have come under attack, but physicians said it's impossible for everyone to get out.

"We cannot evacuate ourselves and (leave) these people inside," a Doctors Without Borders surgeon at Shifa, Mohammed Obeid, was quoted as saying by the organization.

"As a doctor, I swear to help the people who need help."

The organization said other doctors reported that some staff had fled to to save themselves and their families, and urged all hospitals be protected.

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CASUALTIES RISE

More than 11,070 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and minors, have been killed since the war began, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths. About 2,700 people have been reported missing and are thought to be possibly trapped or dead under the rubble.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said six people were killed early Saturday in a strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp that hit a house. The camp is located in the southern evacuation zone.

At least 1,200 people have been killed in Israel, mainly in the initial Hamas attack, and 41 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the ground offensive began, Israeli officials say.

Nearly 240 people abducted by Hamas from Israel remain captive.

About 250,000 Israelis have been forced to evacuate from communities near Gaza and along the northern border with Lebanon, where Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants have traded fire repeatedly.

Magdy reported from Cairo, Rising from Bangkok. Associated Press writer Julia Frankel in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Full AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Morocco debates how to rebuild from September quake that killed thousands

By SAM METZ Associated Press

MOULAY BRAHIM, Morocco (AP) — When a historic earthquake struck Morocco in September, Ahmed Azab tightly hugged his wife and four children as their home's brick walls tumbled around them.

The roof collapsed, shattering clay pots in the kitchen and trapping picture frames and homework assignments beneath rubble. When the ground finally stopped shaking, the construction worker shepherded his five loved ones to a park. Then he rescued his father, mother and aunt, who were trapped in his childhood home nearby.

For centuries, families in towns like Moulay Brahim in Morocco's High Atlas mountains constructed their homes of stone and bricks, which they made by tightly ramming handfuls of muddy earth into molds.

Now they face the daunting task of rebuilding from the quake and villagers and architects are debating just how.

From Mexico to Hawaii, the question of rebuilding communities without changing them for the worse arises in the aftermath of virtually all-natural disasters. In Morocco, King Mohammed VI's cabinet pledged in a statement the week after the quake to rebuild "in harmony with heritage and architectural features."

More than 3,000 people died in September's earthquake in Morocco, and some 1,000 villages were damaged. The country plans to spend \$11.7 billion on post-earthquake reconstruction over the next five years — equivalent to roughly 8.5% of its annual GDP. Morocco plans to allocate residents cash relief for basic necessities, with an additional \$13,600 to rebuild households that were completely destroyed and \$7,800 to those that were partially destroyed.

Because of the number of earthquakes in Morocco, there's widespread agreement among villagers and architects that safety should be a top priority. That's created a drive for modern building materials and an ambivalence toward the government's stated commitment to rebuild in line with Morocco's cultural and architectural heritage.

In some places, local officials awaiting word from higher authorities have stopped those who have tried to start building. That's sowed resentment as the weather grows colder, laid-off miner Ait Brahim Brahim said in Anerni, a pastoral mountainside village where 36 people died.

Many say they hope to build with the concrete and cinderblocks commonly used in larger Moroccan cities, rather than the traditional earthen bricks they suspect may have compounded their misfortune.

"Everyone goes for modern. The traditional ways, no one cares about it," Ait Brahim said.

But a subset of architects and engineers is pushing back against the idea that bricks made from earth are more vulnerable to damage.

Mohammed Hamdouni Alami, a professor at Rabat's National School of Architecture, said that the idea that newer materials like concrete are signs of higher social class has taken hold as parts of Morocco experienced rapid development.

"People see that the government is building all over the country using concrete and think it's because it's better and safer. They ask, 'Why should we build with materials that are for the poor, that are unsafe and primitive?'" he said.

But Hamdouni Alami said that bricks of earth, often called adobe in Spain and the Americas, have long been used in wealthier earthquake-prone regions like California. Some of Morocco's most famous buildings constructed with them — including Marrakech's 16th Century El Badi Palace — have survived the test of time.

"It's not an issue of materials, it's an issue of techniques," he said.

Kit Miyamoto, a Japanese-American structural engineer, led a team that met with masons and surveyed damage after the earthquake and reached a similar conclusion. His team's report said it found "no significant difference in the seismic performance of either traditional or modern construction systems." It concluded that poorly constructed homes of a combination of concrete and earthen materials fared worst in the earthquake.

"A common belief in many post-earthquake affected communities worldwide is that old traditional construction systems must be 'bad and weak,' while new modern techniques such as steel and concrete are inherently 'better,'" they wrote in their October report. "Poor construction quality is the primary cause of failure, not modern versus traditional material systems."

Miyamoto said he hopes that Morocco rebuilds using affordable materials that residents will be able to repair. If the government merely rebuilds using more costly concrete, he said, he worries about residents' future ability to make small repairs to maintain seismic safety.

His team's recommendations included that rebuilding adhere to a code with new seismic safety requirements added in 2011, seven years after a violent earthquake shook the country's north.

The code includes sections about earthen materials, foundations, building reinforcement and the ideal space between bricks. It restricted the number of floors that could be built in earthquake-prone areas and prohibited the use of mud bricks on "soft ground."

However, the extent of its implementation remains limited — a problem that many have blamed for damage in cities like Casablanca and rural parts of the country hit by the earthquake. There, many walls — whether made of concrete or earthen bricks — lacked adequate foundations.

"The problem isn't the building code, it's that it's not in use," Miyamoto said.

Yassine Oulhiq contributed reporting.

Coach Jim Harbaugh banned from 3 games over sign-stealing allegations. Michigan asks judge for stay

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) — The Big Ten Conference banned Jim Harbaugh from coaching at Michigan's three remaining regular-season games on Friday, escalating an extraordinary confrontation with college football's winningest program over a sign-stealing scheme that has rocked the sport.

The school delivered on its promise to fight back in court a few hours later, asking a Michigan judge for a temporary restraining order that would allow Harbaugh to coach the Wolverines in their biggest game of the season so far.

The discipline was announced less than 24 hours before kickoff at No. 9 Penn State. The second-ranked Wolverines (9-0) have a shot to win a third straight Big Ten title and the school's first national championship since 1997.

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Michigan's team plane landed in Pennsylvania shortly before the announcement. It issued a statement ridiculing the decision.

"Like all members of the Big Ten Conference, we are entitled to a fair, deliberate and thoughtful process to determine the full set of facts before a judgment is rendered," Michigan President Santa Ono said in a statement. "Today's action by Commissioner Tony Petitti disregards the conference's own handbook, violates basic tenets of due process, and sets an untenable precedent of assessing penalties before an investigation has been completed."

Harbaugh has denied any knowledge of an improper scouting scheme in his program. Michigan warned earlier this week that it was prepared to take possible legal action if the conference punished the program before a full investigation; the NCAA and the Big Ten are both looking into the claims.

"To ensure fairness in the process, we intend to seek a court order, together with Coach Harbaugh, preventing this disciplinary action from taking effect," Ono said.

The request for the restraining order was filed in Washtenaw County, home to the university, listing Petitti and the Big Ten as defendants and attorneys for Harbaugh and the school contending its students and players would "suffer significant and irreparable harm" if the punishment stands. Courts were closed Friday, the recognized federal holiday for Veteran's Day, and it was unclear when a ruling might come. Judge Timothy P. Connors, a Michigan graduate, was listed as the judicial officer but it was not clear whether he was handling the case.

Such a fight between a conference and one of its most storied members is unheard of. The dispute began three weeks ago and the allegations leaked day by day, with it becoming clear the Wolverines do not want their undefeated season derailed by an unfinished investigation of activities it says Harbaugh knew nothing about and are not unheard of across college football.

The Big Ten, however, said the school had violated its sportsmanship policy by conducting "an impermissible, in-person scouting operation over multiple years" that resulted in "an unfair competitive advantage that compromised the integrity of competition."

As a result, the Big Ten said Michigan must play without Harbaugh against the Nittany Lions (8-1) this weekend, next week at Maryland and in the annual showdown game against rival and No. 3 Ohio State two weeks from now. If Michigan wins out, he would be clear to return for the Big Ten title game in Indianapolis.

For now, while Harbaugh is allowed at practices and other activities, he cannot be "present at the game venue."

The league also sent a 13-page letter to Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel to back up its decision.

"(A) university football staff member engaged in an organized, extensive, years-long in-person advance scouting scheme that was impermissible. ... Such misconduct inherently compromises the integrity of competition," the letter said, before saying the school's response did not deny the scheme occurred. "Instead, it offers only procedural and technical arguments designed to delay accountability."

Michigan says it is cooperating with the NCAA, which does not outlaw sign-stealing, but has rules against in-person scouting of opponents and using electronic equipment to steal signs. The allegations against Michigan suggest a far more robust approach to gathering signs.

The low-level staffer at the center of the investigation, Connor Stalions, resigned last week. Through his attorney, Stalions said that, to his knowledge, none of the Michigan coaches told anyone to break rules or were aware of improper conduct when it came to advance scouting.

The NCAA probe is likely to stretch well past the season. Big Ten's rules allowed for swifter action and coaches and athletic directors in the league had pushed Petitti to discipline Michigan under conference bylaws that cover sportsmanship and competitive integrity.

Multiple Big Ten schools found tickets purchased in Stalions' name to their games over the last three seasons. Tickets to the last two Southeastern Conference championship games were also purchased in Stalions' name. Big Ten schools have also provided the NCAA some video surveillance footage of people sitting in those seats, holding cellphones pointed toward the field.

Harbaugh served a school-imposed, three-game suspension earlier this season for an unrelated and unresolved NCAA infractions case tied to recruiting. The former star quarterback for the Wolverines has

an 80-25 overall record and a 59-17 mark in Big Ten games over nine seasons with the Wolverines. He considered returning to the NFL coaching ranks after both the 2021 and '22 seasons.

Michigan has contended that other schools steal signs. A former employee at a Big Ten football program, whose role was to steal signs, said he was given details from multiple conference schools before his team played Michigan to compile a spreadsheet of play-calling signals used by the Wolverines last year. He spoke with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, fearing the disclosures could impact his coaching career.

The person said he also passed along screenshots of text-message exchanges with staffers from a handful of Big Ten football teams with the Wolverines, giving them proof that other conference teams were colluding to steal signs from Harbaugh's team.

The Big Ten dismissed Michigan's argument that other schools were also stealing signs.

"The conference is unmoved by the university's attempt to downplay its impermissible conduct by asserting that other conference members may have engaged in sign decoding," its letter said. "The conference has not received any information that any other members schools engaged in impermissible advance in-person scouting, let alone a scheme of the size and scale like the one at issue here. ... the conference vehemently rejects any defense by the university or any other conference member that cheating is acceptable because other teams do it too."

AP Sports Writer Larry Lage contributed.

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Why Spain's acting leader is offering a politically explosive amnesty for Catalan separatists

By CIARÁN GILES and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain's acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's chances of forming a new coalition minority government following an inconclusive election in July were greatly boosted this week after reaching an agreement with a tiny party he surely hoped he would never have to rely on.

The deal is with Together for Catalunya, also known as Junts — a group bent on achieving independence for the northeastern region of Catalonia that's headed by Carles Puigdemont, who fled Spain after leading a failed illegal secession bid in 2017 that brought the country to the brink.

Key to the agreement signed Thursday is a massively controversial amnesty that could benefit Puigdemont and thousands of other secessionists. But the proposal, backed by several smaller left-wing parties, has roused the ire of the conservative and far-right opposition parties that represent roughly half the country's population. Many in the judiciary and police are also opposed.

Here is what you need to know about the amnesty and how it all came about.

WHAT IS THE AMNESTY FOR?

Few details have been released of the amnesty proposal being debated between Sánchez's Socialist party and Junts, which will have to be approved by Spain's Parliament. However, the idea is it would wipe away the legal cases against Puigdemont and thousands of others who took part in the secession bid or participated in protests, some of which turned violent, when Spain implemented a crackdown in response.

Sánchez, whose government has already granted pardons to several jailed leaders of the Catalan independence movement, says the amnesty will be positive for Spain because it will calm waters inside Catalonia. Puigdemont is one of several Catalan leaders who fled justice after an illegal independence referendum was held in 2017. An amnesty would allow the five that are still abroad, including Puigdemont, to return to Spain and even run for office again someday.

WHO WANTS AN INDEPENDENT CATALONIA?

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The idea of independence from Spain stretches back decades, if not centuries, for a region that is fiercely proud of its institutions, traditions, and Catalan language, which is spoken along with Spanish. It gathered momentum during the financial crisis of 2008-2013 and then peaked in 2017 when Puigdemont, as regional president, held the illegal ballot on secession and made an ineffectual declaration of independence that received zero international recognition. The nearly 8 million inhabitants of Catalonia, whose capital is Barcelona, are roughly divided over independence, although latest opinion polls in the region indicate fewer favor secession.

WHY IS SÁNCHEZ OFFERING AMNESTY?

Given that Puigdemont is considered public enemy No. 1 for many Spaniards, and Catalan independence a politically toxic issue, some wonder why Sánchez, who has long opposed any amnesty, is now pushing for it. The answer, critics say, is pure political necessity and the desire to stay in office.

A national election in July left no party close to an absolute majority. Sánchez's Socialists with 121 seats, and their leftist coalition partner Sumar — translated as Joining Forces — with 31, need the support of several smaller parties to clinch a 176 majority in Parliament and stay in power. Those include the two pro-secession Catalan parties who led the unsuccessful 2017 breakaway attempt. Junts, with seven seats, became the key.

The chance given to Puigdemont to play kingmaker by the summer's election outcome breathed new life into his political career and his cause just when his party was losing ground inside Catalonia, where Sánchez's Socialists are on the rise.

HOW HAVE OPPONENTS RESPONDED?

Tens of thousands of people have staged massive protests against the amnesty in recent weeks. The demonstrations were called by the Popular Party and Vox, who accuse Sánchez of betraying the country and handing power to a fugitive. Violence broke out at rallies backed by Vox outside the Socialist Party's headquarters in Madrid several nights in November. Police say the violence has been caused by a minority of extreme right-wing radicals. Another major protest has been called for Sunday by the Popular Party.

WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS OF THE DEAL WITH JUNTS?

Under the deal signed Thursday between the Socialists and Junts, both parties recognize their vastly different points of view on the Catalan conflict but agree to work together to resolve it. Junts says it will propose holding another self-determination referendum but agrees to not do it unilaterally, like in 2017. Instead, it will be under Article 92 of the Constitution, which demands the authorization of the prime minister, the Parliament and the king. Junts also demands that more tax revenues stay in Catalonia, one of Spain's richest regions, similar to agreements signed with rich Basque Country and Navarra regions.

The two parties also agree that the amnesty must cover all those who have been subjected to judicial processes — both before and after the 2017 referendum. One clause that is seen as a possible interference in the judiciary is the mention that commissions may investigate if there were cases of "lawfare," meaning that the justice system was used for political purposes against secessionists that might require legislative modifications.

A LEGAL QUAGMIRE

Any amnesty approved by Spain's Parliament is likely to be contested by the opposition parties and several courts in Spain. This may not immediately affect the beneficiaries of the amnesty, but it would cause a legal quagmire of gigantic proportions in an already clogged judiciary.

Meanwhile, Spain's Supreme Court is still trying to have Puigdemont extradited from Belgium for embezzlement. On top of that, the lower National Court recently named him and another secessionist leader in an investigation into possible terrorism during the independence push.

The amnesty talks have also drawn the attention of the European Union Commissioner of Justice, Didier Reynders, who sent Spain's government a request for more information.

Wilson reported from Barcelona, Spain.

Vivek Ramaswamy's approach in business and politics is the same: Confidence, no matter the scenario

BY BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A political novice and one of the world's wealthiest millennials, Vivek Ramaswamy has waged a whirlwind presidential campaign mirroring his meteoric rise as a biotech entrepreneur. On everything from deporting people born in the United States to ending aid to Israel and Ukraine, he consistently displays the bravado of a populist, self-declared outsider.

"I stand on the side of revolution," he declares. "That's what I'm going to lead in a way that no establishment politician can."

In business and politics, though, Ramaswamy has run into skeptics and sometimes hard facts that threatened to derail his ambitions. In the 2024 campaign, the Israel-Hamas war has refocused the Republican primary on foreign policy and exposed just how much Ramaswamy's self-declared revolutionary approach puts him at odds with the party's most powerful figures and many of its voters.

At Wednesday's primary debate, Ramaswamy joined the rest of the field in supporting Israel's offensive but returned to his practice of not just critiquing his opponents but mocking them. Ramaswamy skewered Nikki Haley, the former U.N. ambassador, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who some online sleuths suggest wears lifts in his boots, by asking, "Do you want Dick Cheney in three-inch heels?"

The performance drew eye rolls and derision on stage. When Ramaswamy implied Haley was being hypocritical in criticizing the social media platform TikTok because her daughter has previously used it, the 51-year-old mother of two called him "scum."

Ramaswamy, an Ohio native who also lives there, has wowed many audiences with his rapid-fire, wide-ranging discourse. Yet even some Republican voters who come away impressed are not backing him. He's among a group of candidates who trail former President Donald Trump and generally fall behind DeSantis in national surveys, polling in the mid to high single digits.

Ann Trimble Ray, a Republican activist from Early, Iowa, suggested Ramaswamy "exposes his naivete in part with what he's said about Israel, but also his inexperience."

"Unless you've had the experience of someone who has had exposure to the briefings, what you communicate is a whole lot of conjecture," said Ray, who is leaning toward backing Haley.

The 38-year-old son of Indian immigrants has spent his adult life as a sort of boastful savior. In business, that meant building a fortune by hyping a drug that ultimately failed. In politics, it means arguing he can return Trump's "America First" vision to the White House without the baggage.

Ramaswamy set his course at Harvard, a pillar of the American establishment. Ramaswamy majored in biology and participated in the campus Republican club, standing out even there as a libertarian. He drew attention from the campus newspaper for his alter ego, "Da Vek," a rapper who performed using libertarian ideology as lyrics.

"I consider myself a contrarian; I like to argue," Ramaswamy told The Crimson.

Harvard introduced Ramaswamy to the hedge-fund class. He interned at Goldman Sachs, the most prestigious Wall Street investment house, then won a job at QVT Financial, founded by another Harvard alumnus, Dan Gold. Ramaswamy led the firm's pharmaceutical investments.

Ramaswamy launched his own venture in 2014. He named it Roivant — the ROI standing for "return on investment" — and had a clear business model in mind: Buy discount patents for drugs languishing in the development phase, then resurrect them.

In his first big move, Ramaswamy used a subsidiary, Axovant, and paid GlaxoSmithKline \$5 million for RVT-101, a potential Alzheimer's drug already put through multiple trials and deemed not promising enough to continue. Ramaswamy rebranded it as "intepirdine" and, despite the earlier studies, touted it as a game-changer, a "best-in-class drug candidate," he told The New York Times during Axovant's infancy. He landed on the cover of Forbes magazine.

The hype worked. Intepirdine never would.

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Axovant's initial public stock offering in 2015 drew \$315 million, the largest-ever biotech IPO to that point, and Axovant's valuation approached \$3 billion. In 2017, Axovant released more trial results that found the drug ineffective at dampening Alzheimer's symptoms or its advancement. Axovant stock tanked.

Ramaswamy, though, had pocketed tens of millions, divesting himself of shares whose value had swelled because of public buy-in.

"He pumped up the image and the name so people invested, while he was selling out," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a scholar at the Yale School of Management who tracks Ramaswamy's business dealings. "That's classic 'pump and dump.'"

On his 2015 tax return, one of 20 years' worth he has disclosed, Ramaswamy reported almost \$38 million in capital gains income. He parlayed that into a portfolio now measured in the hundreds of millions, enough to dwarf the \$15 million he has loaned his own campaign.

He became a conservative author and cable news regular, mainly as a critic of corporate America's focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. In that role, and as a candidate, Ramaswamy sidesteps that some of his own interests — he invested in Disney, a punching bag for conservatives — are leaders in DEI efforts.

Ramaswamy embraces the notion that he is Donald Trump 2.0.

"I believe Donald Trump was an excellent president," Ramaswamy said while campaigning in Atlanta. "But I do believe that we need to take our America First agenda to the next level, and I think it will take an outsider from a different generation with an actual positive vision."

Ramaswamy has promised to pardon the former president if he is convicted of federal crimes, including those related to the Capitol Hill attack in 2021. In one of his earlier books, Ramaswamy called Jan. 6 "a dark day for democracy" and criticized Trump's "abhorrent" behavior — assessments he no longer repeats.

Ramaswamy advocates deporting the American-born children of immigrants in the country illegally, though they are U.S. citizens under federal law and Supreme Court precedent. He questions the government's account of 9/11. He's called for firing 75% of the federal workforce. He wants to raise the U.S. voting age.

Two days after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack killed 1,400 people, Ramaswamy suggested the U.S. withhold aid to Israel until its government detailed plans for Gaza.

While many conservatives dislike foreign aid, Republican voters align heavily with Israel.

About 4 in 10 Republicans (44%) say the United States' current level of support for Israel in the conflict with the Palestinians is about right, according to a new Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Research poll conducted in November. Another one-third of Republicans (34%) say the U.S. isn't supportive enough, compared with 9% of Democrats who say the same.

During Wednesday's debate, Ramaswamy endorsed Israel's right to counterattack Hamas but said Americans should not have a financial stake in the war. He chided his opponents for framing U.S. aid to Ukraine as a fight for democracy against Russian aggression.

"I want to be careful to avoid making the mistakes from the neocon establishment of the past. Corrupt politicians in both parties spent trillions, killed millions," he said. "Made billions for themselves in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, fighting wars that sent thousands of our sons and daughters, people my age, to die in wars that did not advance everyone's interests, adding \$7 trillion to our national debt."

Ramaswamy jostled recently with conservative commentator Tucker Carlson over Ramaswamy's accusations of systemic corruption in the U.S. establishment.

When Sean Hannity, the hugely influential Fox News personality, challenged Ramaswamy after his interview with Carlson, the candidate insisted he was mischaracterized. Retorted Hannity: "You do this in every single interview. You say stuff but then you deny it, your own words."

Trump's critics accuse him of doing that as well. The former president also got in trouble with top Republicans for denigrating Israel's prime minister after the Hamas attack. Yet Trump remains such an overwhelming favorite to win the GOP nomination that he has skipped each debate, leaving Ramaswamy to absorb punches most candidates never direct toward the former president.

"I am telling you, Putin and President Xi are salivating at the thought that someone like that could become president," Haley retorted Wednesday, saying the Russian and Chinese leaders "would love" his isolationism.

Ramaswamy showed his core strategy earlier this year in a brief huddle with a 16-year-old who asked

for advice. "Find where the pack is going and then figure out what they missed," Ramaswamy told him. "You have to buck the consensus."

But he added a bottom line: "You have to be right."

Associated Press writers Linley Sanders in Washington and Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Jim Biden's last name has helped open doors. It's also made him a Republican target

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, ALAN SUDERMAN and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press
ELLWOOD CITY, Pa. (AP) — When a healthcare startup dreamed of building a network of rural hospitals several years ago, it turned to Jim Biden.

Although he wasn't a public health consultant or a medical expert, Jim Biden was the brother of Joe Biden, who had recently finished his term as vice president. The firm's chief executive believed Jim Biden would help provide the enterprise with "serious horsepower."

But Jim Biden wasn't the secret weapon that Americore Health Services was counting on. The company imploded in 2019, filing for bankruptcy amid a pile of lawsuits and a federal investigation into fraud allegations. Americore also accused Jim Biden of failing to repay \$600,000 in loans.

Some of the Florida-based company's hospitals closed, including one here in Ellwood City, near the western edge of Pennsylvania, where medical equipment gathers dust and plywood covers broken windows. The only reminder of the bankrupt company's brief tenure as the town's biggest employer is a plaque honoring its donation to a nearby high school athletic field.

The fallout has extended to Washington, where Republicans are hunting for evidence that could be used to impeach President Joe Biden. It's a playbook that they've already used on Joe Biden's son Hunter, whose checkered history includes controversial overseas dealmaking, accusations of tax evasion and a well-publicized struggle with addiction.

Republicans have not uncovered evidence directly tying the president to any wrongdoing. But his brother and son make attractive twin targets, having been close for decades and facing accusations of leveraging their last name into corporate paydays. House Republicans subpoenaed them on Wednesday as part of their probe into a complicated web of transactions and relationships within the Biden family.

The latest focus has been on a series of payments that Republicans claim show the president benefited from his brother's work, including more than \$600,000 that Americore sent Jim Biden when the company was struggling to stay afloat.

Republicans have highlighted a \$200,000 personal check from Jim to Joe Biden on the same day — March 1, 2018 — that Jim Biden received an equal amount from Americore.

House Democrats point to bank records they say indicate Jim Biden was repaying a loan provided by his brother, who had wire transferred \$200,000 to him about six weeks earlier. The money changed hands while Joe Biden was a private citizen, after his stint as vice president and before announcing his successful White House bid.

"There is nothing more to those transactions, and there is nothing wrong with them," said Paul Fishman, an attorney representing Jim Biden. "And Jim Biden has never involved his brother in his business dealings."

He accused Republicans of pursuing "an unnecessary and intrusive review of Jim's private banking records."

White House spokesman Ian Sams said "extreme House Republicans won't let the truth get in the way of abusing their power to conduct a smear campaign against the president."

Jim Biden last year repaid Americore \$350,000 to settle a lawsuit filed by the company's court-appointed trustee. His lawyers for that proceeding said he played no role in the company's collapse and all the money he received was for his consulting work, not loans, as the trustee had alleged.

Biden's political adversaries have vowed to press forward with their investigations as an election year

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approaches.

Rep. James Comer, the Kentucky Republican who chairs the House Oversight Committee, said he's "troubled that Joe Biden's ability to recoup funds depend on his brother's cashing in on the Biden brand."

Comer is also scrutinizing a daisy chain of transactions beyond those involving Americore. The lawmaker claims records show that Joe Biden benefited from "laundered China money" when Hunter and Jim Biden began working with a politically connected Chinese energy company in 2017.

Jim Biden's wife, Sara, cut a personal check to Joe Biden for \$40,000 on Sept. 3, 2017, which came weeks after a payment from Chinese interests.

House Democrats said bank records show Joe Biden had wired \$40,000 to his brother a little more than a month earlier, suggesting that the subsequent check was to repay a loan.

Representatives for Joe and Jim Biden did not provide explanations for the loans, which were made during a lucrative intermission in the president's career as an elected official. In the two years after leaving the vice presidency, Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, made \$15 million in book deals, speaking fees and university work.

Jim Biden's varied career has included stints working as a nightclub owner, selling health and pension benefit services to labor unions and working for a construction company seeking contracts in the Middle East. Last year he said he was looking to purchase a professional rugby franchise in Philadelphia. Jim Biden also has a checkered financial history that includes lawsuits over unpaid bills, trouble with mortgage payments and liens for unpaid federal, state and municipal taxes, court and land records show.

Concerns that Jim Biden's business ventures and missteps would cloud Joe Biden's political career stretch back decades.

After Joe Biden was elected to the Senate in 1972, Jim Biden ran a Delaware nightclub called Seasons Change that eventually shut down with roughly \$600,000 in unpaid debts, according to local newspapers.

Jim Biden received some loans for the club because officials at one bank believed that his last name "would attract a trendy free-spending crowd," the Delaware News Journal reported in 1977. One of the officials tried to pressure Jim Biden to repay the money by telling him that delinquency could embarrass his brother.

According to a newspaper interview that the bank's chairman gave at the time, Joe Biden angrily called to complain. "Look," the senator said, "whatever goes on with my brother, it's his problem, and don't bring my name into it."

Jim Biden's personal financial troubles played a role in his brother's decision to quit his first presidential campaign in 1988, according to the book "What It Takes."

And his ties to lawyers entangled in a Mississippi bribery scheme became a target for Republicans in the 2008 race, when Joe Biden was Barack Obama's running mate.

The negative publicity doesn't seem to have driven a wedge between the brothers, and the president tapped Jim Biden to pick out furnishings for the Oval Office. He also attended a state dinner at the White House honoring Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June.

Joe and Jim Biden's lives have been intertwined in ways that transcend the typical closeness between siblings. The president is the oldest of four children, followed by his sister Valerie, Jim and youngest brother Frank. Their father was a used car salesman and their mother a homemaker, and they were often strapped for cash while growing up.

Jim Biden left the University of Delaware without graduating and raised money for his brother's first Senate campaign. After the 1972 election, Joe Biden's wife and baby daughter were killed in a car accident. His two sons, Beau and Hunter, were badly injured. Jim Biden converted the garage of his brother's house into an apartment, helping with the boys in Delaware as the new senator shuttled back and forth to Washington.

In an interview last year with Internal Revenue Service agents investigating Hunter Biden's taxes, Jim Biden referred to his nephew as his "best friend." A memo summarizing the interview was released by House Republicans.

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Hunter was similarly effusive in his memoir, "Beautiful Things," describing how his uncle brought him to rehab in California when he battled addiction to alcohol and crack cocaine following the 2015 death of Beau Biden to brain cancer.

"Dad knew that if his younger brother asked me to do something, I'd do it," Hunter recalled in his memoir. "Uncle Jim has his own superpower: he gets things done. So he jumped on a plane to Los Angeles, pulled me out of a room in the Hollywood Roosevelt, and said, 'I found a place. Let's go.'"

The uncle and nephew have also been in business with each other. Some deals fizzled, like a disastrous purchase of a hedge fund, while others were lucrative, like consulting for CEFC China Energy.

Records released by House Republicans show more than \$1 million in payments linked to the Chinese firm were paid to Jim Biden's company.

But even when Jim Biden was making money, he struggled to stay solvent. In September 2017 he was sued by American Express over a \$65,000 unpaid credit card bill. Court records show the matter was dropped, and Jim Biden's representatives said the bill was paid.

In early 2018, Jim Biden sold a Florida vacation home for about \$1 million less than what he had paid for it a few years earlier after it was damaged by Hurricane Irma. Last year he was hit with a \$16,000 state tax lien in Pennsylvania, which was paid off a month later, according to local court records.

Republicans remain interested in what transpired with Americore, referencing payments from the company when writing that they've "uncovered evidence that President Biden directly benefited from Jim Biden's attempts to peddle influence."

It is not clear how Americore connected with Jim Biden. Tom Pritchard, a former company executive, said he immediately doubted Jim Biden's value to the startup.

The executive was perplexed that Jim Biden insisted on decorating his office with expensive furniture even as the company was losing money. And Jim Biden always seemed more interested in selling the image of a political insider than doing the hard work necessary to save the firm, Pritchard said.

"He was definitely going for the presidential look," Pritchard said in describing how Jim Biden displayed signed photos of his brother and Obama in his office.

He added that Jim Biden "wanted to do as little as possible and reap the maximum benefits."

Fishman defended Jim Biden's contributions to the company, saying he "worked diligently to identify investors, strategic partners and business opportunities for Americore."

Pritchard said Jim Biden promised to leverage his brother's clout to attract investment from the Middle East, as well as to win contracts to conduct laboratory work for unions and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

In the end, the cash infusion from such countries as Qatar and Saudi Arabia never arrived. Instead, Jim Biden helped land a bridge loan for the company, according to court records. The money, more than \$19 million, was from a South Florida money manager, Michael Lewitt, with whom he had started a separate venture around the same time.

Jim Biden and Lewitt's company, Platinum Global Partners, listed as its address a small Delray Beach, Florida, body shop specializing in foreign car repairs, according to corporate registry records. It was dissolved in July 2020, barely 16 months after it was created.

Last month, the Securities and Exchange Commission accused Lewitt in a civil lawsuit of defrauding investors, many of them senior citizens, who were told their savings would be used to purchase Wall Street securities — not funneled to Americore, an unlisted, unprofitable company. Lewitt, the fund's sole manager, is accused of taking \$4.7 million for himself. Lewitt did not respond to a request for comment.

Jim Biden was not named in the suit, and Fishman said he is not under investigation.

Pritchard said Biden's promises helped Americore persuade skeptical residents in small towns to embrace the firm's takeovers. That was especially true, Pritchard said, in Ellwood City, where the hospital, like the old steel mill town, had been declining for decades.

At a hearing before a local judge in August 2017 to approve the sale, Americore's president, Grant White, invoked Jim Biden's involvement as he spoke emotionally about the company's plans.

"So when you say what's our motivation, why are people like Jim Biden, who could do many other

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things with his life, why am I doing this instead of investment banking and making a few bucks?" White said with Jim Biden nearby in the courtroom. "Because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to actually make a difference."

Americore's collapse has left bitterness in Ellwood City, a traditionally blue-collar Democratic town won by former President Donald Trump in 2020.

At the same time the company was bleeding cash, Jim Biden received \$600,000 that former workers believed could have been directed to the struggling hospital here.

Within two years of Americore acquiring the facility, the company capped paychecks at \$500 and the emergency room's CT scanner broke. Just days before Christmas in 2019, the last of the hospital's roughly 200 employees were laid off.

Scott Paglia, a respiratory therapist who worked at the hospital for two decades, remains angry over what happened. He blames Jim Biden for profiting from his hometown's misfortune and suspects Americore was intent on fraud from the outset.

"How do these people get away with this?" asked Paglia. But he's also angry at Jim Biden's brother. The president, he said, "had to know he was selling the Biden name."

Suderman reported from Richmond, Virginia, and Megerian reported from Washington. Associated Press news researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed from New York.

Biden and Xi are to meet next week. There is no detail too small to sweat

By WILL WEISSERT and DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden meets Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday, there will be no such thing as a small detail.

How they greet? If they eat? Where they sit? Will there be flowers? Bottled water or in a glass? "Pretty intense," senior administration officials say of navigating delicate protocols.

Any encounter involving the president and a foreign leader means managing tricky logistics, political and cultural, and every occurrence or utterance can potentially jolt the world order. But few nations are more attuned to etiquette than the Chinese, and Washington and Beijing's often-conflicting interests might mean the seemingly trivial becomes meaningful.

There's probably "very detailed planning of the actual choreography of who enters a room where, if there will be pictures taken and all of that," said Bonny Lin, senior fellow for Asian security and director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Biden and Xi will meet while both attend next week's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco, but even basic information has remained closely guarded. Statements Friday by China's government didn't mention the day or location, and the White House says only that the face-to-face will be held "in the Bay area," citing security concerns.

That could only increase the pressure as both sides potentially haggle over everything from meeting time and length to who enters the room first. Will they use a table or easy chairs? What about security presence and interpreter access?

Then there is the more obviously substantive: whether there will be a post-meeting joint statement and how much of the session will be in public view.

The plan is to set aside enough time for in-depth conversations on issues that will be divided into different sessions, senior administration officials say. That recalls Biden's nearly three-hour meeting with Xi before the start of last year's G-20 summit in Bali.

The officials also noted that this will be Xi's first trip to the U.S. in six years, and his first to San Francisco since he was a provincial Communist Party secretary.

Victor Cha, former Director for Asian Affairs on the White House's National Security Council, said organizing such meetings at APEC is easier than at a formal location. But, he said, hammering out talks on summit sidelines is still "a logistics nightmare."

"China, normally, if they come to United States, they want everything. They want all the pomp and

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circumstance. They want the highest possible respect that can be paid to them," Cha said. "That is politically not possible. And so, having APEC in San Francisco solves that problem in the sense that it's not the official White House that's hosting the meeting."

Even informal settings can bring high stakes.

When President Richard Nixon visited China in 1972, aiming to ease decades of animosity, he brought a new pair of shoes with rubber soles to climb the Great Wall.

President Barack Obama and Xi didn't wear ties during their 2013 meeting at Sunnylands, a sumptuous, modernist mansion in Rancho Mirage near Palm Springs, California. It was news then that Obama stayed overnight there while the Chinese delegation returned to a nearby hotel.

Donald Trump and Xi wore dark suits for dinner at Mar-a-Lago four years later, and the meal featured what the then-president called "the most beautiful piece of chocolate cake."

Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund, said that, for the upcoming meeting, Xi's team likely pushed for a venue away from the APEC site and talks lasting longer than Bali's.

"The Chinese want a separate summit," she said.

The Chinese attach importance to the location, which this time may be more like Sunnylands than Anchorage, where top U.S. and Chinese officials held rather tense 2021 talks. Chinese state media might fixate on the weather as a barometer for bilateral relations. Early forecasts are calling for rain with a high in the mid-60s for San Francisco.

Even on-site flowers could be important, as certain choices can symbolize harmony in Chinese culture. Plum blossom is a well-liked flower known in China for persevering amid harshness, while lotuses convey peace in the Chinese language. Chrysanthemums, by contrast, are associated with death.

Xi may expect Biden to greet him upon arrival. His team could also want him and Biden photographed together without staff to convey a personal relationship.

"Chinese officials will want to project to their domestic audience that Xi is received by Biden with dignity and respect," said Ryan Hass, director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institute. He suggested that required "imagery of both leaders interacting on a personal basis, beyond the customary handshake in front of a bank of flags in a hotel conference room."

That could be as simple as a short walk together, Hass said. The Chinese also tend to emphasize food and might push for a meal.

During Nixon's 1971 visit, a military honor guard greeted him at the airport, but the much-watched series of toasts from both sides came later, only after a shark fin banquet dish was served. China offered a Texas-style barbecue at a luxury Beijing hotel to fete President George H.W. Bush in 1989, but blocked his invitation of Fang Lizhi, then the country's best-known dissident.

The APEC setting precludes a formal dinner. But lunch is possible. That's despite Xi scheduling his trips down to the minute and often packing in so much that there's no time to eat, according to a documentary on its diplomatic principles China released in 2017.

Both sides also always have security concerns. Obama wrote in his memoir of his 2009 China trip that his team was "instructed to leave any non-governmental electronic devices on the plane" and to operate assuming "that our communications were being monitored" and hotel rooms had hidden cameras.

Hillary Clinton's 1995 Beijing visit turned heads for a different reason when she declared that "human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights." So did Laura Bush's 2008 trip to the Olympics in Beijing after she stopped in Thailand and visited a refugee camp for people fleeing the government of China-backed Myanmar.

But protocols around U.S.-China leader interactions don't always have to address espionage threats or human rights matters.

Sasha Obama was 9 and studying Mandarin in grade school when she practiced a few phrases during a 2011 White House welcome ceremony for Chinese President Hu Jintao. When she and her sister, Malia, visited China with their mother, Michelle, on a goodwill tour three years later, the Chinese press dubbed

the then-first lady "Mrs. Diplomatic."

That trip featured a toboggan ride away from the press after a Great Wall visit, and a game of table tennis where Michelle Obama joked that her husband played the game and "thinks he's better than he really is." Yet what unfolded felt stiff to some. The write-up in The New York Times carried the headline: "Even With Ping-Pong, a Formal Meeting in China."

Associated Press writer Colleen Long contributed to this report.

Projects featuring Lady Bird Johnson's voice offer new looks at the late first lady

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Texas college student Jade Emerson found herself entranced as she worked on a podcast about Lady Bird Johnson, listening to hour upon hour of the former first lady recounting everything from her childhood memories to advising her husband in the White House.

"I fell in love very quickly," said Emerson, host and producer of the University of Texas podcast "Lady Bird." "She kept surprising me."

The podcast, which was released earlier this year, is among several recent projects using Johnson's own lyrical voice to offer a new look at the first lady who died in 2007. Other projects include a documentary titled "The Lady Bird Diaries" that premieres Monday on Hulu and an exhibit in Austin at the presidential library for her husband, Lyndon B. Johnson, who died in 1973.

Lady Bird Johnson began recording an audio diary in the tumultuous days after her husband became president following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. The library released that audio about a decade after her death. It adds to recorded interviews she did following her husband's presidency and home movies she narrated.

"I don't know that people appreciated or realized how much she was doing behind the scenes and I think that's the part that's only just now really starting to come out," said Lara Hall, LBJ Presidential Library curator.

"Lady Bird: Beyond the Wildflowers" shows library visitors the myriad ways Johnson made an impact. Hall said the exhibit, which closes at the end of the year, has been so popular that the library hopes to integrate parts of it into its permanent display.

In making her podcast, Emerson, who graduated from UT in May with a journalism degree, relied heavily on the interviews Johnson did with presidential library staff over the decades after her husband left the White House in 1969.

"Just to have her telling her own story was so fascinating," Emerson said. "And she just kept surprising me. Like during World War II when LBJ was off serving, she was the one who ran his congressional office in the 1940s. She had bought a radio station in Austin and went down to Austin to renovate it and get it going again."

The new documentary from filmmaker Dawn Porter, based on Julia Sweig's 2021 biography "Lady Bird Johnson: Hiding in Plain Sight" and a podcast hosted by the author, takes viewers through the White House years. From advising her husband on strategy to critiquing his speeches, her influence is quickly seen.

Porter also notes that Johnson was "a fierce environmentalist" and an advocate for women. She was also a skilled campaigner, Porter said. Among events the documentary recounts is Johnson's tour of the South aboard a train named the "Lady Bird Special" before the 1964 election.

With racial tensions simmering following the passage of the Civil Rights Act, President Johnson sent his wife as his surrogate. "She does that whistle-stop tour in the very hostile South and does it beautifully," Porter said.

"She did all of these things and she didn't ask for credit, but she deserves the credit," Porter said.

The couple's daughter Luci Baines Johnson can still remember the frustration she felt as a 16-year-old when she saw the message hanging on the doorknob to her mother's room that read: "I want to be

alone." Lady Bird Johnson would spend that time working on her audio tapes, compiling her thoughts from photographs, letters and other information that might strike her memory.

"She was just begging for the world to give her the time to do what she'd been uniquely trained to do," said Luci Baines Johnson, who noted that her mother had degrees in both history and journalism from the University of Texas.

"She was just beyond, beyond and beyond," she said. "She thought a day without learning was a day that was wasted."

Emerson called her work on the podcast "a huge gift" as she "spent more time with Lady Bird than I did with anyone else in my college years."

"She's taught me a lot about just what type of legacy I'd like to leave with my own life and just how to treat people."

"Every time I hear her voice, I start to smile," she said.

Nonprofits making progress in tackling homelessness among veterans, but challenges remain

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Along a busy Atlanta residential road, a 68-year-old Vietnam War-era Army veteran has found what he calls a "match made in heaven."

Harold Tilson Jr. found himself homeless earlier this year but for the past few months has been living in transitional housing run by the nonprofit Veterans Empowerment Organization, or VEO. It provides emergency and permanent housing for dozens of previously homeless military veterans.

"If you're homeless and you need help, you couldn't ask for a better place to go because they take care of just about everything," Tilson said.

It's part of a years-long effort by government agencies and nonprofits around the country to address homelessness among veterans. Since January 2020, the numbers of homeless veterans have fallen 11% and have gone down 55% over the past 13 years, according to a government count. That's in sharp contrast with the general homeless population.

Authorities credit the Obama administration's work to make housing veterans a top priority and more recently the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package that boosted the Department of Veteran Affairs' homeless programs and expanded rental aid. Advocates also point to partnerships between government agencies, nonprofits and corporate foundations.

Last month, the VA gave \$1 billion in grants to community nonprofits for the upcoming year to tackle the issue, the most ever, said Jill Albanese, director of clinical operations at the Veterans Health Administration's Homeless Programs Office.

"This isn't something that we're doing on our own: This is really something that we're doing through partnerships," Albanese said. "They're the experts on homelessness in their communities."

Still, the number of veterans living on the streets is significant. There are more than 33,000 homeless veterans, according to the 2022 Point-in-Time count conducted by the VA and Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

And much still needs to be done, said Kathryn Monet, CEO of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, calling it a "moving target" — just as people are moving out of homelessness, others become unhoused every day. Affordable housing is key, she said, though communities nationwide have struggled with that.

Along with housing, the VEO offers classes about financial literacy, securing VA benefits and how to get on a path toward employment and housing independence. There's also a common area for reading and a gym for working out.

"We are proud to say that we are not a shelter. This is a program center, meaning the veteran has to put some skin in the game," said Tony Kimbrough, a former military intelligence officer and CEO of the nonprofit, which started in 2008 with a single two-bedroom house. "We're going to put a ton of it in there, but we expect a little bit of back-and-forth."

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Tilson became homeless in February when he was forced out of the triplex he was renting south of Atlanta. He spent the next month and a half sleeping in the street or on business doorsteps, relying on friends from his church for food or access to a shower. Church members steered him to local nonprofits and he eventually landed at VEO, where he has been living in emergency housing, has taken a five-week financial literacy course and is focused on improving his credit score.

Tilson, who suffered a stroke last year, said he needs a knee replacement and hernia surgery to address the physical toll carrying his belongings took while he was homeless. A VA case manager is helping him get those, and he's optimistic that in a few months he'll get to move into his own place, with the help of VEO and another local nonprofit.

His friends from church are thrilled about the help he's getting, Tilson said, but "nobody can be happier than me."

In addition to 10 double-occupancy rooms housing veterans like Tilson in emergency shelter, the VEO campus has 41 apartment units where veterans pay a few hundred dollars in rent. VA funding makes up the difference, allowing the nonprofit to reinject the money and expand. Its next project is 20 single-occupancy bedrooms being built this winter.

VEO says its expansion would not be possible, without more than \$2.3 million in corporate donations from The Home Depot Foundation.

The Atlanta-based foundation has helped some 50,000 homeless veterans nationwide through its partnership with nonprofits like VEO. It has donated \$500 million to veterans causes since 2011, and on Friday announced a commitment to giving an additional \$250 million by 2030.

Company employees have also volunteered more than 1.5 million hours in service to veterans, including building or repairing 60,000 houses and facilities for former service members. On Friday, 20 members of "Team Depot" were finishing a weeklong project to build a garden, complete with a water feature, in honor of Veterans Day.

"When we think about the role that corporate foundations can play, it boils down to three things," said Jennifer A. Taylor, a political science professor at James Madison University and a military spouse who studies philanthropy and veterans issues. "Are you a funder — giving out grants for others to do the work? Are you a doer — taking employees out into the community? Or are you a convener — bringing thought leaders together? Home Depot is doing all of those things."

Home Depot CEO Ted Decker said the company's giving philosophy was always housing-centric but was "pretty disparate" before 2011. That's when then-CEO Frank Blake, realizing that tens of thousands of employees were veterans or spouses of veterans, decided to focus the company's philanthropy on veteran housing.

"It fit our culture," Decker said.

Despite the progress that's been made, there are still tens of thousands of homeless veterans, including nearly 3,500 in the Los Angeles area.

Navy veteran Malcolm Harvey III spent years living on the streets in Southern California, including Los Angeles' Skid Row. In 2015, a representative from the nonprofit U.S. Vets helped him get a job with the organization. Speaking gigs on behalf of The Home Depot Foundation followed.

Now, Harvey, 62, is married, owns a condo and works as program director at the Long Beach nonprofit People Assisting The Homeless.

"We can't become numb to this," Harvey said of the homelessness problem among former service members.

"We made a promise to them when they took that oath and put on that uniform and decided to defend this country," he said.

"We owe them a debt of gratitude. But we owe them more than that: We owe them action."

Associated Press Writer Michael Casey in Boston contributed to this report.

If you are a veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-424-3838 for assistance.

Biden's movable wall is criticized by environmentalists and those who want more border security

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — The Biden administration's plan to build new barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border in South Texas calls for a "movable" design that frustrates both environmentalists and advocates of stronger border enforcement.

The plans for the nearly 20 miles (32 kilometers) of new barrier in Starr County were made public in September when the federal government sought public input. The following month, the administration waived 26 federal laws protecting the environment and certain species to speed up the construction process.

"The United States Border Patrol did not ask for this downgraded border wall," Rodney Scott, a former U.S. Border Patrol chief said.

Construction is moving forward despite President Joe Biden's campaign promise not to build more wall and amid an increase in migrants coming to the nation's southern border from across Latin America and other parts of the world to seek asylum. Illegal crossings topped 2 million for the second year in a row for the government's budget year that ended Sept. 30.

People such as Scott who want more border security believe the barriers won't be strong enough to stop people from crossing illegally. Environmentalists, meanwhile, say the design actually poses a greater risk to animal habitat than former President Donald Trump's border wall.

Biden has defended the administration's decision by saying he had to use the Trump-era funding for it. The law requires the funding for the new barriers to be used as approved and for the construction to be completed in 2023.

Most barriers on the border were erected in the last 20 years under Trump and former President George W. Bush. Those sections of border wall include Normandy-style fencing that resembles big X's and bollard-style fencing made of upright steel posts.

Biden's barrier will be much shorter than the 18- to 30-foot (5.5 to 9-meter) concrete-filled steel bollard panels of Trump's wall. It also could be temporary.

An example of the style of barrier his administration will use can be seen in Brownsville, about 100 miles (161 kilometers) southeast of Starr County. Metal bollards embedded into 4-foot-high (1.2-meter-high) cement blocks that taper toward the top sit along the southern part of a neighborhood not far from the curving Rio Grande.

Over the last year, the Rio Grande Valley region was the fourth-busiest area for the number of people crossing into the U.S. illegally, though it was the busiest in previous years.

With the design planned for Starr County, federal border agents will be able to move around the fencing, said Democratic U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, who represents Starr County. "So it's one of those things where if they want to direct traffic, they can move it."

Scott agreed that the "moveable" fences can be used as an emergency stopgap measure to block off access in some areas. But he warned that if the fencing isn't placed far enough into the ground, someone might be able to use a vehicle to shove it out of the way, provided they don't mind damaging the vehicle.

Laiken Jordahl, a conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity, said mountain lions, bobcats, javelinas, coyotes, white-tail deer, armadillos, jack rabbits, ground squirrels, and two endangered, federally protected plants — Zapata bladderpod and prostrate milkweed — may be affected.

Jordahl said the design the Biden administration is using "will block even the smallest species of animals from passing through the barrier."

"The one advantage for making it shorter is, I guess if somebody falls while they're climbing over it, they aren't falling as far," Scott Nicol, a board member of the Friends of the Wildlife Corridor, said.

Nicol, who lives in the Rio Grande Valley, is familiar with the type of barriers Biden's administration will

use, the terrain, and the weather in Starr County. He is concerned about unintended consequences, particularly on the Rio Grande that separates U.S. and Mexico.

"You know, if Starr County gets hit by a big rainstorm and the water has to drain into the river, these walls — whether it's the bollard walls or the Jersey barrier walls — are going to block the movement of that water and dam it up," Nicol said.

Last month, the Center for Biological Diversity along with about 100 other organizations sent the U.S. government a letter pleading for reconsideration of environmental protection laws. To date, they have not received an answer.

John Bailey, who presided over the film academy during the initial #MeToo reckoning, dies at 81

LOS ANGELES (AP) — John Bailey, a cinematographer who led the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences during the initial #MeToo reckoning, died Friday at 81.

Bailey died "peacefully in his sleep" in Los Angeles, his wife, Carol Littleton, said in a statement distributed by the film academy.

Bailey — who worked on films ranging from "Ordinary People" to "Groundhog Day" to "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days" — was the first cinematographer to preside over the Academy, serving two terms that spanned 2017-2019.

Those were tumultuous years for the film industry. When Bailey took over, the Oscars alone had been grappling with falling ratings, controversies over the homogeneity of its choices (#OscarsSoWhite) and the infamous envelope flub in 2017 that marred the best picture win for "Moonlight." Scarcely two months into his presidency, The New York Times and The New Yorker released bombshell reports about sexual assault allegations against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein that ignited an industry-wide reckoning about power structures and abuses.

The Academy's Board of Governors voted to expel Weinstein shortly after the reports. Afterward, with questions arising about other members who remained in good standing despite being accused, Bailey said in a memo to members that the organization "cannot, and will not, be an inquisitorial court, but we can be a part of a larger initiative to define standards of behavior and to support the vulnerable women and men who may be at personal and career risk because of violations of ethical standards by their peers."

The Academy subsequently adopted a code of conduct stipulating it was no place for "people who abuse their status, power or influence in a manner that violates standards of decency," and made it easier to suspend or expel members.

"I may be a 75-year-old white male, but I'm every bit as gratified as the youngest of you here that the fossilized bedrock of many of Hollywood's worst abuses are being jackhammered into oblivion," Bailey said at the 2018 Oscars luncheon.

Soon after, Bailey himself was accused of attempting to touch a woman inappropriately on a movie set a decade prior. Bailey denied the allegation and an Academy investigation determined no further action was required in March 2018. He was reelected to a second term later that year.

Bailey's tenure also saw attempts to change the Academy Awards ceremony that grew contentious. In 2018, the Academy announced the Oscars would add a popular film award and shorten the telecast by bumping the presentation of certain categories to commercial breaks.

"We have heard from many of you about improvements needed to keep the Oscars and our Academy relevant in a changing world," Bailey and Academy CEO Dawn Hudson wrote in an email to members.

The moves sparked immediate backlash, including fears that the new category would relegate hits like that year's "Black Panther" out of contention for the best film award. A month later, the "outstanding achievement in popular film" award had been tabled.

Bailey told The Associated Press at the time that he had been surprised by the intense reaction.

"The idea of this award was not about trying to make sure that certain kinds of big mass market pictures get recognized. To my mind, it's more about the kind of pictures that are so difficult to get made,"

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he said. He championed "middle pictures," citing his own films as examples of movies with larger budgets that don't tend to get laurels.

(The decision to cut categories from the telecast was also unpopular, but stuck — temporarily. All categories have since been restored to the show.)

Bailey is survived by Littleton, a former Academy governor and film editor who was nominated for an Oscar for "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial." She was announced as the recipient of an honorary Oscar this year, but the Governors Awards ceremony was delayed because of the Hollywood strikes.

The Oscars are ever-evolving, with more changes since Bailey's time at the top. In his view, the Oscars could not be a static entity. Instead, he told the AP in 2018, the statuette "is a symbol of excellence in an ever-changing industry. And what we're trying to do is keep up with those changes and honor those changes. It's not like it's frozen in time, these awards."

"For an institution that people keep saying is irrelevant and is out of touch with everything to do with the industry, and there are people who say that, they seem to be very eager to kind of jump into the fray, voice their opinions and create discussion," Bailey said. "If we're that irrelevant, why is everybody so concerned about it?"

'From the river to the sea': Why these 6 words spark fury and passion over the Israel-Hamas war

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

The Jordan River is a winding, 200-plus-mile run on the eastern flank of Israel and the occupied West Bank. The sea is the glittering Mediterranean to its west.

But a phrase about the space in between, "from the river to the sea," has become a battle cry with new power to roil Jews and pro-Palestinian activists in the aftermath of Hamas' deadly rampage across southern Israel Oct. 7 and Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," pro-Palestinian activists from London to Rome and Washington chanted in the volatile aftermath of Israel's bloodiest day. Adopting or defending it can be costly for public figures, such as U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, who was censured by the House on Tuesday.

But like so much of the Mideast conflict, what the phrase means depends on who is telling the story — and which audience is hearing it.

Many Palestinian activists say it's a call for peace and equality after 75 years of Israeli statehood and decades-long, open-ended Israeli military rule over millions of Palestinians. Jews hear a clear demand for Israel's destruction.

This much is clear: Hamas fighters killed at least 1,200 people in Israel, mainly in the initial Hamas attack, and 41 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the ground offensive began, Israeli officials say. The Foreign Ministry had previously estimated the civilian death toll at 1,400, and gave no reason Friday for the revision.

Hamas also hauled around 240 people back to Gaza as hostages in the worst violence against Jews since the Holocaust.

Israel responded with heavy bombardment of Gaza and a ground offensive, that has killed more than 11,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The death toll is certain to rise. The result is the deadliest round of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in decades.

In the raw afterburn of the Hamas attacks, the chant seems to put everyone on edge.

SLOGAN ADOPTED BY HAMAS

"From the river to the sea" echoes through pro-Palestinian rallies across campuses and cities, adopted by some as a call for a single state on the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean.

By 2012, it was clear that Hamas had claimed the slogan in its drive to claim land spanning Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

"Palestine is ours from the river to the sea and from the south to the north," Khaled Mashaal, the group's former leader, said that year in a speech in Gaza celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of

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Hamas. "There will be no concession on any inch of the land."

The phrase also has roots in the Hamas charter.

The story behind the phrase is much larger, and reaches across the decades.

In the months before and during the 1948 war, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from what is now Israel. Many expected to return. Israel captured the West Bank, along with Gaza and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 war. In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza, and in 2007, Hamas claimed the tiny strip from the Palestinian Authority after a violent coup.

WHAT JEWS SAY THEY HEAR

Even the shorthand, "from the river to the sea," echoes through pro-Palestinian protests, crackles across social media and is available on a variety of merchandise, from sweatshirts to candles.

Ask Jewish people in London what's so chilled them about the current spike in antisemitism, and many will cite what seems like the ubiquity of the slogan. It is a sign, they suggest, that there's much to fear.

"Have no doubt that Hamas is cheering those 'from the river to the sea' chants, because a Palestine between the river to the sea leaves not a single inch for Israel," read an open letter signed by 30 Jewish news outlets around the world and released on Wednesday.

And in the wake of Hamas' killing of civilians on Oct. 7, they're not buying that the chant is merely anti-Israel. Backed by groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, they say it's inherently anti-Jewish.

"No one can now say that in the eyes of Hamas, a hatred of Israel does not mean a hatred of all Jews," said London resident Sarah Nachshen. "The slogans and placards and chants calling for the eradication of Israel and, indeed, all Jews have clearly shown this."

WHAT PALESTINIAN ACTIVISTS SAY

Tlaib, D-Mich., who has family in the West Bank and is Congress' only Palestinian-American, posted a video Nov. 3 that featured protesters chanting the slogan.

No stranger to criticism over her rhetoric on the U.S.-Israel relationship, Tlaib defended the slogan.

"From the river to the sea is an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction, or hate," Tlaib tweeted, cautioning that conflating anti-Israel sentiment with anti-semitism "silence(s) diverse voices speaking up for human rights."

Tweeted Yousef Munayyer, head of the Palestine/Israel Program and a senior Fellow at Arab Center Washington: "There isn't a square inch of the land between the river and the sea where Palestinians have freedom, justice and equality, and it has never been more important to emphasize this than right now."

A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

Most of the international community supports a two-state solution, which calls for the partition of the land. To many, though, decades of Israeli settlement expansion have made the reality of a two-state solution impossible.

Right-wing Israelis have blurred the lines between Israel and the West Bank, where half a million people now live in settlements. Many in the Israeli government support the annexation of the West Bank, and official government maps often make no mention of the "green line" boundary between the two.

And the original platform of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's party, Likud, published a version of the slogan, saying that between the sea and the Jordan River, "there will only be Israeli sovereignty."

THE RISK OF THE SLOGAN

Using the phrase for public figures can be costly. Tlaib's censure is a punishment one step short of expulsion from the House.

Last month, Vienna police banned a pro-Palestinian demonstration, citing the fact that the phrase "from the river to the sea" was mentioned in invitations and characterizing it as a call to violence.

And in Britain, the Labour party issued a temporary punishment to a member of Parliament, Andy McDonald, for using the phrase during a rally at which he called for a stop to bombardment.

"We won't rest until we have justice. Until all people, Israelis & Palestinians, between the river & the sea can live in peaceful liberty," he tweeted.

Then he explained: "These words should not be construed in any other way than they were intended,

namely as a heart felt plea for an end to killings in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank, and for all peoples in the region to live in freedom without the threat of violence." ____

Follow Kellman at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

Hollywood actors union board approves strike-ending deal as leaders tout money gains and AI rights

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

Board members from Hollywood's actors union voted Friday to approve the deal with studios that ended their strike after nearly four months, with the union's leadership touting the gains made in weeks of methodical negotiations.

Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists' executive director and chief negotiator, announced at an afternoon news conference that the tentative agreement was approved with 86% of the vote.

The three-year contract agreement next goes to a vote from the union's members, who are now learning what they earned through spending the summer and early fall on picket lines instead of film and television sets. That vote begins Tuesday and continues into December.

Crabtree-Ireland said the deal "will keep the motion picture industry sustainable as a profession for working class performers."

SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher said the studios believed they could outlast actors by waiting more than two months before initiating talks.

"What were they doing? Were they trying to smoke us out?" she said. "Well honey, I quit smoking a long time ago."

Crabtree-Ireland and Drescher would not give specifics on who disapproved of the deal, and why. The board vote was weighted, so it's not immediately clear how many people voted against approval.

Overall, the happy scene at SAG-AFTRA's Los Angeles headquarters was as different as can be from the defiant, angry tone of a news conference in the same room in July, when guild leaders announced that actors would join writers in a historic strike that shook the industry.

The successful vote from the board, whose members include actors Billy Porter, Jennifer Beals, Sean Astin and Sharon Stone, was expected, as many of the same people were on the committee that negotiated the deal. And it was in some ways drained of its drama by union leaders declaring the strike over as soon as the tentative deal was reached with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers on Wednesday, rather than waiting for the approval.

But it was still an essential step in returning to business as usual in Hollywood, if there is any such thing.

Actors need not wait for the ratification to start acting again — "in fact some of them already have," Crabtree-Ireland said.

Contract provisions surrounding the control of artificial intelligence were among the last sticking points in the agreement.

"AI was a dealbreaker," Drescher said. "If we didn't get that package, then what are we doing to protect our members?"

Here's a look at those and some of the other contract gains that union leaders outlined Friday. A more detailed look the terms will come next week, they said.

ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Productions must get the informed consent of actors whose digital replicas are used. That means there will be a reasonably specific description of how an actor's image will just be used — a vague, boilerplate sentence will not suffice. This includes the consent of background actors used for crowd scenes and similar simulations.

When artificial intelligence is used for a movie or show an actor is already working on, they will be compensated the same as if they'd actually performed what their digital likeness does, the guild said. Companies will need to negotiate new permission to use a likeness in a new project.

"The caveat to the consent is that it's only for the one job," Drescher told The Associated Press in an interview. "They have to come back if they want to use it for something else. That's kind of huge."

When it's a licensed image on a show where an actor, living or dead, is not otherwise performing, the license holders have a right to negotiate a rate.

In a hard-won provision that SAG-AFTRA said came on the final day of negotiations, when generative AI is used to create a synthetic character from the images of several different performers — be it Denzel Washington's eyes or Margot Robbie's hair — consent must be obtained from every person used, and the union must be able to negotiate pay for each.

ON COMPENSATION

The contract includes a creation of a new fund to pay performers for future viewings of their work on streaming services, in addition to traditional residuals paid for the showing of movies or series. The issue derailed talks for more than a week last month before studios returned to the table.

"They leaned pretty far because they were willing to accept that a new stream of revenue had to be established," Drescher told the AP.

A 7% general wage increase is effective immediately, with another 4% hike in July, and another 3.5% a year after that.

An 11% increase for background actors is effective immediately, with the same 4% and 3.5% increases in the coming years.

There will also be more money for the relocation of actors who have to move to appear in TV series.

OTHER FIRST-TIME GAINS

Productions will be required to hire intimacy coordinators for any scenes involving nudity or simulated sex. While this has become an increasingly common practice in recent years, it had not been mandatory.

Dancers asked to sing or singers asked to dance will be fully compensated for both skills, rather than productions getting a two-for-one when performers do double duty.

Sets must have proper hair and makeup artists for all performers who need them, and those artists must be able to properly serve the particular ethnicities and appearances of the performers.

The agreement also includes more protections and funding for the self-taping of auditions.

Associated Press journalist Krysta Fauria contributed reporting.

Thousands who were sheltering at Gaza City's hospitals flee as Israel-Hamas war closes in

By WAFAA SHURAF, ISABEL DEBRE and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Thousands of Palestinians sheltering from the Israel-Hamas war at Gaza City's main hospital fled south Friday after several reported strikes in and around the compound overnight. They joined a growing exodus of people escaping intense urban fighting in the north — including near other hospitals — as Gaza officials said the territory's death toll surpassed 11,000.

The search for safety across the besieged Gaza Strip has grown desperate as Israel intensified its assault on the territory's largest city.

The Israeli army says Hamas' military infrastructure is based amid Gaza City's hospitals and neighborhoods, and that it has set up its main command center in and under the largest hospital, Shifa — claims the militant group and Shifa staff deny.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas after its deadly Oct. 7 surprise incursion, which killed at least 1,200.

More than 100,000 Palestinians have fled south over the past two days, according to Israel, but they still face bombardment and dire conditions. Reported strikes on or near at least four hospitals in northern Gaza overnight underscored the danger for tens of thousands more who had crowded into the facilities, believing they would be safe.

BATTLES AROUND HOSPITALS

Early Friday, at least three strikes over several hours hit the courtyard and the obstetrics department

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of Shifa Hospital, according to Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesperson at the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. A video of the courtyard recorded the sound of incoming fire waking people in makeshift shelters, followed by shouts for an ambulance. In the blood-spattered courtyard, one man writhed, screaming on the ground, his leg apparently severed.

Al-Qidra blamed the attack on Israel, a claim that could not be independently verified. The Israeli army said one strike at Shifa was the result of a misfire by militants targeting its troops nearby.

For weeks, tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians — reaching as many 60,000 this week, according to the Health Ministry — have been sheltering in the Shifa complex.

The overnight strikes triggered a mass exodus of the displaced. About 10 a.m., large numbers packed up their belongings and began walking toward the south, five people who were among those who left told The Associated Press.

Al-Qidra told the Qatar-based satellite news network Al-Jazeera that more than 30,000 displaced people, medical workers and patients remain in the hospital.

Mainly those who could not walk or did not know where to go remained, said Wafaa abu Hajajj, a journalist who arrived in the south after leaving the hospital Friday.

“The strikes were hoping to scare people and it worked. ... It became too much,” said 32-year-old Haneen Abu Awda, who had been at Shifa being treated for wounds from an earlier strike on his house.

At the same time, Shifa has been overwhelmed by thousands of wounded, even as it operates with minimal power and medical supplies.

In video released Friday by the Gaza Health Ministry, bodies of limp children are seen on stretchers across blood-stained floors in the hospital, some dead, some barely breathing. Other patients were strewn around the floor, unable to be treated for lack of supplies. One man is seen gasping for air.

The director of Shifa, Mohammed Abu Selmia, said Israel demanded the facility be evacuated, but he said there was nowhere for such a large number of patients to go.

“Where are we going to evacuate them?” he said, speaking to Al Jazeera television.

The Health Ministry said one person had been killed at Shifa and several were wounded. Another strike near the Nasr Medical Center killed two people, according to the ministry. Abu Selmia said at least 25 people were killed when a strike hit a Gaza City school where people were sheltered inside.

The strike on Nasr forced the shutdown of its children’s hospital, the only remaining specialized pediatric care in north Gaza, said World Health Organization spokesperson Margaret Harris. She said it was not known what happened to patients there, including children receiving dialysis and on life support — “things that you cannot possibly evacuate them safely with.”

Military spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht said Israel is “aware of the sensitivity” of hospitals and that forces were closing in on them slowly. Israel “does not fire on hospitals,” he said, but if militants are seen firing from them “we will do what we need to do” and kill them.

Israel has produced video that it says is evidence that Hamas uses not only hospitals, but schools and mosques as well, as cover for military activities.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said on multiple occasions that Hamas uses civilians as “human shields,” while stressing that this does not give Israel free rein to target buildings where militants are hiding among civilians. He has pointed to international humanitarian law, which states that protection of civilians and hospitals, schools, and homes is paramount.

CIVILIANS FLEE SOUTH

Tens of thousands of new evacuees from the north, some from Shifa, flowed down Salah al-Din road — the central spine running the length of the Gaza Strip — and reached the central city of Deir al-Balah on Friday. With no fuel for vehicles, the crowds walked for hours as explosions echoed a short distance away. Among them were wounded and older people.

They arrived hungry, exhausted and with a stew of emotions: relief, rage, and despair.

Reem Asant, 50, described seeing bodies on the streets as he and others made their way out of Gaza City, trying to avoid shelling.

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"We're talking about children killed in a hospital," shouted one man, Abu Yousef. "Hundreds of women killed every day. Houses collapsing on the heads of civilians. ... Where are human rights? Where is the United Nations? Where is the United States? Where is the International Criminal Court? Where is the entire world?"

The Israeli military announced an expanded six-hour window Friday for civilians to escape northern Gaza along Salah al-Din, the route used since last weekend. It also announced the opening of a second route, along the coastal road, after an agreement announced by the White House a day earlier.

More than two-thirds of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled their homes since the war began. Israel estimates that more than 850,000 of the 1.1 million people in northern Gaza have left, according to military spokesman Jonathan Conricus.

RISING DEATH TOLLS

More than 11,070 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and minors, have been killed since the war began, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths. Another 2,650 people have been reported missing.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that "far too many" Palestinians have died and suffered. While recent Israeli steps to try to minimize civilian harm are positive, he said, they are not enough.

Assistant Secretary of State Barbara Leaf told U.S. lawmakers this week that it was "very possible" the death toll was even higher than the Gaza Health Ministry's tally.

At least 1,200 people have been killed in Israel, mainly in the initial Hamas attack, and 41 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the ground offensive began, Israeli officials say. The Foreign Ministry had previously estimated the civilian death toll at 1,400, and gave no reason Friday for the revision.

An Israeli official told The Associated Press that the number had been changed after a painstaking weeklong process to identify bodies, many of which were mutilated or burned in the Hamas rampage. The final death toll could still change, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement.

Nearly 240 people abducted by Hamas from Israel remain captive.

Palestinian militants have continued to fire rockets into Israel, and an attack on Tel Aviv wounded at least two people Friday, said Yossi Elkabetz, a paramedic with Israel's rescue services. Hamas claimed credit.

About 250,000 Israelis have been forced to evacuate from communities near Gaza and along the northern border with Lebanon, where Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants have traded fire repeatedly.

Debre reported from Jerusalem, and Jeffery from Cairo. Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue and Sarah El Deeb in Beirut; David Rising in Bangkok, Thailand; Lee Keath in Cairo; and Julia Frankel and Josef Federman in Jerusalem, contributed to this report.

Full AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Clashes over Israel-Hamas war shatter students' sense of safety on US college campuses

By KEVIN MCGILL, STEPHEN SMITH and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — As a Jewish student, Eden Roth always has felt safe and welcome at Tulane University, where more than 40% of the students are Jewish. That has been tested by the aftermath of last month's Hamas incursion into Israel.

Graffiti appeared on the New Orleans campus with the message "from the river to the sea," a rallying cry for pro-Palestinian activists. Then came a clash between dueling demonstrations, where a melee led to three arrests and left a Jewish student with a broken nose.

"I think that the shift of experience with Jews on campus was extremely shocking," said Roth, who was in Israel last summer for a study-abroad program. "A lot of students come to Tulane because of the Jewish population — feeling like they're supported, like a majority rather than a minority. And I think that's

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definitely shifted.”

Tulane isn't alone. On other campuses, long-simmering tensions are erupting in violence and shattering the sense of safety that makes colleges hubs of free discourse. Students on both sides are witnessing acts of hate, leaving many fearing for their safety even as they walk to classrooms.

Threats and clashes have sometimes come from within, including at Cornell, where a student is accused of posting online threats against Jewish students. A University of Massachusetts student was arrested after allegedly punching a Jewish student and spitting on an Israeli flag at a demonstration. At Stanford, an Arab Muslim student was hit by a car in a case being investigated as a hate crime.

The unease is felt acutely at Tulane, where 43% of students are Jewish, the highest percentage among colleges that are not explicitly Jewish.

“To see it on Tulane's campus is definitely scary,” said Jacob Starr, a Jewish student from Massachusetts.

Within the student Jewish community, there is a range of perspectives on the conflict. The latest war began with an attack on Oct. 7 by Hamas militants who targeted towns, farming communities and a music festival near the Gaza border. At least 1,200 people have been killed in Israel, mainly in the initial Hamas attack, Israeli officials say. Israel has responded with weeks of attacks in Gaza, which have killed more than 11,000 people, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza — most of them Palestinian civilians.

Emma Sackheim, a Jewish student from Los Angeles who attends Tulane's law school, said she grew up as a supporter of the Jewish state but now considers herself an opponent of Zionism. Sackheim says she knows students who oppose Israel's policies “but don't feel comfortable to publicly say anything.”

“I was standing on the Palestinian side,” she said when asked about the Oct. 26 demonstration, which took place along a public New Orleans street that runs through campus.

Still, she said Tulane is where she feels most comfortable as a Jew. “I know that I have so many options of community,” she said.

On campuses around the U.S., students on both sides say they have been subjected to taunts and rhetoric that oppose their very existence since the invasion and the subsequent Israeli assault on Hamas in northern Gaza.

They see it in campus rallies, on anonymous message boards frequented by college students, and on graffiti scrawled on dorms and buildings. In one case under police investigation as a possible hate crime, “Free Palestine” was found written this week on a window of Boston University's Hillel center.

Colleges have been scrambling to restore a sense of security for Jewish and Arab students — and stressing messages of inclusion for diverse student bodies. But untangling what's protected as political speech and what crosses into threatening language can be a daunting task.

Tulane's president, Michael Fitts, has described an increased police presence and other security measures on campus. In messages to the campus community, he has lamented the loss of innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives and said the university was reaching out to Jewish and Muslim student groups and religious organizations.

He has faced criticism from people on both sides seeking more forceful statements.

Islam Elrabieey, for example, seeks condemnation of Israel's actions.

“To condemn Hamas is a good thing,” said Elrabieey, a native of Egypt and a visiting scholar in Tulane's Middle East and North African Studies program. “But at the same time, if you didn't condemn Israel for committing war crimes, this is a double standard.”

As places that encourage intellectual debate, it isn't surprising that colleges have seen heated conflict, said Jonathan Fansmith, a senior vice president for the American Council on Education, an association of university presidents. But when different factions disagree about what crosses the line between free speech and abuse, it puts colleges in a difficult place, he said.

“Everyone should be incredibly sympathetic to Jewish students who feel under threat, and the alarming rise in antisemitic actions is something college universities take very seriously,” Fansmith said. “But they have a requirement, a responsibility under the law as well, to balance the free speech rights of people who may disagree, who may have critiques that they find disagreeable or dislike. And finding that line is

very, very difficult.”

After facing criticism for trying to remain too neutral on the war, Harvard University’s president on Thursday condemned the phrase “from the river to the sea,” saying it has historical meanings that, to many, imply the eradication of Jews from Israel. Pro-Palestinian activists around the world chanted the phrase in the aftermath of the Hamas raid.

At Tulane, Roth said some Jewish students have been rattled enough to make them think twice about visiting the Mintz Center, the headquarters for the Tulane Hillel organization.

“I don’t feel completely safe, but I feel like we have no other choice but to embrace who we are in these times,” Roth said in an interview at the building. “I know a lot of my friends are nervous to wear their Star of David necklaces, to wear a kippah or even come into this building. But I think it’s critical that we do not let fear consume us.”

Lea Jackson, a freshman from New Jersey who describes herself as a modern Orthodox Jew, said she is concerned supporters of a Palestinian state are nervous expressing their views because of the large numbers of Jewish students on campus.

The Hamas raid may have made some people more reluctant to speak even as others become more outspoken, said Jackson, who said she recently spent a “gap year” in Israel and has friends and family there.

“But it’s a lot harder to have a civil conversation,” Jackson said, “when emotions and tension are so high and so many people are so personally connected to this.”

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FBI seized phones, iPad from New York Mayor Eric Adams in escalation of fundraising investigation

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — FBI agents quietly seized phones and an iPad from New York City Mayor Eric Adams early this week as part of an investigation into political fundraising during his 2021 campaign, his attorney disclosed Friday.

The seizures happened as Adams was leaving a public event in Manhattan, according to a statement from the mayor’s attorney, Boyd Johnson.

“On Monday night, the FBI approached the mayor after an event. The Mayor immediately complied with the FBI’s request and provided them with electronic devices,” Johnson said. “The mayor has not been accused of any wrongdoing and continues to cooperate with the investigation.”

The seizure of the devices, first reported by The New York Times, came four days after federal agents searched the Brooklyn home of Adams’ top campaign fundraiser, Brianna Suggs. That search prompted the mayor to cancel a planned trip to meet with White House officials in Washington and instead return to New York.

In a statement on Friday, Adams, a former police captain, said he had “nothing to hide.”

“As a former member of law enforcement, I expect all members of my staff to follow the law and fully cooperate with any sort of investigation — and I will continue to do exactly that,” he said.

The revelation of the seizure is the clearest evidence yet that federal investigators are interested in Adams, who has previously kept an arms-length distance from ethics scandals that have dogged several of his associates.

Adams, a Democrat, said nothing publicly about his phones being seized when he met with reporters on Wednesday and insisted he wasn’t aware of any wrongdoing by members of his campaign team. He said he would be “shocked” if anyone on his campaign acted inappropriately.

But in his statement Friday, Adams’ attorney said they had “discovered that an individual had recently acted improperly.” His campaign spokesperson declined to identify the person involved or say what they did wrong.

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"After learning of the federal investigation, it was discovered that an individual had recently acted improperly. In the spirit of transparency and cooperation, this behavior was immediately and proactively reported to investigators," Johnson said, offering no further details.

Representatives for the U.S. attorney in Manhattan and the FBI both declined to comment.

The focus of the investigation hasn't been publicly disclosed by prosecutors, but a search warrant obtained by The New York Times indicated authorities are examining whether the Adams campaign conspired with the Turkish government to receive donations from foreign sources, funneled through straw donors.

The warrant also requested information about Adams' use of New York City's matching funds program, which provides candidates with an eightfold match of a city resident's first donations.

Over the summer, Manhattan prosecutors brought charges against six people who allegedly sought to manipulate the fundraising program to funnel tens of thousands of dollars to Adams' 2021 mayoral campaign. Adams has not been charged in that case.

A campaign spokesperson said the FBI has since returned some, but not all, of Adams' devices.

Photos show Adams spoke Monday evening at an autism awareness event at New York University. The following day, his spokesperson announced that Adams would not travel to Puerto Rico for an annual conference widely attended by New York's political players.

At his news conference Wednesday, Adams told reporters his absence at the conference was the result of New York's "serious fiscal crisis," adding that it wouldn't be appropriate "to have on a flowery shirt lying on a beach drinking a margarita." He was previously scheduled to receive a humanitarian award at the conference, according to a flyer of the event.

The Democrat also reiterated earlier statements that he had no personal knowledge of any improper fundraising, and didn't believe he had anything to personally fear from the investigation. He praised Suggs, 25, as a "brilliant young lady" who "followed the rules."

Suggs has declined comment through a spokesperson.

At the time, the mayor's chief City Hall lawyer had confirmed that the administration was communicating with federal prosecutors, but declined to discuss what that entailed.

Adams, 63, was elected mayor two years ago and has been in office since January 2022. He went into politics after a 22-year police career, serving as a state senator and in the largely ceremonial position of Brooklyn borough president before running for mayor.

A political centrist, Adams rode a tough-on-crime message to victory in the 2021 Democratic mayoral primary before defeating Republican Curtis Sliwa in the general election.

In September, Adams' top building-safety official, Eric Ulrich, was charged with taking \$150,000 in bribes and improper gifts from associates and repaying them with favors that included access to top officials, including Adams, and help doing business with the city.

Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak and Karen Matthews contributed to this report.

SZA leads the 2024 Grammy nominations as women outpace men in the leading categories

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Killing her ex? That's a bad idea. Writing "Kill Bill" and releasing her critically acclaimed sophomore album "SOS" earlier this year? That was a great one. SZA is the lead contender for the 66th Grammy Awards, with nine nominations announced Friday.

"Kill Bill," her revenge anthem cloaked in an R&B ballad, earned her nods for record of the year, song of the year, and best R&B performance. "SOS" is also up for album of the year and best progressive R&B album. The 2024 ceremony will mark the second time SZA has been nominated for record, album, and song of the year in the same year.

And just like at the box office, "Barbie" will be seen — and heard — at the Grammys. Music from the hit film's soundtrack earned 11 nominations, including nabbing four of the five slots in the visual media

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song category.

If there is an overall trend in the 2024 nominations, it's that female acts outperformed their male counterparts. The majority of leading nominees are women and include superstars like Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, Miley Cyrus and Olivia Rodrigo. In both the record and album of the year categories, the only man represented is Jon Batiste.

"Seeing the women nominees this year, and the number of them, was not a surprise but it was something that made me happy," the Recording Academy CEO and President Harvey Mason jr. told The Associated Press. He believes that representation allows the next group of creators to look at the nominees and say: "Maybe somebody will love what I do one day, or maybe I have an opportunity to express myself or voice my thoughts like that person."

SZA, of course, leads the charge, also picking up nominations for best traditional R&B performance ("Love Language"), best R&B song ("Snooze"), best melodic rap performance ("Low"), and best pop duo/group performance ("Ghost in the Machine"). The last features Phoebe Bridgers, who — alongside Victoria Monét, the only leading nominee also up for best new artist — boasts the second-most nominations with seven.

Six of Bridgers' nods are with her band boygenius, nominated for the first time for record of the year, album of the year, best rock performance, best rock song, best alternative music performance, and best alternative music album.

Also earning six nominations: Swift, Rodrigo, Cyrus, Eilish, Brandy Clark, Batiste and producer Jack Antonoff.

Only recordings released between Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 15, 2023 were eligible.

In addition to Monét, the best new artist category is rounded out by Gracie Abrams, Fred again.., Ice Spice, Jelly Roll, Coco Jones, Noah Kahan and The War and Treaty.

For album of the year, it's again Batiste, boygenius, Cyrus, Rodrigo, Swift, and SZA, but with the addition of Lana Del Rey's "Did you know that there's a tunnel under Ocean Blvd" and Janelle Monáe's "The Age of Pleasure."

The song of the year category features Del Rey's "A&W," Swift's "Anti-Hero," Batiste's "Butterfly," Cyrus' "Flowers," SZA's "Kill Bill," Rodrigo's "vampire," and two tracks from the "Barbie" soundtrack: Dua Lipa's "Dance The Night" and Eilish's "What Was I Made For?"

While "I'm Just Ken" from "Barbie" did get a nomination, it's in a songwriting category — so actor Ryan Gosling is not up for a Grammy.

What else is missing? Some fans may notice a dearth of Latin and country musicians in the main categories.

"We need to do more work with our country voters and continue to invite more country voters to the process," says Mason jr. "Another thing that surprised me was, as big of a year that Latin had this year, (that) we didn't have more Latin representation in some of the general fields."

"We want to make sure that our membership is representative of the music that's being created and concerned," he added. "So, these nominations always inform us on what we're going to do over the next few years. And these nominations in particular have told us we need to continue to reach out and communicate with the voting groups within country and Latin."

There are three new categories at the 2024 Grammys: best pop dance recording, best African music performance and best alternative jazz album. Four of the five acts in the best African music performance category are nominated for the first time: ASAKE & Olamide for "Amapiano," Davido featuring Musa Keys for "UNAVAILABLE," Ayra Starr for "Rush," and Tyla for "Water." The fifth is the already Grammy-winning Burna Boy for "City Boys."

The 2024 Grammy Awards will air Feb. 4 live on CBS and Paramount+ from the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

Local election workers have been under siege since 2020. Now they face fentanyl-laced letters

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — While workers were counting ballots for primary elections in August, the elections office in King County, Washington, received a suspicious envelope that turned out to contain trace amounts of fentanyl.

It happened again this week, and not just in Washington state, where the office was processing ballots from the general election and had to be evacuated. Election offices in at least five states were sent threatening mail, some containing the potentially deadly drug, authorities say.

Authorities were working to intercept any additional letters still in the mail system, including one bound for Atlanta's Fulton County, the largest voting jurisdiction in one of the nation's most important presidential swing states. Officials said Friday afternoon the letter sent to the Georgia office had been located.

The letters were just the latest worrisome disruption for election workers in Seattle and across the country who have been besieged by threats, harassment and intimidation since the 2020 presidential election.

"There's certainly a toll that occurs emotionally and mentally with our elections administrators, and it's devastating," said Julie Wise, the King County elections director. "But we're not going to be paused or impacted by these individuals who clearly want to break us."

Election offices have been understaffed for years, and the pandemic-related challenges before the 2020 vote and the hostility afterward driven by false claims of a stolen election have led to a wave of retirements and resignations. Those who remain are tired and worried — and yet determined to do everything they can to conduct a safe and secure election next year.

King County was one of at least four counties in Washington with election offices that were evacuated this week after they received envelopes containing suspicious powders — including two that field-tested positive for fentanyl — while workers were processing ballots from Tuesday's election.

Authorities say suspicious letters also were sent to election offices in four other states: Georgia, Nevada, California and Oregon — with some being intercepted before they were delivered. Four of the letters sent to offices in the five states contained fentanyl, according to a memo Thursday to election officials from the FBI and U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Election officials are confronting the new reality of having the overdose-reversal drug naloxone on hand as a precaution. Fulton County has been the target of conspiracy theories since the 2020 election, and its election workers have been harassed and threatened over false claims that they were stuffing ballots to aid Democrats.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, the state's top election official and a Republican, said his office had alerted all 159 of its counties of the possible threat. In speaking about the seriousness of the threat, he noted one of his sons died of a fentanyl overdose about five years ago.

"We want to make sure our workers in the Fulton County election office are safe," Raffensperger said. "We know how deadly this stuff is."

Fentanyl, an opioid that can be 50 times as powerful as the same amount of heroin, is driving an overdose crisis as it is pressed into pills or mixed into other drugs — though briefly touching it cannot cause an overdose and researchers have found that the risk of fatal overdose from accidental exposure is low.

Just a few months ago, election workers in Ingham County, Michigan, were trained in using naloxone out of concern that something like this week's occurrences could happen, Clerk Barb Byrum said. She is confident her team is doing everything it can to keep workers safe but knows there are no guarantees given the vitriol displayed by some voters and combustibility of false election claims.

"We shouldn't have to live in fear of opening letters, which we get thousands per week, especially during elections," Byrum said. "This flagrant attempt to interfere with democracy has gone far beyond one person. It has metastasized everywhere."

Recruiting enough people to assist with elections, including poll workers and temporary or part-time staff, already was a challenge for the nation's 10,000 voting jurisdictions before the hostility that has emerged

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since the 2020 election. The current environment has only made the task harder.

"A smooth Election Day happens in large part to these people coming back election after election and bringing their knowledge and training with them," said Ryan Ronco, clerk in Placer County, California. "In an era when it's getting harder and harder to find people willing to volunteer for anything, whether that's joining the Rotary club or being a Little League coach or any number of things, people who were already on the fence about serving will likely opt out rather than opt in."

Meanwhile, the exodus of some top local election officials has the potential to create a vacuum of institutional knowledge, raising concerns that inexperience could lead to mistakes that could later be twisted by conspiracy theorists.

Some politically important states are seeing significant staff turnover. In Pennsylvania, officials estimate 40 of the state's 67 county election offices have new directors or deputy directors since 2020. In Nevada, election directors in 11 of 17 counties will be overseeing their first presidential election next year, while in Arizona at least 12 of 15 counties have lost at least one top election official.

In North Carolina, where Republican lawmakers recently moved to gain more control of state and local election boards, roughly a third of 100 county election directors have left since the 2020 election.

Kim Wyman, the former secretary of state in Washington, said election workers are worn down from the harassment they have received in the past few years but are focused on ensuring an accessible and secure election.

"At best, these letters are another reminder that there are people willing to intimidate election officials and make them question whether their job is worth the risk," Wyman said. "At worst, a bad actor is going to injure or kill somebody for just doing their job."

Nationally, the harassment of election workers has drawn the attention of Congress, state lawmakers and law enforcement. Lawmakers in several states have increased criminal penalties for those who threaten election workers, and the Justice Department has formed a task force that has charged more than a dozen people across the country.

Former election officials say it's imperative that people are arrested and prosecuted for threats.

"Getting to the bottom of what happened and holding those accountable who threaten or endanger the lives of our election officials is critical to helping prevent and mitigate threats moving forward," said Liz Howard, a former Virginia election official now at the Brennan Center for Justice's elections and government program.

About 1 in 5 election workers knows someone who left their election job for safety reasons, and about 70% of local election officials said harassment has increased, according to a Brennan Center survey.

Wise, who has worked in elections for 23 years, said she and others who work in the King County election offices are resilient and dedicated to the nonpartisan work of running elections. She emphasized that the threatening letters have only stiffened their resolve.

"It lit a fire underneath us," she said.

___ Associated Press writers Ed Komenda in Tacoma, Washington; Manuel Valdes in Seattle; Jeff Amy in Atlanta and Lindsay Whitehurst in Washington contributed to this report.

Even Picasso had to practice, practice: Sketchbooks on display show whimsy, humor, determination

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — He was a giant of 20th-century art, but that doesn't mean Pablo Picasso needed a big canvas.

Matchbook covers, postcards, restaurant napkins — they all served as makeshift sketchpads for the artist at moments of inspiration.

And so it should perhaps not be surprising that some of Picasso's actual sketchpads were well smaller than, say, a compact disc cover — like the tiny one now on display at Manhattan's Pace Gallery as part of "Picasso: 14 Sketchbooks," a new exhibit marking 50 years since the legendary artist's death.

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A stunningly complete self-portrait in pencil peeks out of that little book, with deep and piercing eyes, all 3 ¾ by 5 ½ inches of it. It was 1918 and Picasso, then in his mid-30s, had just married ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova. During a summer in balmy Biarritz, he painted on canvas but also kept this tiny notebook around, filling it with scenes of their villa, the beach and the town, and sketches of upcoming paintings. He also drafted a letter to his wife's doctor and listed addresses of friends.

The exhibit, which opened Friday, is a collaboration with the Madrid foundation run by a grandson of Picasso's, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso. It comes nearly 40 years after the gallery's initial 1986 show of Picasso sketchbooks, called "Je Suis le Cahier (I am the Sketchbook)" after a notation Picasso made on one of his pads — which subsequently toured the globe.

The show comes at a busy time for Picasso developments — even in New York this very week, where the artist's famed 1932 "Femme à la montre" ("Woman with a Watch"), portraying his muse Marie-Thérèse Walter, sold for \$139.4 million at Sotheby's on Wednesday evening, making it the second most valuable Picasso ever sold at auction.

"He is the greatest artist of the modern period, and in many ways he thought of himself as a sketchbook," said Pace CEO Marc Glimcher, speaking to a crowd at a preview Thursday, referring to Picasso's efforts to refine his work through copious sketching.

He sounded almost evangelical when he urged the young people present to recognize that "everyone in this room sees the world differently because of Pablo Picasso."

In an interview, Glimcher explained that he feels the world needs to be reminded of Picasso's achievements at a time in our culture where, he said, it seems everything and everyone is being questioned anew. He also noted what he called the icon effect: "When something becomes so iconic it becomes by necessity oversimplified," he said. "People say, 'Oh, Picasso, got it.' We have to make sure they DO get it."

The show, in one large gallery, is organized chronologically, spanning the years 1900-1959, most of Picasso's career (he died in 1973). Each of the 14 sketchbooks is presented in context with what was going on in his life — including in his romantic relationships, which figured so prominently in his artwork.

Many of the sketches are early versions of famed paintings like "Les Femmes d'Alger" (1907), for which one sketchbook tests out various figure renderings; "Dora Maar in an Armchair" (1939); and his "War and Peace" murals, for a chapel in southern France, that were finished in 1952.

There is also a film of Picasso, shirtless and in shorts, preparing for those giant murals, needing a ladder to reach the top of his canvas — and reminding us of the dimension of some of his masterworks.

But elsewhere in the show, the gems are in miniature size. Some of the images are fanciful, like the monsters and clownlike figures, some in bright blue and red pencil, from a 1956-1957 sketchbook that resembles a whimsical children's book.

Others feel precise and more technical like the ink drawings in his Juan-les-Pins sketchbooks, from 1924, in which he experiments with shapes of guitars and other objects through patterns of dots and lines, known as "constellations." A long poem also appears in one of the sketchbooks, translated in an accompanying catalog.

With each sketchbook open to only one page, how to uncover the rest? The gallery's solution is to provide subsequent pages in video displays on a loop.

Ruiz-Picasso, the artist's grandson and son of Paul Picasso, said the sketchbooks deserve a fresh look because much has happened in the past few decades in terms of research into Picasso's work and the context in which it was produced.

"We have better information now about what he was doing," Ruiz-Picasso said in an interview. "It's a kind of archaeological dimension, where we can go more deeply."

Ruiz-Picasso, who was 13 when his grandfather died, remembers children not being entirely welcome in the studio where the artist painted in Mougins, France, where he lived out his later years. But elsewhere in the home, he remembers him always sketching "until the last piece of paper available."

"He was permanently doing something," Ruiz-Picasso said.

The Pace Gallery show runs until December 22.

Biden and Xi will meet Wednesday for talks on trade, Taiwan and fraught US-China relations

By AAMER MADHANI and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet Wednesday in California for talks on trade, Taiwan and fraught U.S.-Chinese relations in the first engagement in a year between the leaders of the world's two biggest economies.

The White House has said for weeks that it anticipated Biden and Xi would meet on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco, but negotiations went down to the eve of the gathering, which kicks off Saturday.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement the leaders would discuss the "continued importance of maintaining open lines of communication" and how they "can continue to responsibly manage competition and work together where our interests align, particularly on transnational challenges that affect the international community."

China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Friday that Xi would attend APEC from Tuesday to Friday at Biden's invitation and would take part in the U.S.-China summit.

Two senior Biden administration officials, who earlier briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said the leaders would meet in the San Francisco Bay area but declined to offer further details because of security concerns. Thousands of protesters are expected to descend on San Francisco during the summit.

Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng met for a second day of talks on Friday in San Francisco, the latest in a string of senior level engagements between the nations in recent months aimed at easing tensions.

Yellen said that during the talks she emphasized that the U.S. seeks a healthy economic relationship with China. She called on China to crack down on private Chinese firms and financial institutions that the U.S. believes are skirting international sanction to do business with Russia and she raised concerns about Chinese export controls on graphite in other critical minerals. Graphite is a key raw material in electric vehicle batteries.

Yellen, who visited China in July, said she accepted an invitation to make a return trip to Beijing next year. "There is no substitute for in-person diplomacy," said Yellen, who added that she believed the two laid the groundwork for a productive meeting between Biden and Xi. "During our discussions, we agreed in-depth and frank discussions matter, particularly when we disagree."

The Biden-Xi meeting is not expected to lead to many, if any, major announcements, and differences between the two powers certainly won't be resolved. Instead, one official said, Biden is looking toward "managing the competition, preventing the downside risk of conflict and ensuring channels of communication are open." The officials said they believed it would be Xi's first visit to San Francisco since he was a young Communist Party leader.

The agenda includes no shortage of difficult issues.

Differences in the already complicated U.S.-Chinese relationship have only sharpened in the last year, with Beijing bristling over new U.S. export controls on advanced technology; Biden ordering the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon after it traversed the continental United States; and Chinese anger over a stopover in the U.S. by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen earlier this year, among other issues. China claims the island as its territory.

Biden will also likely press Xi on using China's influence on North Korea, during heightened anxiety over an increased pace of ballistic missile tests by North Korea as well as Pyongyang providing munitions to Russia for its war in Ukraine.

The Democratic president is also expected to let Xi know that he would like China to use its burgeoning sway over Iran to make clear that Tehran or its proxies should not take action that could lead to expansion of the Israel-Hamas war. His administration believes the Chinese, a big buyer of Iranian oil, have considerable leverage with Iran, which is a major backer of Hamas.

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Biden and Xi last met nearly a year ago on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Bali, Indonesia. In the nearly three-hour meeting, Biden objected directly to China's "coercive and increasingly aggressive actions" toward Taiwan and discussed Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other issues. Xi stressed that "the Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests, the bedrock of the political foundation of China-U.S. relations, and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-U.S. relations."

The Chinese foreign ministry said this time Biden and Xi would focus on "in-depth communications on the strategic, overall and directional issues of the China-US relations as well as major issues concerning world peace and development."

Next week's meeting comes as the United States braces for a potentially bumpy year for U.S.-Chinese relations, with Taiwan set to hold a presidential election in January and the U.S. holding its own presidential election next November.

Beijing sees official American contact with Taiwan as encouragement to make the island's decades-old de facto independence permanent, a step U.S. leaders say they don't support. Under the "One China" policy, the U.S. recognizes Beijing as the government of China and doesn't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, but it has maintained that Taipei is an important partner in the Indo-Pacific. Biden intends to reaffirm the U.S. wants no change in the status quo, one official said.

Disinformation experts testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee have warned that Beijing could aim to target the U.S., sowing discord that might influence election results at the local level, especially in districts with large numbers of Chinese-American voters.

The Biden administration has sought to make clear to the Chinese that any actions or interference in the 2024 election "would raise extremely strong concerns from our side," according to one official.

The officials also noted that Biden is determined to restore military-to-military communications that Beijing largely withdrew from after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022.

All the while, the number of unsafe or provocative encounters involving the two nations' ships and aircraft have spiked.

Last month, the U.S. military released a video of a Chinese fighter jet flying within 10 feet (3 meters) of an American B-52 bomber over the South China Sea, nearly causing an accident. Earlier that month, the Pentagon released footage of some of the more than 180 intercepts of U.S. warplanes by Chinese aircraft that occurred in the last two years, part of a trend U.S. military officials call concerning.

Gen. CQ Brown Jr., the top U.S. military commander, told reporters in Tokyo on Friday that restoration of military-to-military contacts is "hugely important" to "ensure there is no miscalculation" between the sides. He said he conveyed his desire to restart the dialogue in a letter to his Chinese counterpart.

The officials also said Biden would underscore U.S. commitment to the Philippines, following a recent episode in which Chinese ships blocked and collided with two Filipino vessels off a contested shoal in the South China Sea.

The Philippines and other neighbors of China are resisting Beijing's sweeping territorial claims over virtually the entire sea.

"I want to be very clear," Biden said in October. "The United States' defense commitment to the Philippines is iron clad."

Both sides appeared to be carefully considering security for the meeting, declining to publicize the venue of the much-anticipated talks.

Thousands of people protesting climate destruction, corporate practices, the Israel-Hamas war and other issues are expected to descend on San Francisco during the summit.

San Francisco Police Department Chief Bill Scott said his department expects several protests a day but doesn't know which ones will materialize where and when. He said the city respects people's right to mobilize peacefully but will not tolerate property destruction, violence or any other crime.

Associated Press writers Janie Har and Michael Liedtke in San Francisco, Fatima Hussein in Washington and Ken Moritsugu in Beijing contributed reporting.

96-year-old Korean War veteran still attempting to get Purple Heart medal after 7 decades

By STEVE KARNOWSKI, MARK VANCLEAVE and MELISSA PEREZ WINDER Associated Press
ST. PETER, Minn. (AP) — Earl Meyer remembers in vivid detail when his platoon came under heavy fire during the Korean War -- he still has shrapnel embedded in his thigh.

But over 70 years later, the 96-year-old is still waiting for the U.S. Army to recognize his injury and to award him a Purple Heart medal, which honors service members wounded or killed in combat.

Meyer has provided the Army with documents to back up his assertion that he was wounded in combat in June 1951. Doctors at the Department of Veterans Affairs agreed that his account of the shrapnel coming from a mortar attack was probably true. But few men in his unit who would have witnessed the battle have survived, and he thinks the medic who treated him on the battlefield was killed before he could file the paperwork.

An Army review board in April issued what it called a final rejection of Meyer's request for a Purple Heart, citing insufficient documentation. His case highlights how it can be a struggle for wounded veterans to get medals they've earned when the fog of war, the absence of records and the passage of time make it challenging to produce proof.

"At first I didn't know that I had been wounded," Meyer wrote in a sworn statement that was part of his rejected appeal. "But as my unit advanced from where the mortar rounds were hitting, I noticed that my pants were sticking to my leg. I reached down to correct this and discovered that my hand was covered in blood."

Meyer took the rare step of suing the Department of Defense and the Army in September. The Army's Office of Public Affairs said it doesn't comment on ongoing litigation. But after The Associated Press made requests for comment on Meyer's case, the office of the Army's top noncommissioned officer, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer, said that it's going to take another look.

"The Sergeant Major of the Army's Office is engaging with Mr. Meyer's family and looking into the situation," spokesperson Master Sgt. Daniel Wallace said. "Either way, we're proud of Mr. Meyer's service to our country."

Meyer said in an interview that he wouldn't have pursued the Purple Heart because his injuries were relatively minor compared to those of many men he served with, but his three daughters persuaded him. Growing up, they knew that he had been injured in the war, but like many veterans, he never talked much about it. It's only been in the past decade or so that he's opened up to them, which led them to urge his pursuit of a Purple Heart.

"I think it will provide closure for him. I really do," said his daughter, Sandy Baker, of New Buffalo, Michigan.

Tony Cross, a disability claims and appeals specialist with the American Legion, the country's largest veterans' service organization, said the Legion doesn't commonly see cases like Meyer's of medals denied, though it did see one earlier this year. The process is challenging because each military branch has its own approval process and it gets more challenging after a veteran leaves the military, he said.

Meyer's main obstacle has been the lack of paperwork. He told the AP the medic who bandaged his leg told him he would file the forms to show he was wounded in combat. But he never did. Meyer thinks the medic may have been killed in action. Only a few members of his platoon made it out unharmed.

At the time, Meyer wasn't hurt badly enough to leave the battlefield. But Army medical records show he injured his back a few days later when he fell down a hill while carrying a machine gun, and then aggravated it again days later while lifting ammunition. He was evacuated to a MASH unit, then a hospital ship. The records show his treatment included a tetanus shot, apparently for the shrapnel injury.

"I still had the hole in my pants and the blood on it," he said about the time he was hospitalized for his back. He said he still had the patch on his leg. "I should have told them at that time."

But he wasn't thinking then about gathering paperwork for a future medal. His mind was on survival.

"I was just glad to get out of there," he said.

Accidental back injuries generally don't qualify a service member for a Purple Heart, but wounds from

enemy shrapnel can.

Meyer finished out his tour guarding prisoners of war. He was honorably discharged in 1952. His decorations included the Combat Infantryman Badge, which is reserved for those who actively participate in ground combat under enemy fire. He also received the Congressional Gold Medal for his service in the Merchant Marine in World War II.

He still has coffee with fellow veterans a couple mornings a week at the St. Peter American Legion post. He said his leg isn't acutely sore, but it still aches. VA doctors told him they didn't want to risk surgery to remove the shrapnel because it was too close to his sciatic nerve.

In 2005, doctors at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis agreed that his leg injury probably happened in combat. "The scar in the left thigh is at least as likely as not (50/50 probability) caused by or a result of a combat fragment wound," they wrote in one report. "Reasonable doubt has been resolved in your favor," they wrote in another.

Meyer first applied for a Purple Heart in 2020. The Army denied him, saying he needed more documentation.

So U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar's staff then helped him get documents from the National Archives and made numerous follow-up inquiries. But even with the additional evidence, the Army Board for Correction of Military Records turned him down. Klobuchar said this week that she's not giving up.

"Earl Meyer put his life on the line in defense of our freedoms, and we will continue to do all we can to further the work to rightfully honor his service," the Minnesota Democrat said in a statement.

In its most recent rejection letter, the board said he must have "substantiating evidence to verify that he was injured, the wound was the result of hostile action, the wound must have required treatment by medical personnel and the medical treatment must have been made a matter of official record."

The board conceded that "some evidence available for review indicates a possible injury," but that "based on the preponderance of the evidence available for review, the Board determined the evidence presented insufficient to warrant a recommendation for relief."

Meyer's attorney, Alan Anderson, wrote in the lawsuit that review boards have awarded Purple Hearts under similar circumstances — sometimes under court order. He said the board noted the problems of relying solely on medical records when it approved a Purple Heart in a separate 2015 case.

"Under wartime conditions, wounds requiring medical treatment by a medical officer will not always receive such treatment, and, even if a Soldier requiring such treatment receives it, there will be cases where the treatment is not made a matter of official record," the board said in that case. "In such cases, other sources, including credible statements from colleagues, may be useful in establishing the circumstances in which a Soldier was wounded."

Karnowski reported from Minneapolis; Perez Winder reported from New Buffalo, Michigan.

New Speaker Mike Johnson grasps for a funding plan with a government shutdown rapidly approaching

By STEPHEN GROVES and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With just a week left to avert a government shutdown, new House Speaker Mike Johnson is facing his first big test as he tries to win House Republican support for a short-term funding plan — a task that looks increasingly difficult amid stubborn divisions in the party over federal spending.

Federal agencies are making plans for a shutdown that would shutter government services and halt paychecks for millions of federal workers and military troops.

It's a disruption that Johnson — just two weeks into his job running the House — has said he wants to avoid. Yet House lawmakers left Washington for the weekend without a plan in hand after several setbacks. Johnson is still sounding out support among Republicans about what to do and is expected to unveil funding legislation over the weekend, according to Republicans granted anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The shrinking calendar gives Johnson, a Louisiana Republican who has vaulted from the lower ranks of

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Republican leadership to the speaker's office, a narrow window to corral an unpredictable GOP conference.

"We're running up against the clock on Nov. 17, and we're obviously aware of that," Johnson said this week, referring to the date that government funding expires. "But we are going to get the job done."

Hardline conservatives, usually loathe to support temporary spending measures of any sort, had indicated they would give Johnson some leeway to pass legislation, known as a continuing resolution, to give Congress more time to negotiate a long-term agreement. Congress passed a 47-day continuing resolution in October, but the fallout was severe. Kevin McCarthy was booted from the speakership days later, and the House was effectively paralyzed for most of the month while Republicans tried to elect a replacement.

Republicans eventually were unanimous in electing Johnson speaker, but his elevation has hardly eased the dynamic that led to McCarthy's removal — a conference torn on policy as well as how much to spend on federal programs. This week, Republicans had to pull two spending bills from the floor — one to fund transportation and housing programs and the other to fund the Treasury Department, Small Business Administration and other agencies — because they didn't have the votes in their own party to push them through the House.

"I thought we were going to show the speaker a little bit of grace," said a frustrated Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, as he exited the Capitol Thursday after the last votes of the week. "I think it's looking like we're still confused and we are not united."

Johnson has turned to House Republicans for ideas on how to win support for a continuing resolution. He has floated the obscure idea of a "laddered" approach that would fund some parts of the government until early December and other federal departments until mid-January. He has also raised the idea of a funding package that would last into January.

Meanwhile, lawmakers are still looking for a way to negotiate final passage of aid for Israel in its war with Hamas, and Johnson has also proposed the formation of a new federal commission focused on slowing increases in the national debt that threaten the government's ability in future years to finance the military and major entitlement programs relied on by seniors and the disabled.

Democrats have made it clear they will not support any funding packages that include policy wins for conservatives. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, who the Democratic leader in the House, said they would not "pay a single, right-wing ransom demand" as part of a funding resolution.

Democratic lawmakers are also eager to play up the House Republican divisions and to pin any blame for a shutdown squarely on the new speaker and his GOP colleagues.

"They are a divided, divisive, dysfunctional majority," said Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md. "They can't get their business done, to the detriment of Americans."

On the other side of the Capitol, the Democratic-held Senate took procedural steps Thursday that would allow it to take up a continuing resolution in time to avoid a partial shutdown. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said negotiations could evolve in the coming days, but added that a shutdown cannot be avoided without bipartisan cooperation.

"I implore Speaker Johnson and our House Republican colleagues to learn from the fiasco of a month ago: Hard-right proposals, hard-right slashing cuts, hard-right poison pills that have zero support from Democrats will only make a shutdown more likely," Schumer said. "I hope they don't go down that path in the week to come."

But the Senate is also involved in delicate negotiations involving changes to border policy and funding for Ukraine. Republican senators have demanded that Congress pass immigration and border legislation alongside additional Ukraine aid.

This week, they released a plan to resume construction on parts of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, curtail humanitarian parole for people who cross into the United States and make it more difficult for migrants to qualify for asylum. That kickstarted the work of a bipartisan group of senators who are considering a limited set of policy changes that could find favor with both Republicans and Democrats.

"It remains a high-wire act," Sen. Chris Murphy, a Democrat from Connecticut who is involved in the negotiations.

He said the chances of bringing together a border bill by next week were slim, adding, "There's a reason

why we haven't done bipartisan immigration reform in 40 years."

Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of senators is also pushing for a debt commission that could be lumped in with the continuing resolution, known as a "CR" in Washington.

"I think it could get on the CR," said Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va. "I think it would be something they can really run with."

Mitch McConnell, standing apart in a changing GOP, digs in on his decades-long push against Russia

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mitch McConnell often tells the story of a letter that his father, a foot soldier in World War II, wrote to his mother while he was stationed in Eastern Europe in 1945, as the United States was liberating the region from Nazi rule.

"I think the Russians are going to be a big problem," A.M. McConnell wrote, foreshadowing the communist takeover to come.

Almost 80 years later, his son is still warning of Russia. From his perch as the long-time Republican leader in the U.S. Senate, McConnell has emerged as perhaps the strongest advocate in Congress for sending billions of dollars in American assistance to Ukraine as the country fights Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion, aligning himself with President Joe Biden and majority Democrats in the process.

It's hardly a change in outlook for the Kentucky senator, who was first elected to the Senate in 1984 and was shaped by the era when President Ronald Reagan was fighting the Cold War and U.S. foreign policy was centered on the Soviet threat.

But while McConnell still thinks of himself as a Reagan Republican, many in his party no longer do.

As he faces the end of his fourth decade in the Senate, McConnell's unwavering advocacy for Ukraine has set him apart from many of his GOP colleagues, many of whom are deeply skeptical or outright opposed to U.S. involvement abroad — particularly in Ukraine. It's an increasingly prevalent view in the Republican Party, shaped under the influence of former President Donald Trump, who has railed against "forever wars" and praised Putin.

"Honestly, I think Ronald Reagan would turn over in his grave if he saw we were not going to help Ukraine," McConnell said in an interview with The Associated Press this week. He called the Ukraine aid, which Biden has asked Congress to pass as part of a \$105 billion request for Israel and other countries, a "no brainer."

The Republican dissension has created a pivotal political moment, one that could forever shape the fate of Ukraine and the strength of American influence abroad. Stressing urgency, the White House has pushed Congress to approve the massive foreign aid package, which would also aid Israel in its war with Hamas and replenish American military stockpiles at home, by the end of the year.

But while earlier rounds of assistance passed Congress easily, the path for aiding Ukraine has grown perilous as the war enters its second brutal winter.

Almost more than any other issue, the debate over Ukraine divides the GOP along generational and ideological lines — especially as Trump is the leading candidate for the GOP nomination next year.

Cutting off assistance from Ukraine would be "a huge setback for the United States," and the country's reputation as the leader of the free world, McConnell said.

He sees the potential consequences as even bigger than the Biden administration's chaotic and deadly 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The current moment is "a time of unique American vulnerability," he said.

It is also a uniquely vulnerable moment for McConnell, who rarely ventures far from the views of his GOP conference. While his position is unequivocal on sending Ukraine more assistance, and several colleagues are behind him, many are hesitant to speak in strong terms about the need to keep Putin at bay.

Others are outright opposed to the aid, and they have begun to directly challenge the Republican leader's support for it in ways that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago.

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"One of the things I worry about is we have leadership negotiating with the president," said Ohio GOP Sen. J.D. Vance, who is in the first year of his term, of McConnell's recent talks with the White House and the leader's support for tying Ukraine and Israel aid together. "I want to make sure that leadership is actually being representative of the views of the conference."

Vance, who has pushed to separate the aid for the two countries, says his views are closer to new House Speaker Mike Johnson and Republicans in the House, which passed legislation last week that would aid Israel but not Ukraine. Vance argues the United States does not have enough of a plan for winning the Ukraine war.

"I think the fact that Speaker Johnson has a little bit more agency is in part because he is the Speaker of the House," Vance says. "But it's also important because he has a membership that is much, much more in tune with where Republican voters actually are."

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, who has also criticized the Ukraine aid, said that "nationally, the Republican leader right now is the speaker of the House of Representatives."

"We need to support his efforts, we need to understand the challenges he faces, and certainly not undermine him," Johnson said.

The Republican schism in the Senate was most pronounced on Sept. 30, as the House and Senate scrambled in a rare Saturday session to keep the government open before funding expired at midnight on Oct. 1. McConnell was insistent that short-term aid to Ukraine would have to be in the deal, but relented when several of his colleagues, even some of those who were like-minded, endorsed a House plan that would not include it.

McConnell walked out of a private conference meeting and declared that the Republicans would vote against advancing a bipartisan Senate bill that included the aid — a rare public reversal for the leader. His move made the House bill the only funding option left, and it easily passed the Senate. The government stayed open but the Ukraine aid was left unresolved.

McConnell downplays the decision, arguing that "the most important thing at that particular moment was to avoid a government shutdown. The rest of it was sort of incidental."

The development also wasn't unexpected. A week before the government funding deadline, McConnell told Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, on a call that it "would be impossible" for Congress to pass the full package with Ukraine money included, according to a person familiar with the situation who granted anonymity to discuss it.

Republicans supportive of the aid have laid blame for the delay generally on Biden and congressional Democrats, saying that they need to articulate the importance of helping Ukraine and provide a detailed plan.

As he continues to push for the aid, McConnell's style is not to strong-arm his colleagues, or the Republican-led House. He has spoken with new Speaker Johnson, but he said he just repeated to him what he has said publicly about Ukraine for months. "That's not my job" to convince others, he said.

Republican Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas, a McConnell ally who has spoken out in favor of the Ukraine aid, says he thinks McConnell has managed to stem his losses so far.

"There's a number of us who feel strong and certain about the rightness of this cause, others are more persuadable," Moran said. "And I think the leader has done a really good job of keeping the two sets of senators together."

One way McConnell is managing the challenge is by endorsing a push from GOP senators to include border policy in the aid package for Israel and Ukraine — a gambit that introduces difficult immigration issues and could threaten its ultimate passage, but appears essential to winning Republican support. Bipartisan talks are underway to try and find consensus around changes on that issue.

McConnell has also drawn from the lessons of history, emphasizing the connections between the two wars as he urges an unflinching defense of democracy and the West.

After the Cold War ended, McConnell often says, the U.S. focused more on terrorism, partially through two wars in Iraq. As China has emerged as an adversary and Russia has re-emerged, and Israel is now at war with Hamas, "what we have now is both — both the terrorism issue and the big power competition

issue all at the same time, which is why I think singling out one of these problems to the exclusion of the others is a mistake.”

Failing to pass the aid would be “a disaster for Ukraine and disaster for us,” McConnell said. He questions what has happened to the belief in America’s global leadership.

“For myself, I’m still a Reagan Republican,” McConnell said. “And I think that’s the best path for us in the future. But look, in our democracy, the voters make that decision.”

Judge declines for now to push back Trump’s classified documents trial but postpones other deadlines

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge in Florida on Friday declined to delay Donald Trump’s classified documents trial, calling a request by the former president’s defense lawyers to postpone the date “premature.” But she pushed back other deadlines in the case and signaled that she would revisit the trial date later.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon means that the trial, for now at least, remains scheduled to begin on May 20, 2024 despite efforts by the Trump team to postpone it until after next November’s presidential election.

Trump’s lawyers had argued that they needed more time to review the large trove of evidence with which they’d been presented and also cited scheduling challenges resulting from the other legal cases against Trump, including three additional criminal prosecutions for which he is awaiting trial. Special counsel Jack Smith’s team had vigorously opposed that position in urging the judge to leave the trial date intact.

Cannon signaled during a hearing this month, and again in her written order on Friday, that she was sympathetic to the defense arguments. She noted the “unusually high volume of classified and unclassified evidence” involved in the case, as well as the fact that Trump is currently scheduled next March to face both a federal trial in Washington and a trial on state charges in New York.

“Although the Special Counsel is correct that the trajectory of these matters potentially remains in flux, the schedules as they currently stand overlap substantially with the deadlines in this case, presenting additional challenges to ensuring Defendant Trump has adequate time to prepare for trial and to assist in his defense,” Cannon wrote.

She pushed back several deadlines for filing and responding to pretrial motions but kept the trial date in place, though she said she would consider the defense request again at a scheduling conference next March.

The case in Florida includes dozens of felony charges accusing the Republican former president of illegally retaining classified documents at his Palm Beach estate, Mar-a-Lago, and hiding them from government investigators. Trump has pleaded not guilty.

Trump is currently set for trial on March 4, 2024, in Washington on federal charges that he plotted to overturn the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. He also faces charges in Georgia accusing him of trying to subvert that state’s vote, as well as another state case in New York accusing him of falsifying business records in connection with hush money payments to porn actor Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 election.

In addition, Trump has been sued in a business fraud case in New York, where a trial is taking place. Trump has denied wrongdoing in all of the cases, claiming without evidence that they are part of a politically motivated effort to prevent him from returning to the White House.

Explain, laugh, try the 'tush push': how a German announcer spreads the word about the NFL

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — You can talk NFL tactics, or you can demonstrate. Even if you're wearing a suit.

Trying the Philadelphia Eagles' "tush push" on the floor of the studio is all part of a day's work for the TV crews whose entertaining and educational shows have played a big part in Germany embracing the NFL.

Patrick "Coach" Esume has been the face of NFL broadcasts in Germany for years, alongside players like ex-Indianapolis Colts defensive end Björn Werner and former New England Patriots offensive tackle Sebastian Vollmer. The Patriots and Colts play Sunday at Deutsche Bank Park in the second of two regular-season NFL games in Frankfurt.

Esume said German fans, who typically grow up watching soccer, need the rules and the on-field action explained, but it has to be fun, too.

"Björn Werner and I, even (though) we were wearing suits, we got in the four-point stance and tried to explain the 'tush push,'" Esume told The Associated Press.

"There's a lot of laughing and explaining and it's not too serious in the sense that we are solely focused on the technical part of the game. We try to make it entertaining."

Esume and his colleagues have seen their audience soar over the last few years, first with the ProSieben network and now with RTL from this season with free-to-air broadcasts. The NFL has estimated a rise of up to 10% this year alone. Tickets for the two games in Frankfurt sold out in minutes.

"If you're one of the on-air faces that have been on air even with ProSieben, (its sports broadcast) RAN and now RTL, if you step on the street anywhere in Austria, Switzerland, especially in Germany, every other minute somebody comes and tells you, 'Hey, I watch you, you explain football to me,'" Esume said.

"It doesn't matter whether you're at a grocery store, the pharmacy, the bus driver on public transportation. It feels like everybody, or at least I would say 20% of the population, has seen and heard about it."

Like most of his audience, Esume was a soccer fan before he ever discovered American football. Growing up as a German-Nigerian teenager in Hamburg in the late 1980s, he encountered the game through a neighbor who played on a local club team.

Since then, he's been spreading the word about football in Germany from a wide range of jobs — first as a player in the amateur club football scene, then as a coach in NFL Europe, the NFL's former development league, which had its most popular teams in Germany. Esume was invited to NFL training camps on what was then known as the Minority Coaching Fellowship and through a connection with former Raiders coach Art Shell, who had worked in NFL Europe.

These days, Esume splits his time between NFL broadcasts and his role as commissioner of the European League of Football, which is based in Germany but has 17 teams across nine countries.

The ELF plays a June-September season, giving fans a chance to see live football outside of the two NFL games in Frankfurt this year, and has licensed old NFL Europa brands like the Frankfurt Galaxy and Berlin Thunder. It attracted 31,500 fans for its championship game in September and is aiming to break the 16-year-old NFL Europe (then known as NFL Europa) attendance record of 48,125 next year.

"Even as the commissioner of the league, my job is to explain to the audience what makes this game so fascinating and you've got to do it in a different way if not everybody is familiar with every detail, or even the bigger picture of the game," Esume said.

"You have to make it different than soccer, and that's one of the key success points of football here in the media in Germany. It's entertaining."

The Great Grift: COVID-19 aid thieves bought fancy cars, a Pokemon card - even a private island

By RICHARD LARDNER Associated Press

YANKEETOWN, Fla. (AP) — A freshwater spring bubbles amid the mangroves, cabbage palms and red cedars on Sweetheart Island, a two-acre uninhabited patch of paradise about a mile off the coast of this little Gulf Coast town.

Pelicans divebomb nearby into the cool waters of Florida's Withlacoochee Bay and the open view westward holds the promise of dazzling sunsets.

It may have seemed like an ideal getaway for Florida businessman Patrick Parker Walsh. Instead, he's serving five and half years in federal prison for stealing nearly \$8 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds that he used, in part, to buy Sweetheart Island.

While Walsh's private island ranks among the more unusual purchases by pandemic fraudsters, his crime was not unique. He is one of thousands of thieves who perpetrated the greatest grift in U.S. history. They potentially plundered more than \$280 billion in federal COVID-19 aid; another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent.

The loss represents close to 10% of the \$4.3 trillion the U.S. government has disbursed to mitigate the economic devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

An AP review of hundreds of pandemic fraud cases presents a picture of thieves and scam artists who spent lavishly on houses, luxury watches and diamond jewelry, Lamborghinis and other expensive cars. The stolen aid also paid for long nights at strip clubs, gambling sprees in Las Vegas and bucket-list vacations.

Their crimes were relatively simple: The government's goal was to get cash into the hands of struggling people and businesses with minimal hassle, particularly during the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis. Safeguards to weed out the swindlers were dropped. As Walsh's case and thousands of others have shown, stealing the money was as easy as lying on an application.

The thieves came from all walks of life and all corners of the globe. There was a Tennessee rapper who bragged about the ease of stealing more than \$700,000 in pandemic unemployment insurance on YouTube. A former pizzeria owner and host of a cryptocurrency-themed radio show bought an alpaca farm in Vermont with pilfered aid. And an ex-Nigerian government official who grabbed about half a million dollars in COVID-19 relief benefits was wearing a \$10,000 watch and \$35,000 gold chain when he was arrested.

Nearly 3,200 defendants have been charged with COVID-19 relief fraud, according to the U.S. Justice Department. About \$1.4 billion in stolen pandemic aid has been seized.

Investigators won't catch every crook. The scale and scope of the fraud are too large. Pandemic cases often depend on digital evidence, which is perishable, and the financial trail can go cold over time, said Bob Westbrook, former executive director of the federal Pandemic Response Accountability Committee.

"The uncomfortable truth is the federal criminal justice system is simply not equipped to fully address the unprecedented volume of pandemic relief fraud cases, large and small, and involving thousands upon thousands of domestic and foreign actors," Westbrook said.

Top Justice Department officials are undeterred by the enormity of the task. They've created special "strike forces" to hunt down COVID-19 aid thieves and vowed not to give up the chase.

"We'll stay at it for as long as it takes," U.S. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said in August.

Konstantinos Zarkadas, a New York doctor deeply in debt, joined the rogues' gallery of COVID-19 fraudsters by falsifying at least 11 separate applications for pandemic aid that netted him almost \$3.8 million, according to prosecutors. He bought Rolex and Cartier wristwatches valued at \$140,000 for himself and family members and made a hefty down payment on a yacht, according to court records.

Zarkadas used about \$3 million to pay off part of an earlier civil judgment against him for breaching a real estate lease. His most brazen move was to send \$80,000 of the looted cash back to the government to settle a federal lawsuit alleging he violated the Controlled Substances Act by dispensing more than 20,000 doses of a weight-loss drug without keeping accurate records, prosecutors said.

The state of New York revoked Zarkadas' medical license shortly after he was sentenced to more than

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four years in prison for swiping the pandemic aid.

The stolen funds financed the high-rolling lifestyle of Lee E. Price III, a Houston resident with prior felony convictions for forgery and robbery. He swindled nearly \$1.7 million by submitting bogus aid applications on behalf of businesses that existed only on paper, according to court records.

Price wasted little time blowing \$14,000 on a Rolex and more than \$233,000 for a flashy white Lamborghini Urus, a luxury SUV that can go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds. He also spent thousands of dollars at the Casanova, a Houston stripclub. Price was sentenced to more than nine years in prison.

Vinath Oudomsine of Georgia also created a fake company that he claimed made \$235,000 a year and had 10 employees. A few weeks after Oudomsine applied for the pandemic aid, the government rushed him \$85,000 to keep his non-existent business afloat.

Oudomsine spent nearly \$58,000 on a 1999 Charizard Pokémon card, which depicts a gold dragon-like creature, jaws wide open, poised to attack.

While not as valuable as rare baseball cards — a mint condition Mickey Mantle card sold for \$12.6 million last year — Pokémon merchandise can command big money as collectors have driven up prices for collectibles issued by the popular franchise.

At Oudomsine's sentencing last year, U.S. District Judge Dudley H. Bowen called Oudomsine's theft "an \$85,000 insult" to a country reeling from the pandemic.

"I feel foolish every time I say it: Pokémon card," Bowen said before sending Oudomsine to prison for three years.

Patrick Walsh's bid to save his aerial advertising businesses started out legitimately but quickly escalated into sizeable fraud.

Walsh operated a small fleet of cigar-shaped blimps that flew corporate logos over crowded venues. In June 2017, one of his blimps crashed and burned on live television at the men's U.S. Open golf tournament, one of the world's premier sporting events.

"I was teeing off and I looked up and saw it on fire, and I felt sick to my stomach," said professional golfer Jamie Lovemark, according to an Associated Press report. The pilot — the sole passenger — was badly injured but survived, according to a National Transportation Safety Board investigation.

In the wake of the crash, Walsh's clients began to bail, his attorneys wrote in court filings. To stay afloat, he obtained high-interest loans that also allowed him to expand his businesses. By 2019, his companies had sales of \$16 million and had expanded into Latin America and Asian markets.

Then the pandemic hit. "COVID-19 did not slow down business, it killed it," Walsh's attorneys wrote. He panicked.

Between March 2020 and January 2021 Walsh submitted more than 30 fraudulent applications for emergency pandemic aid and received \$7.8 million, according to the Justice Department. Even if Walsh had followed the rules, his companies would have only qualified for a "small subset" of those loans, federal prosecutors alleged.

"His crimes are egregious and the product of greed," prosecutors wrote in court papers. They cited the purchase of Sweetheart Island, undisclosed "luxury goods," oil fields in Texas and a downpayment on a home in tony Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Walsh's attorneys said in a court filing that he wasn't motivated by avarice, but desperation. Walsh was under enormous pressure to rescue his businesses and to support his large family, they wrote. He has 11 children.

U.S. District Judge Allen C. Winsor didn't buy the argument.

This was not "a single moment of weakness," Winsor said in sentencing Walsh in January to more than five years behind bars.

As part of his plea deal, Walsh agreed to return the \$7.8 million he stole and to sell Sweetheart Island, which was among his first purchases with the stolen federal money, according to the court records.

Prosecutors said Walsh used \$90,000 of those funds to help finance the \$116,000 island purchase. Florida property records show that the island was sold for \$200,000 at the end of June.

Walsh's attorneys said he didn't buy the island as a "tropical paradise for entertainment" but as a real estate opportunity. They did not explain how the businessman would have transformed the isolated isle into a profit center.

Withlacoochee Bay is scattered with similar small, uninhabited islands. The only hint that anyone had ever tried to develop Sweetheart Island were a few low, timeworn cinder block walls that extend into the water. There was still a "For Sale" sign posted on a weather-beaten and leafless tree that resembled a scarecrow warning people to stay away.

Internet collapses in war-torn Yemen over 'maintenance' involving undersea line

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Internet access across the war-torn nation of Yemen collapsed Friday and stayed down for hours, with officials later blaming unannounced "maintenance work" for the outage.

The interruption began early Friday and halted all traffic at YemenNet, the country's main provider for about 10 million users which is now controlled by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthis.

Both NetBlocks, a group tracking internet outages, and the internet services company CloudFlare reported the outage. The two did not offer a cause for the outage.

"Data shows that the issue has impacted connectivity at a national level as well," CloudFlare said.

By late Friday, service had been fully restored.

In a statement to the Houthi-controlled SABA state news agency, Yemen's Public Telecom Corp. blamed the outage on maintenance.

"Internet service will return after the completion of the maintenance work," the statement quoted an unidentified official as saying.

The undersea FALCON cable carries the internet into Yemen through the Hodeida port along the Red Sea for TeleYemen. The FALCON cable has another landing in Yemen's far eastern port of Ghaydah as well, but the majority of Yemen's population lives in its west along the Red Sea.

GCX, the company that operates the cable, later issued a statement also saying that "scheduled maintenance took place" involving the line.

Analysis: Bill Belichick should get another opportunity if he wants to keep coaching after Patriots

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

On Football analyzes the biggest topics in the NFL from week to week. For more On Football analysis, head here.

Bill Belichick has won six Super Bowls as a head coach and more games than everyone except Don Shula. That won't save his job in New England if the Patriots keep losing.

Belichick's future is a hot topic as the Patriots (2-7) prepare to play the Indianapolis Colts (4-5) in Frankfurt, Germany, on Sunday. There even was speculation this week that Belichick could be fired if New England loses to Indianapolis.

Belichick presided over an unprecedented, two-decade run of excellence, but the Patriots have steadily declined since Tom Brady departed after the 2019 season. New England's dismal start this year is the franchise's worst since Belichick's first season with the team in 2000.

Since Brady left, the Patriots are 27-33, including a playoff loss. In 24 seasons as a head coach with New England and five previously with Cleveland, Belichick is 82-97 in games Brady hasn't started.

Belichick will one day be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, but it has become obvious that Brady was the reason for New England's success.

Patriots owner Robert Kraft avoided talking to reporters at the NFL meetings last month and hasn't commented on Belichick's status this season. However, he made it clear during the league's spring meetings

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that he expected more from the team in 2023.

"I think Bill is exceptional at what he does," Kraft said in March. "I've given him the freedom to make the choices and do the things that need to be done. His football intellect and knowledge is unparalleled from what I've seen. But in the end, this is a business. You either execute and win or you don't. That's where we're at. We're in a transition phase. I think we've made some moves this year that personally I'm comfortable with. And I still believe in Bill."

Kraft also stressed the importance of making the playoffs.

"We're about winning and doing whatever we can to win," he said. "That's what our focus is. It's very important to me that we make the playoffs."

Even if the Patriots somehow win their final eight games, that still might not be good enough to make the playoffs.

Belichick is 71 and has spent almost 50 years coaching in the NFL so he could sail off on a yacht and not look back when his time is up in New England. But if he wants to keep going and continue chasing Shula's record — Belichick is 17 wins away from first place — it's likely he'll get an opportunity.

Here are five teams that could hire Belichick next:

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

The Chargers (4-4) have underachieved in Brandon Staley's 2 1/2 seasons. They reached the playoffs last season only to waste a 27-0 lead in a loss to Jacksonville. Unless Staley wins a playoff game this season, a change could happen. Belichick would get a franchise quarterback in Justin Herbert and he'd sell tickets in a stadium that's usually filled with fans from opposing teams.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Todd Bowles won a division title last season but is 11-15 since replacing Bruce Arians so he could be out if the Buccaneers (3-5) don't find a way to win the mediocre NFC South. Bringing Brady to the Sunshine State worked out well for the Buccaneers, who won a Super Bowl in No. 12's first season in 2020. Bucs general manager Jason Licht had two stints in the front office under Belichick so they have a relationship. Tampa's ownership had success with a big-name hire previously when the team traded for Jon Gruden, who led the Buccaneers to the franchise's first Super Bowl title in 2002.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

The Commanders are 4-5 and Ron Rivera hasn't had a winning record in Washington though he won a division title at 7-9 in 2020. It seems inevitable the new ownership group will want to hire their own guy. Hiring Belichick would win over a fan base that suffered through Daniel Snyder's tenure. The Commanders have talented players on defense and young quarterback Sam Howell has potential so they could be an attractive destination for Belichick.

CHICAGO BEARS

Matt Eberflus is 6-21 and the Bears (3-7) could be onto their sixth coach since 2012. They might end with two picks in the top five and have a decision to make on quarterback Justin Fields. Belichick's recent track record in the draft doesn't help his case but he would bring instant credibility to an organization that's enjoyed one winning season since 2013.

DALLAS COWBOYS

Mike McCarthy might have to reach the Super Bowl to stay in Dallas. The Cowboys (5-3) have plenty of talent but haven't had playoff success. Jerry Jones might run out of patience if the Cowboys fail to reach the NFC title game for the 28th straight year. Jones' ego may not handle giving Belichick control but he once hired Bill Parcells so it's not unrealistic.

Blinken says 'far too many' Palestinians have died as Israel wages relentless war on Hamas

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that “far too many” Palestinians have died and suffered as Israel wages a relentless war against the militant Hamas group in the Gaza Strip. He urged Israel to minimize harm to civilians and maximize humanitarian assistance that reaches them.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, Blinken said recent Israeli moves to improve dire conditions in Gaza as its military pushes deeper into the strip — including pauses in military operations to allow Palestinians to move from northern to southern Gaza and the creation of a second safe corridor — are positive but they are not nearly enough.

“Much more needs to be done to protect civilians and to make sure that humanitarian assistance reaches them,” he said. “Far too many Palestinians have been killed, far too many have suffered these past weeks, and we want to do everything possible to prevent harm to them and to maximize the assistance that gets to them.”

Blinken spoke as he wrapped up an intense nine-day diplomatic tour of the Middle East and Asia — his second frenetic Mideast trip since the war began with Hamas’ deadly incursion into southern Israel on Oct. 7.

In Hamas-run Gaza, the Health Ministry said Friday that the Palestinian death toll in the coastal strip has surpassed 11,000 people. More than 1,400 people have been killed in Israel, mainly in the initial Hamas attack.

Blinken’s tour focused largely on the war amid growing international outrage over the destruction wrought on Gaza and demands for an immediate cease-fire. Neither Israel nor the United States support a cease-fire because they argue Hamas would take advantage of it to regroup and launch new terror attacks.

Blinken said the U.S. has come up with additional proposals how better to protect civilians but did not elaborate.

U.S. officials have said they would like to see Israel introduce longer “humanitarian pauses” in areas beyond the two established safe passage and exponentially expand the amount of assistance getting into Gaza from Egypt by increasing the flow of truck convoys.

The U.S. also remains resolute to secure the release of Israeli and other hostages held by Hamas, get all foreigners who want to leave Gaza out, prevent the violence from spreading to the broader region, and to begin planning for what a post-conflict Gaza will look like, Blinken said.

Starting last week, Blinken’s marathon mission took him to eight countries — Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Iraq, Turkey, Japan, South Korea and India — as well as the occupied West Bank. But as he did on his previous Mideast tour last month, he encountered skepticism and outright resistance.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv last Friday rejected the idea of “humanitarian pauses,” saying military pressure on Hamas could not be eased.

“We are going full steam ahead,” Netanyahu said shortly after Blinken warned that Palestinians were being driven toward further radicalism that could perpetuate the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict and leave Israel at greater risk.

Then, Arab foreign ministers accused Israel of war crimes, demanding nothing less than an immediate full-on cease-fire and dismissing Blinken’s call for post-conflict planning as naïve and premature while civilian deaths were rising.

“The Arab countries demand an immediate cease-fire that will end this war,” Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi told Blinken in Amman on Saturday.

Diplomatically, things weren’t looking much better.

During Blinken’s trip, both Jordan and Turkey recalled their ambassadors to Israel in protest and made clear that Israeli envoys to their countries would not be welcomed back until the conflict was over.

Over the weekend, massive pro-Palestinian demonstrations against the war and U.S. support for Israel rocked capitals around the world, fueling fears of unrest amid a global spike in both antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents.

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By the time Blinken had visited Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, made a brief stop in Cyprus, and flown on to Iraq and Turkey on Sunday, it appeared he had won little, if any, support for most of his proposals.

Privately, however, U.S. officials said they were making headway with Netanyahu on the humanitarian pauses and increased aid to Gaza and that the Arab states would in the interim support temporary pauses.

Leaving Ankara on Monday, Blinken acknowledged his efforts remained "a work in progress" while U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, insisted prospects for at least some success were not so bleak.

In Tokyo on Tuesday, where Blinken attended a Japanese-hosted meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven leading industrial democracies, there were fears that the bloc, which has overcome differences to remain united against Russia's war in Ukraine, might split over the Middle East.

Both Japan and France, along with the European Union, had taken less forceful stances in support of Israel. The French had voted in favor of a U.N. Security Council resolution demanding a cease-fire that the U.S. has vetoed. The other G7 members had all abstained on a similar but non-binding General Assembly resolution that the U.S. had voted against.

Behind the scenes, U.S. officials said momentum was shifting.

Israeli officials were beginning to warm to the idea that temporary rolling pauses could both benefit Israel militarily and show its willingness to ease civilian hardship. In the meantime, Arab leaders, including Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, were stepping up quiet efforts to keep the conflict from spreading.

After Blinken warned of consequences if Iranian-backed militias continued to attack U.S. facilities in Iraq and Syria on Sunday in Baghdad, al-Sudani had travelled to Tehran and met Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a move U.S. officials suggested was positive.

And, in Tokyo, after a forceful closed-door intervention by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, the G7 coalesced around a strong statement of support for all of Blinken's priorities, including an unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and backing for Israel's right to defend itself.

They also backed humanitarian pauses and corridors, post-conflict planning for Gaza, and an eventual restoration of a process to bring lasting peace through a two-state solution.

As Blinken concluded bilateral talks with South Korean leaders in Seoul and made his way to India, Israel announced daily four-hour humanitarian pauses, with a three hours' notice, and the opening of a second safe corridor for Palestinians to leave northern Gaza to seek safety in the south.

"We appreciate the fact that" Israel finally agreed to the pauses, Blinken said as he stopped in New Delhi, more than a week after starting his mission.

"As I've said, from the start, this is a process and it's not always flipping the light switch," he said. "But we have seen progress. We just need to see more of it."

Today in History: November 11, World War I armistice signed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 11, the 315th day of 2023. There are 50 days left in the year. Today is Veterans Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I ended as the Allies and Germany signed an armistice in the Forest of Compiègne (kohm-PYEHN'-yeh).

On this date:

In 1620, 41 Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, anchored off Massachusetts, signed a compact calling for a "body politick."

In 1831, former slave Nat Turner, who'd led a slave uprising, was executed in Jerusalem, Virginia.

In 1921, the remains of an unidentified American service member were interred in a Tomb of the Un-

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known Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

In 1938, Irish-born cook Mary Mallon, who'd gained notoriety as the disease-carrying "Typhoid Mary" blamed for the deaths of three people, died on North Brother Island in New York's East River at age 69 after 23 years of mandatory quarantine.

In 1942, during World War II, Germany completed its occupation of France.

In 1966, Gemini 12 blasted off on a four-day mission with astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. aboard; it was the tenth and final flight of NASA's Gemini program.

In 1972, the U.S. Army turned over its base at Long Binh to the South Vietnamese, symbolizing the end of direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1987, following the failure of two Supreme Court nominations, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Judge Anthony M. Kennedy, who went on to win confirmation.

In 1992, the Church of England voted to ordain women as priests.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton ordered warships, planes and troops to the Persian Gulf as he laid out his case for a possible attack on Iraq. Iraq, meanwhile, showed no sign of backing down from its refusal to deal with U.N. weapons inspectors.

In 2004, Palestinians at home and abroad wept, waved flags and burned tires in an eruption of grief at news of the death of Yasser Arafat in Paris at age 75.

In 2020, Georgia's secretary of state announced an audit of presidential election results that he said would be done with a full hand tally of ballots because the margin was so tight; President-elect Joe Biden led President Donald Trump by about 14,000 votes out of nearly 5 million votes counted in the state. (The audit would affirm Biden's win.)

In 2021, F.W. de Klerk, South Africa's last apartheid leader, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela and oversaw the end of the country's white minority rule, died at age 85.

In 2022, Kevin Conroy, the prolific voice actor whose gravely delivery on "Batman: The Animated Series" was for many Batman fans the definitive sound of the Caped Crusader, died at age 66.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Narvel Felts is 85. Former Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., is 83. Americana roots singer/songwriter Chris Smither is 79. Rock singer-musician Vince Martell (Vanilla Fudge) is 78. The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, is 78. Rock singer Jim Peterik (PEE'-ter-ihk) (Ides of March, Survivor) is 73. Golfer Fuzzy Zoeller is 72. Pop singer-musician Paul Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 72. Rock singer-musician Andy Partridge (XTC) is 70. Singer Marshall Crenshaw is 70. Rock singer Dave Alvin is 68. Rock musician Ian Craig Marsh (Human League; Heaven 17) is 67. Actor Stanley Tucci is 63. Actor Demi Moore is 61. Actor Calista Flockhart is 59. Actor Frank John Hughes is 56. TV personality Carson Kressley is 54. Actor David DeLuise is 52. Actor Adam Beach is 51. Actor Tyler Christopher is 51. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is 49. Actor Scoot McNairy is 46. Rock musician Jonathan Pretus (formerly with Cowboy Mouth) is 42. Actor Frankie Shaw is 42. Musician Jon Batiste is 37. Actor Christa B. Allen is 32. Actor Tye Sheridan is 27. Actor Ian Patrick is 21.