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## Coming up

### Wednesday, Nov. 15

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, almond rice with peas, pineapple-strawberry ambrosia, cookie, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Turkey dinner with all the bells and whistles.

### Thursday, Nov. 16

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA Praise and thanksgiving: Program: Nigeria. Hostess: Sarah., 1:30 p.m.  
Blood Drive at the Groton Community Center.  
State Volleyball Tournament at Rapid City  
Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.  
School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.

### Friday, Nov. 17

State Volleyball Tournament at Rapid City  
JH GBB at Milbank (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)  
Senior Menu: BBQ pork driblet on bun, potato salad, mixed vegetables, tropical fruit.  
School Breakfast: Cheese omelets.  
School Lunch: Chicken noodle soup.

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

**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

Capitol Chaos: GOP lawmakers were called “toddlers” following separate incidents involving Representatives Kevin McCarthy and Tim Burchett, a heated exchange between Reps. James Comer and Jared Moskowitz, and Sen. Markwayne Mullin challenging a union leader to a fight during a Senate hearing.

War in Gaza: President Joe Biden was accused of “genocide” by pro-Palestinian demonstrators hours before Israeli troops raided Gaza’s largest hospital, having urged Hamas to surrender. Israel claimed the Al Shifa Hospital houses a

massive Hamas command center.

March for Israel: At least 290,000 people took to the streets in Washington, D.C. to call for the release of hostages by Hamas. See a list of celebs who were there. Other highlights include CNN political commentator Van Jones being booed and John Fetterman’s moment with a fellow protestor.

Michigan Ballot: A Michigan judge handed victory to Donald Trump after denying efforts to keep the 2024 GOP frontrunner off the state presidential primary ballot.

Domestic Flights: Travel for Thanksgiving may be higher this year as airlines struggle to get back to pre-2020 capacity levels even as the tourism sector bounces back from the pandemic downturn, AAA Travel’s Paula Twidale told Newsweek.

War in Ukraine: Ukrainian partisans on Monday claimed that many of the warships in Russia’s Black Sea Fleet have departed from their home port in Crimea following recent attacks by Kyiv’s military.



## Stop signs installed

If you're driving on Second Street and see a stop sign, you don't have to say, "I don't remember a stop sign here." Because you're right. The stop sign was installed on Tuesday at the intersection of N. Second Street and East Seventh Avenue. North and south bound traffic will need to stop at this intersection, which will now make three straight stop signs Second Street between Sixth Avenue and Ninth Avenue. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## Conde National League

**November 13 Team Standings:** Cubs 23, Braves 21, Mets 20½, Tigers 20, Giants 19½, Pirates 16,  
**Men's High Games:** Dalton Locke 201, 191; Aaron Severson 187; Chad Furney 184  
**Men's High Series:** Dalton Locke 527, Butch Farmen 501, Ryan Bethke 498, Russ Bethke 498  
**Women's High Games:** Suzi Easthouse 206, 184; Mayme Baker 165; Vickie Kramp 153; Nancy Radke 153  
**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 521, Vickie Kramp 437, Nancy Radke 423

## Vermillion added to Groton Boys Basketball Schedule

A boys basketball game with Vermillion has been added to the schedule. It is set for Friday, February 2, 2024 in Groton. The JV will start at 5 p.m. with the Varsity at 6:30 p.m.

This will be game #20 for the boys, so besides changes due to weather, the schedule should be good to go!



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## 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....

15.) Was the baby of the family growing up



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## Groton's Angel Trees are out

There are two Angel Trees in Groton again this year. Tina Kosel has put together her annual cards for the Angel Trees with one at Dollar General and one at Lori's Pharmacy. (Photos by Tina Kosel)

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## NSU Volleyball

### **NSU Falls to No. 8 SCSU in NSIC Tournament Opening Round Sweep**

St. Cloud, Minn. – The Northern State University volleyball team's NSIC Tournament run was cut short on Tuesday by No. 8 St. Cloud State. The Wolves were swept by the Huskies, falling with set scores of 25-21, 25-19, and 25-14.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 0, SCSU 3

Records: NSU 19-9, SCSU 21-7

Attendance: 439

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

St. Cloud State was efficient offensively hitting .330 with 48 kills and 14 errors; Northern has just four matches this season where their opponents hit .300 or bet, two of which are in losses to the Huskies

The Wolves hit .160 with 32 kills and 16 errors

NSU added 31 assists, 37 digs, four blocks, and two aces in the contest

Hanna Thompson led the offense as the lone Wolf in double figures with 11 kills and a .219 attack percentage

Abby Meister continued to be the defensive leader for NSU with 14 digs, while Eliza Bauers led the team at the net with four blocks

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Hanna Thompson: 11 kills, .219 attack%, 1 block

Abby Brooks: 8 kills, .429 attack%

Keri Walker: 27 assists, 8 digs, 2 blocks, 1 ace

Abby Meister: 14 digs

#### UP NEXT

Northern will now await their season fate with the completion of the NSIC Tournament and the NCAA Selection Show next Monday, November 20. Updated Central Region Rankings will be released on ncaa.com tomorrow, the Wolves sat in tenth in last week's edition.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Latest round of state housing infrastructure aid totals \$19 million

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - NOVEMBER 14, 2023 4:26 PM

The South Dakota Housing Development Authority Board signed off on another \$19 million in housing infrastructure funding for 19 projects on Tuesday.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the grant funding will include seniors in Watertown, students and residents in Vermillion, along with home buyers or renters in Worthing, Miller, Beresford, Centerville, Canton and Aberdeen. One project will see grant funding used to develop a now-shuttered nursing home in Salem into 27 homes and eight apartments.

Now in its third month of awards for the \$200 million program, the housing board has signed off on grants and loans totaling more than \$77 million for 46 projects across South Dakota.

The money was allocated in 2023 by the South Dakota Legislature, after late-session tweaks to a 2022 bill meant to create the program sparked questions about the housing board's legal authority to award the funds. It's meant to help address a workforce housing shortage in South Dakota by helping developers cover the swelling costs for street construction, water and sewer lines, street lights and other infrastructure-related building expenses.

Chas Olson, the Housing Development Authority's director, told South Dakota Searchlight in October that the \$200 million cash infusion represents the agency's most substantial single funding pool. The authority also helps finance affordable housing projects, largely funded through federal grants, and administers the state's first-time homebuyer and repeat homebuyer programs.

"\$200 million is by far the largest funding allocation we've ever gotten," said Olson, who's worked for the HDA nearly a decade and ascended to its directorship after the resignation of former director Lorraine Polak in late March.

The board will consider more applications for housing infrastructure funds next month.

### Housing infrastructure awards, November 2023

Lakes of Willow Creek Second Addition, 74 single-family lots, Watertown: \$1.34 million  
Aurora's Addition, 55 single-family lots, Sioux Falls: \$746,701  
Bak Property Housing Development, 59 single-family lots, Beresford: \$1.02 million  
Briggs Development, 16 single family lots, Plankinton: \$209,701  
Freedom Estates, 68 single family lots, Box Elder, \$808,869  
Greater Huron Cul-De-Sac, 13 single family lots, Huron: \$269,667  
HAPI 2nd North Subdivision, 66 single family lots, Aberdeen: \$1.52 million  
Harmony Hill Development, Challenger Way-West, 137 single family lots, 40 senior housing units, 20 twin homes and 160 multifamily affordable housing units, Watertown: \$1.41 million  
Harvest Pointe Development Project, 18 single-family lots and four twin home lots, Centerville: \$483,968  
Jack Powell Addition Development, 13 single family lots and 110 multifamily units, Vermillion: \$1.42 million  
SEDC Residential Development, 27 single-family lots and eight multifamily units, Salem: \$755,000  
Union Cross Development, 136 homes (including a mix of single family, triplexes, fourplexes and a duplex), North Sioux City: \$2.71 million  
WEDC Housing Lots Project, three single family lots, Worthing: \$70,9270  
Liberty Park Phase 4, 24 single-family lots and 51 multifamily units, Box Elder: \$533,220



Northern Lights Subdivision, 23 single-family lots and 30 multifamily units, Box Elder: \$517,254  
PEDCO Properties, 32 single-family lots, Pierre: \$457,433  
Monarch Village Subdivision, 82 single-family lots and 200 condominium units, Canton: \$3.72 million  
Ridgeview on Foster Housing Development, 54 single-family lots, Mitchell: \$1.03 million  
Rustler Lot, 12 single-family lots, Miller: \$178,790

## State auditor says legislative factions are spreading conflict-of-interest allegations

**Sattgast also says lawmakers are doing a poor job filling out disclosure forms**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 14, 2023 3:55 PM**

The state auditor said Tuesday he has fielded claims that numerous legislators are violating state constitutional provisions regarding conflicts of interest.

"I haven't been given any names, but I've been alerted that there are possibly 20 legislators out of the 105 that would probably have some sort of conflict," said Auditor Rich Sattgast, who shared the information with the Legislature's Executive Board on Tuesday in Pierre.

Sattgast later told South Dakota Searchlight many of the alleged conflicts of interest are being reported by lawmakers against other lawmakers.

"We have these factions that are trying to take one another out, and they're trying to use this office as their way of going about that," he said.

In the Executive Board meeting, Sattgast and committee members discussed Article III, Section 12 of the South Dakota Constitution. It bans legislators from having an interest, "directly or indirectly," in a state or county contract authorized by a law passed during their term.

### Controversy flows from Castleberry situation

In August, Sen. Jessica Castleberry, R-Rapid City, resigned and agreed to repay \$500,000 in federal COVID-19 relief assistance she received for her child care business. The situation had gone public earlier when Gov. Kristi Noem accused Castleberry of violating the conflict of interest law.

Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, asked Sattgast on Tuesday whether the state has procedures for handling conflict of interest allegations.

"Is there a process where you're looking at them or doing something?" Schoenbeck said.

Sattgast said yes, but, "At this juncture, I really want to wait and see what the Supreme Court says." He was referencing a recent request from Noem. She's seeking an advisory opinion from the court to further clarify the meaning of the constitution's conflict-of-interest provisions.

Sattgast told the Executive Board that he and other state officials are considering the integration of alerts within South Dakota's accounting system. He said the system would incorporate information from legislators' financial disclosure forms and flag contracts with any legislator-involved businesses.

But the system would only be as good as the data fed into it, and Sattgast said that data isn't great.

"I've gone through several legislators' conflict of interest statements and many just have one line filled out on there," he said. "One that I reviewed was from a legislator who said, in that statement where you're supposed to name where you receive your funds, it said 'my rental properties' without listing the name of the rental properties."

Rep. Hugh Bartels, R-Watertown, the chairman of the Executive Board, said the board will send letters to all legislators soon asking them to list all possible conflicts of interest. Bartels said the information will be used to help former U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons, a lawyer hired by the Legislature, to file a brief for the Supreme Court's use in forming its advisory opinion.

### Memo explains constitutional provisions

In a memo to the board, Justin Goetz of the Legislative Research Council explained two conflict-of-interest



prohibitions in the state constitution.

The state Supreme Court has written that the purpose behind both clauses is “to remove any suspicion which might otherwise attach to the motives of members who advocate the creation of new offices or the expenditure of public funds.”

One clause prohibits legislators from being appointed or elected to state offices created – or whose pay is increased – during their term. Additionally, they can’t receive state job appointments from the governor or Legislature during their term. That clause has not been interpreted in any state Supreme Court rulings, according to Goetz.

The other clause bars legislators, during their term and a year thereafter, from being directly or indirectly involved in state or county contracts authorized by laws passed during their term.

The state Supreme Court has interpreted that clause in five rulings, Goetz wrote. But several questions about the clause remain unanswered, according to Goetz, including the extent to which family members’ interests affect a legislator and the impact of owning shares in publicly traded companies.

Schoenbeck said the gray areas left by the Supreme Court need clarification.

“There are no guidelines in those cases,” he said. “There’s a whole lot of confusion.”

Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Pierre, said he hopes the upcoming Supreme Court advisory opinion takes into consideration how much bigger state government has become since the constitution was established.

“This was written in the 1800s, when the Legislature would approve contracts one by one,” Mortenson said. “We’re in an entirely different paradigm here.”

*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.*

## Staffing and funding problems leave tribal child welfare offices scrambling

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER AND ANNIE TODD - NOVEMBER 14, 2023 6:00 AM**

Christian Blackbird isn’t sure how many children fell through the cracks.

He’d been at the Crow Creek Indian Child Welfare Act Office for more than a year with a staff of two under his management. But before he started in January 2022, the director’s chair he now sits in was vacant on and off for years, leaving children separated from their families without a lifeline to their tribes.

Part of Blackbird’s job is picking up the phone when the state calls to ask if children removed from their parents are tribal citizens. If no one’s there to take the call, the child cannot be placed with kin and could be placed hours away from their home.

Blackbird doesn’t live in Fort Thompson because of a lack of housing, part of the reason why ICWA offices on reservations across the state are struggling to find staff. Instead, he commutes from Pierre. It’s a quicker drive than four hours each week from Bismarck, North Dakota, where he lived when he started.

Juanita Scherich, in Pine Ridge, knows the struggle of not having someone in the office to pick up the phone.

She came out of a six-year retirement to retake her seat as the Oglala Sioux Tribe ICWA director. She was greeted by mountains of paperwork and cases. Two years later, the OST ICWA office is still trying to catch up with the hundreds of cases it takes on each year.

There are nine tribal ICWA directors in South Dakota. Their mission: exhaust all options to place a child with relatives or a Native foster family to keep them in contact with their culture and their community, which is required by the federal 1978 ICWA law. Only when all efforts are exhausted can a Native child be placed with a non-Native family.

Blackbird and Scherich are tired. Without proper staff, it hinders the directors’ ability to protect the state’s most vulnerable population before they enter the child welfare system.

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## ICWA office turnover

Summary of ICWA office turnover during fiscal year 2022, according to the Department of Social Services: Oglala Sioux Tribe: ICWA director resigned in July of 2021 and the position had been carried out by acting staff as of June 2022. The OST Child Protective Services director resigned in January 2022 after just over two years in the job. The role was filled in May 2022.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: CPS director resigned in February of 2022 and was vacant as of the end of June 2022. The director was in the position for less than a year.

Crow Creek Sioux Tribe: ICWA director had been vacant since January 2021. A new hire started in August 2021 and left the next month. A permanent hire was completed in January 2022.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe: ICWA director resigned in August of 2021 and was vacant as of June 2022.

Yankton Sioux Tribe: ICWA director resigned in April 2022. The director of the tribe's Child Protection Program was the acting director along with the tribe's enrollment specialist as of June 2022.

An Argus Leader/South Dakota Searchlight investigation examined the issues Native families and children face inside South Dakota's child welfare system. Native American children accounted for nearly 74% of the foster care system at the end of fiscal year 2023 — despite accounting for only 13% of the state's overall child population. One in five Native children can expect to be placed in foster care by the time they turn 18.

"A lot of people think we could just help everybody, which I wish we could, but we can't," Blackbird said.

## Contracts between state and tribes help fund child welfare services

In South Dakota, the state contracts with five tribes to disburse federal dollars for child welfare services. The dollars, known as Title IV-E funds, help cover staffing and operating costs at the tribes' ICWA offices, as well as payments to tribally licensed foster families and child guardians.

The Sisseton Wahpeton, Flandreau Santee, Standing Rock and Oglala Sioux tribes have Title IV-E contracts with the state. In 2021, the dollar amounts ranged from \$40,000 for Flandreau Santee to \$1.02 million for Oglala, according to the publicly available contracts.

Other tribes receive Title IV-E funds in other manners. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe applied for direct funding, but as of April, hadn't moved forward with implementation of the program, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Five tribes also contract with the state for child protective services. For example, on the Crow Creek reservation, the tribe coordinates with CPS to place children with foster families licensed through the tribe. The Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Lower Brule and Yankton Sioux tribes also receive state CPS services.

Sisseton Wahpeton, Flandreau Santee, Standing Rock and Oglala run their own CPS. It's a reflection of tribal sovereignty, said Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Chairman J. Garret Renville.

The ultimate exercise of tribal sovereignty in foster care, in Renville's eyes, would be for the state to remove itself as the middleman for disbursing Title IV-E funds.

"I think we're educated enough here and sophisticated enough here to be able to create some sort of program so that we can address those needs internally without the state involvement," he said.

Renville said if the Title IV-E funds weren't passed through the state, it would be easier for the tribe to solve problems and direct resources to the right places.

"I think it would help the state in recognizing sovereignty: honoring sovereignty and honoring ICWA and honoring our culture," he said.

State Tribal Relations Secretary David Flute said inadequate staffing in ICWA offices can impede tribes from filling out the forms needed for Title IV-E funds. According to Flute, it's part of the reason the state contracts exist: to help fill that gap.

"I'm proud of the work that we're doing in partnership with DSS, of the support we get from the governor and her office," Flute said, referring to the Department of Social Services. "And bringing forth resources for tribes to help them with their shortfalls. They might have to bring in some outside resources and help that is specifically for reconnecting kids and their parents."

The state must match some of the federal government's Title IV-E funding. For every dollar the state

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spends on child welfare, the federal government pays back 55 cents.

Some in Indian Country believe the state sees their children as a financial boon, believing the state receives more funding from the federal government when Native American children are placed in the state child welfare system.

But that's not the case, said David Simmons, the director of government affairs and advocacy for the National Indian Child Welfare Association. The state may have "other kinds of incentives" to remove Native American children more often than their non-Native peers, he added, such as beliefs about the "right way" to raise a family.

"States don't actually have a financial incentive," Simmons said.

## Lack of staffing

Despite contracts between the state and tribes for Title IV-E funds, tribal ICWA officers say they lack necessary resources to ensure Native children stay in or near their communities. The lack of resources also impacts their ability to quickly transfer cases to tribal courts.

Blackbird said his office relied on one part-time worker to fill the role before he was hired in 2022, and prior to that there were times when there was no one in the chair. There was no Crow Creek ICWA director for a year.

Housing, rather than a lack of qualified candidates, was the issue, Blackbird said.

"ICWA directors did not want to come here. There's no housing," Blackbird said.

A new foster village remains unused at Crow Creek. The village, which is akin to a larger foster home where qualified staff act as foster parents and children remain in their community, doesn't have staff to open its doors.

Blackbird is hopeful the tribe will eventually have resources to get its own CPS services started.

"I really think that Crow Creek is maybe a step or two back behind everybody else," he said. "I keep telling everybody, 'We already hit rock bottom, the best we can do is go up.'"

In the southwestern corner of the state, the Oglala Sioux Tribe is assessing what its needs are after declaring a state of emergency for the tribe's ICWA and CPS programs in 2022. The assessment will be done through the Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative.

The office struggles to retain staff and offers low salaries, said Alicia Mousseau, vice president of the tribe.

"We don't know what's truly needed until we have a full staff — we don't know what the actual caseload is or what the true need is until we have a well-oiled machine," Mousseau said.

The ICWA supervisor salary (Scherich's position) is \$38,106 a year. The salaries for Oglala's three ICWA specialists and its reunification caseworker are \$27,014 a year.

Meanwhile, the base pay for an ICWA specialist in the United States on average is \$51,000, according to Glassdoor.

The lack of staff in the Oglala Sioux ICWA office and CPS office has been noticed by state officials.

Matt Althoff, the DSS secretary, said transfer rates for Native children from state court to Oglala Sioux tribal court have "plummeted," and the lack of resources in the tribe has led to a backlog of cases.

"I'm not telling anybody how to run a tribe, but I would focus on getting their ICWA resources up and running so we can permanently place [the children] or at least foster them within the tribe," he said.

It was apparent to Scherich that something was wrong after she retired from her position as the Oglala ICWA director in 2015, after serving for 10 years. Multiple ICWA directors came in and out of the position while she was trying to relax in retirement.

"That's not normal. It was me for all those years and then something like every other year the office was changing and then there was nobody there," she said.

Scherich came back to the office to serve as acting ICWA director in 2021. She's still there.

She was in the foster care system as a child and came back because "the system was broken."

"We are a system of families. Families need to have resources when they're in trouble," she said. "That's why it's needed. Children can be saved."



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## What can be done?

In a perfect world, Blackbird sees access to more resources – for substance abuse prevention and more staff – as a way to address the issues he sees every day.

“We’d have more funding. I’d be able to bring probably just about every case back to the tribe,” he said, adding that more funds would mean the tribe could become self-sufficient and start its own CPS office.

BJ Jones, a tribal judge and director of the Tribal Judicial Institute at the University of North Dakota, said he’d like to see Title IV-E funding changed to better support Indigenous children and ICWA.

“The federal government, the state and all the tribes need to just sit down and work this out,” Jones said. “The feds have to be at the table because, after all, it was really the federal policies that started this through the removal of Native kids.”

Prevention services and stopping the removal of children from their families is already on the minds of the federal government. Title IV-E funds are being shifted to a new program called Family First Prevention Services, which uses some Title IV-E money to fund prevention services and address child abuse and neglect at its root.

South Dakota is one of the last four states to create a plan, which has yet to be finalized and approved by the federal government. Creation of the plan is a three-year process, with South Dakota being in its first year.

Mousseau added that there needs to be other avenues to find funding.

Oglala was awarded \$100,000 in one-time funding in early 2023 from the federal government’s Tiwahe Initiative to develop a Tiwahe (family) plan aimed at improving case management services. The tribe applied for another Tiwahe Initiative grant program earlier this year.

“We always ask for more funding for services, but we need to figure out how to bring in philanthropic funding ... we have to start thinking outside of the box and thinking holistically,” Mousseau said.

Gov. Kristi Noem added the state would be willing to work with the tribes so long as they come to the table with ideas on how to fix the problem so that there’s buy-in from all sides.

“The state can take an incredible lead from the tribal governments,” Noem said. “Tell us what they need. And don’t just say we need more money. We need to be spending money wisely in ways that are really effective. We would entertain, and have asked them many times, what more we can do to partner and serve.”

Simmons, the director of government affairs and advocacy for NICWA, said the association has worked with a number of states and tribes to develop positive relationships and come up with solution-based approaches to correcting the wrongs in foster care.

But the organization has had limited success in South Dakota in developing partnerships between the state and the tribes.

“It’s been over many years and it’s been really frustrating,” Simmons said.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She’s spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

*Annie Todd covers state politics for the Argus Leader in Sioux Falls. She was born and raised in Colorado and graduated from the University of Wyoming.*

## With yes vote from SD’s Johnson, House passes stopgap spending bill

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 14, 2023 5:12 PM**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House took a broadly bipartisan vote Tuesday to fund the government into the new year, though the measure must pass the Senate by the end of the week if Congress is going to avoid a partial government shutdown.

The 336-95 House vote was the first major legislative test for Speaker Mike Johnson, the Louisiana Republican who took on the role after the former speaker was ousted after passing a similar bipartisan short-term funding bill in late September.

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A total of 93 House Republicans voted against the bill, but enough Democrats supported it to send the measure to the Senate. South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson voted yes.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said Tuesday that he and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, both agree the Senate needs to pass the bill quickly to avoid a funding lapse.

"If the House should pass it, and I hope they do, Leader McConnell and I will figure out the best way to get this done quickly," Schumer said.

During a press conference prior to the vote, Johnson defended his decision to move the short-term spending bill, saying it would prevent Congress from passing an omnibus spending package in mid-December before the holiday break. Republicans have repeatedly said they oppose such massive packages, which wrap together all 12 government spending bills, often on short notice.

He rejected criticism from fellow GOP lawmakers that he was making a mistake and taking the wrong approach to funding the government.

"We're not surrendering, we're fighting. But you have to be wise about choosing the fights," Johnson said. "You've got to fight fights that you can win and we're going to, and you're going to see this House majority stand together on our principles."

Johnson said he was optimistic that Congress would be able to pass the dozen full-year appropriations bills before the new deadlines next year, avoiding the need for another stopgap spending bill.

"Part of the reason I'm confident about this is, I've been drinking from Niagara Falls for the last three weeks. This will allow everybody to go home for a couple of days for Thanksgiving," Johnson said. "Everybody can cool off."

During that time, Johnson said he would get a group together to "map out that plan to fight for" conservative principles in the final set of 12 spending bills. The current fiscal year ends on Sept. 30, 2024.

"I look forward to rolling that out," he said. "You'll see much more of that."

## Two deadlines

The 32-page short-term spending bill, sometimes called a continuing resolution or CR, would fund part of the federal government through Jan. 19 and the remainder of the annual appropriations bills through Feb. 2.

The short-term funding measure is intended to give Congress and the White House more time to negotiate the dozen full-year spending bills. But there are several pitfalls along the way.

Former GOP Speaker Kevin McCarthy was ousted from his leadership role after moving the short-term government funding bill in late September that will keep the federal government up and running through Friday.

The decision by eight House Republicans and Democrats to vote to "vacate the chair" plunged the chamber into gridlock for weeks as GOP lawmakers debated who should lead the party.

After nominating three Republicans who couldn't get the votes on the floor to hold the gavel, the party finally coalesced behind Johnson. But some of the especially conservative members became frustrated this week with his decision to put the stopgap spending bill on the floor.

The short-term spending bill would give the House and Senate until Jan. 19 to work out an agreement on the Agriculture-FDA, Energy-Water, Military Construction-VA and Transportation-HUD spending bills.

The remaining eight spending bills — Commerce-Justice-Science, Defense, Financial Services, Homeland Security, Interior-Environment, Labor-HHS-Education, Legislative Branch and State-Foreign Operations — would have funding until Feb. 2.

The House and Senate would need to reach agreement well before those deadlines on the total amount of spending for the current fiscal year that began back on Oct. 1. The leaders of the Appropriations committees would then determine how much of the money goes to each of the dozen bills.

Democrats have said the total spending level should match what Congress and President Joe Biden agreed to in the debt limit law this summer. But some Republicans have pressed for lawmakers to go

below that level.

## Lawmakers sound off on spending

Idaho Republican Rep. Mike Simpson, chair of the Interior-Environment spending panel, said that leaders need to clarify the total spending number, though he expects that will ultimately match the debt limit law. "I think it will end up being that, but leadership needs to tell us," Simpson said.

Georgia Rep. Sanford Bishop Jr., the top Democrat on the Agriculture spending panel, said the total spending level for the final slate of bills that the House and Senate will negotiate in the coming weeks and months needs to adhere to the number in the debt limit law.

"Some of them, particularly the MAGA Republicans, pretty much don't agree with it, they want to cut much more drastically than is beneficial for the American people," Bishop said. "The moderate, reasonable minds of that side think that we probably should do something that is reasonable."

Maryland Rep. Steny Hoyer, the top Democrat on the Financial Services spending panel, said a key challenge to getting full-year bills agreed to is that "Republicans have been unable for eight or nine months to get their act together on fiscal issues."

"And we'd lost a speaker over that," Hoyer said. "They were unable to elect speakers for some period of time, and there is still no guarantee that we know what the overall spending levels are."

Ohio Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur, ranking member on the Energy-Water subcommittee, said "hopefully the leadership can find a way to do the business of the country."

"I could say a lot. But we need to do the business of the country and not have any speed bumps along the way," Kaptur said. "We want to keep the recovery going."

Florida Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, ranking member on the Military Construction-VA spending subcommittee, said before the vote that she needed to know Republicans would follow the spending levels in the debt limit law and work on a supplemental spending bill for Ukraine, Israel and the Indo-Pacific region.

"I, as a Democrat, am going to need to make sure that the agreements that were previously made are adhered to in terms of where we start after the CR," she said.

"And to ensure that we have a full opportunity for an emergency supplemental that will include Ukraine, Taiwan, Israel, and our domestic priorities that are absolutely essential."

Kentucky Republican Rep. Hal Rogers, chairman of the Commerce-Justice-Science spending panel, said during floor debate the short-term bill was necessary to avoid a partial government shutdown and allow the House and Senate time to negotiate.

"While a CR is not my preferred method of conducting business, a government shutdown right before the holiday does our nation no good," Rogers said. "We need more time to complete our fiscal '24 year, to give the House a better negotiating position with the Senate, so we can eventually pass full-year appropriations bills."

House Republican leaders brought the stopgap spending bill up for a vote under the suspension calendar, which is typically reserved for smaller, non-controversial legislation and requires two-thirds vote for passage.

That maneuver avoided the House needing to adopt a rule for the stopgap spending bill. House Republicans opposed to the bill likely would have blocked approval of that rule, preventing the chamber from debating and voting on the stopgap spending bill.

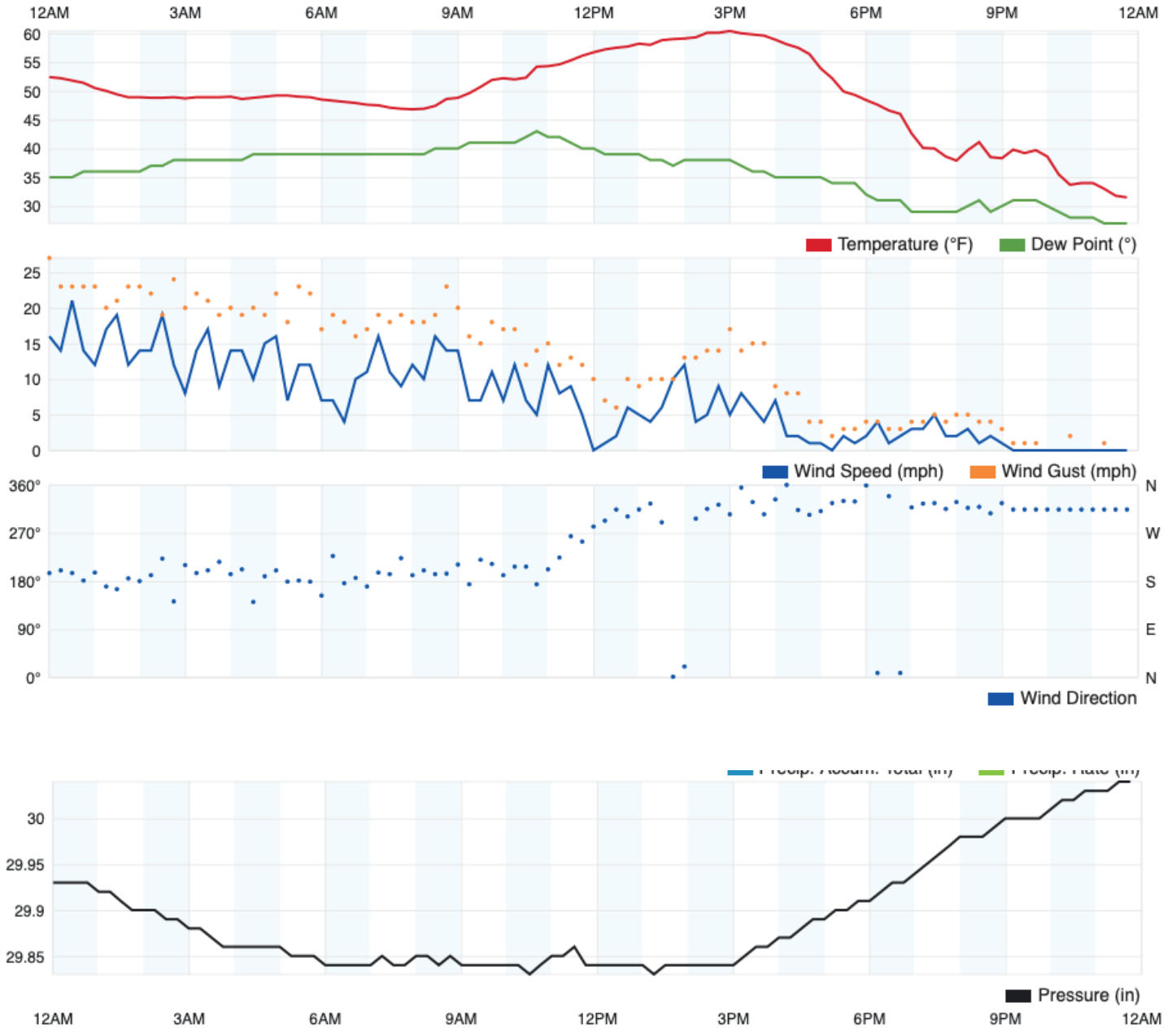
*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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Wed Nov 15	Thu Nov 16	Fri Nov 17	Sat Nov 18	Sun Nov 19	Mon Nov 20	Tue Nov 21
61°F	56°F	47°F	51°F	52°F	48°F	44°F
45°F	22°F	26°F	30°F	34°F	27°F	23°F
S	SSW	SW	W	SSE	WSW	WNW
16 MPH	30 MPH	18 MPH	10 MPH	12 MPH	13 MPH	16 MPH



## Turning Windy Again Tonight & Thursday

November 15, 2023

4:49 AM

High to Very High fire danger today and Thursday



- Well above normal highs in the 60s for many areas today.
- Turning windy tonight through Thursday as a cold front moves through.
- Cooler Friday, but warming into the 50s again this weekend.

### Wind Gust Forecast

	11/15 Wed		11/16 Thu						11/17 Fri		
	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	25	30	25	25	22	23	38	40	30	21	14
Britton	22	26	28	31	36	33	37	44	32	26	15
Brookings	16	23	25	25	31	30	30	33	31	26	15
Chamberlain	16	18	24	23	24	20	37	35	26	22	12
Clark	26	31	33	35	37	30	35	38	32	26	18
Eagle Butte	13	13	16	21	25	43	46	43	28	18	13
Ellendale	22	20	18	21	21	29	41	44	30	23	15
Eureka	17	18	15	22	18	36	48	45	30	22	14
Gettysburg	23	24	26	29	22	37	46	45	30	20	14
Huron	23	22	21	24	24	17	37	38	31	23	14
Kennebec	18	26	32	29	26	35	45	41	31	21	12
McIntosh	15	13	14	20	30	46	48	45	26	16	14
Milbank	14	13	28	32	35	31	32	36	32	30	18
Miller	24	26	29	32	30	31	38	39	29	21	15
Mobridge	17	15	13	17	14	35	44	40	30	17	12
Murdo	17	26	32	28	38	38	43	41	30	20	10
Pierre	20	20	21	24	16	24	38	39	29	17	9
Redfield	25	28	24	28	21	21	37	39	30	22	14
Sisseton	16	28	30	32	39	35	37	39	33	30	22
Watertown	21	25	31	33	35	31	32	37	32	26	18
Webster	28	32	36	38	38	35	41	46	38	31	18
Wheaton	17	18	22	23	25	25	30	36	29	24	20



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Mild temperature will once again be in place across the region today, with highs in the upper 50s to upper 60s for most areas. South to southwest winds will increase across the area tonight as a cold front approaches. This front will move through the region on Thursday, bringing gusty northwest winds and cooler temperatures. The air mass behind this front isn't terribly cold, and we'll quickly rebound back into the 50s for the weekend.

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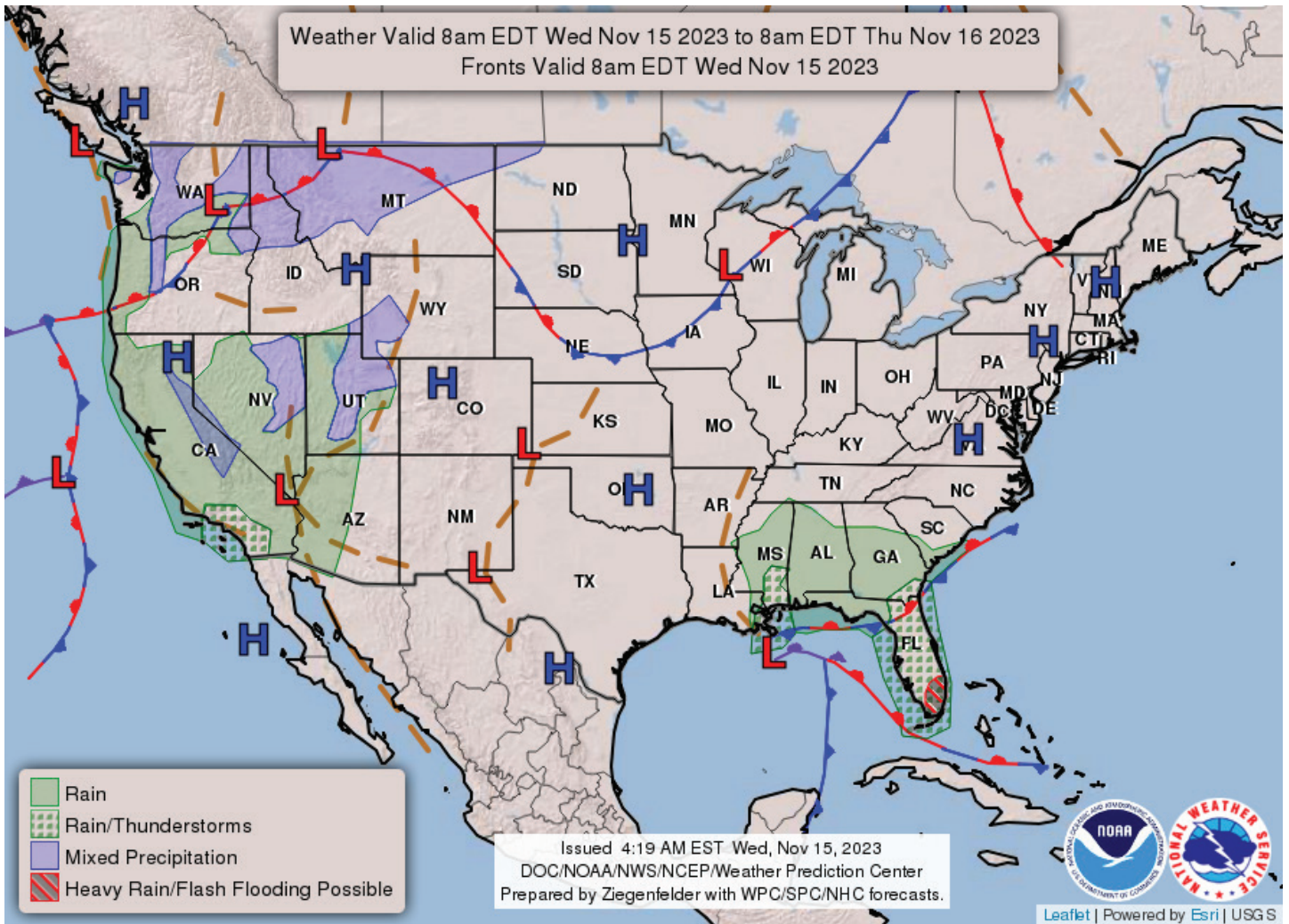
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 60 °F at 2:51 PM**  
**Low Temp: 32 °F at 11:27 PM**  
**Wind: 28 mph at 12:01 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 9 hours, 34 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 72 in 1953  
Record Low: -8 in 1900  
Average High: 43  
Average Low: 20  
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.42  
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.17  
Average Precip to date: 20.89  
Precip Year to Date: 23.15  
Sunset Tonight: 5:04:16 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:31:03 AM





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## Today in Weather History

November 15, 1988: A mixture of sleet, freezing rain and snow fell from north central South Dakota into west central Minnesota before changing over to all snow by the afternoon of the 15th. Snow continued across Minnesota during the morning hours on the 16th, along with increasing winds. The winds and falling snow created near zero visibility due to blowing snow in the northwest and west central Minnesota. A 60 mph wind gust was recorded in Morris, MN. Snow and blowing snow blocked roads, caused power outages and closed schools. Snow in many locations accumulated over a sheet of ice that coated roads from preceding rainfall.

1987: On November 15 and 16, intense thunderstorms rumbled through the South-Central US producing 49 tornadoes in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi during a 34 hour period. Of the 49 tornadoes, four were F3, 12 were F2, 27 were F1, and 6 were F0. These severe storms caused 11 deaths and 303 injuries. This storm system also brought heavy rain to central Louisiana where five stations recorded over 10 inches in 24 hours. The highest amount was 14.22 inches at Olla on the 16.

1900 - A record lake-effect snowstorm at Watertown, NY, produced 45 inches in 24 hours. The storm total was 49 inches. (14th-15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A surprise snow and ice coating paralyzed Boston during the evening rush hour. (David Ludlum)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Oklahoma and northeastern Texas to northern Indiana and southern Wisconsin from mid morning through the pre-dawn hours of the following day. Thunderstorms spawned forty-four tornadoes, including thirteen in Missouri, and there were more than two hundred reports of large hail or damaging winds. A tornado in central Arkansas hit Scott and Lonoke killing five people, injuring sixty others, and causing fifteen million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a powerful cold front began to produce severe weather in the Middle Mississippi Valley before sunrise, and by early the next morning thunderstorms had spawned seventeen tornadoes east of the Mississippi River, with a total of 350 reports of severe weather. There were one hundred reports of damaging winds in Georgia, and five tornadoes, and there were another four tornadoes in Alabama. Hardest hit was Huntsville AL where a violent tornado killed 21 persons, injured 463 others, and caused one hundred million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms in Kentucky produced hail three inches in diameter in Grayson County, and wind gusts to 110 mph at Flaherty. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S. through the morning and afternoon hours. Severe thunderstorms spawned 23 tornadoes, and there were 164 reports of damaging winds. There were fourteen tornadoes in New Jersey, central and eastern New York, and eastern Pennsylvania, and 122 reports of damaging winds. A tornado at Coldenham NY killed nine school children and injured eighteen others, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 100 mph at Malvern PA. Thunderstorms spawned a total of thirty-nine tornadoes east of Great Plains in two days, and there 499 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1996: An intense, lake effect snow event came to an end over western New York, northeastern Ohio, and northwest Pennsylvania. Chardon, Ohio was buried under 68.9 of snow over a six-day period. Edinboro, Pennsylvania checked in with 54.8 inches. 18.5 inches blanketed Cleveland, Ohio and 42 inches fell at Sherman, New York.

2005 - Severe thunderstorms produced over 30 tornadoes in 6 states, resulting in one fatality and at least 35 injuries (Associated Press). Some of the worst damage occurred in Henry county, Tennessee, where numerous homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed.

2006 - Strong winds cause severe damage at a skating rink in Montgomery, Alabama where more than 30 preschoolers were playing. Two children suffered injuries but there were no fatalities.

2007: Tropical Cyclone Sidr, a Category 4 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale, brings torrential rain 150-mph winds and a four ft storm surge to the Bangladesh coast. At least 3200 people die, and millions are left homeless. Since records began in 1877, Sidr obtained the title of the second-strongest cyclone to make landfall in Bangladesh.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### OUR WONDER WORKING GOD!

All of us know individuals whose lives have gone from pinnacles of prosperity to places of poverty. We know that temptations overtake some individuals, and they soon become enslaved and imprisoned by harmful habits. Once they were blest, but now they are in bondage. There seems to be a pattern of self-destruction that overcomes many who are not satisfied with the gifts of God. They apparently will not allow His grace and goodness to satisfy them. They always want "more!"

This is what happened to the people of Israel. It seems that the more God gave them, the less satisfied they were. Finally, their greed led them to slavery. But, thank God, their story does not end there. His love and mercy eventually brought redemption and restoration to them. When? When they repented and returned to the Covenant He made with them. God always keeps His Word.

Not only did He rescue them from their captors, but "they were laden with silver and gold." When we allow God to redeem us by His grace, His Word promises us that "It is He who will supply all of our needs from His riches in glory because of what Jesus Christ has done for us." God will honor His Word with us, as He did with Israel.

He also empowers those whom He redeems: "From among their tribes no one faltered." When God redeems us, we are called to serve Him faithfully. He has a plan for each of our lives, and that plan contains many opportunities for us to serve Him. And, for each of those opportunities He gives us, we know that He will empower us, and we will not falter or fail if we are faithful to Him.

Prayer: Father, if we have strayed from the plan You have for us, please forgive and restore us to the joy of serving You. There are no real riches but those found in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered. Psalm 105:37



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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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.14.23

29 35 59 61 69 22

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$267,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 51  
DRAW: Mins 43 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.13.23

17 18 20 44 51 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,200,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 6 Mins 43  
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.14.23

20 35 36 44 48 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 21 Mins 43  
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.11.23

8 9 17 30 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$53,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 21 Mins 43  
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.13.23

13 14 20 67 69 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 50 Mins  
DRAW: 43 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.13.23

24 33 35 37 42 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$255,000,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 50 Mins  
DRAW: 43 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## News from the Associated Press

### Oden scores 16 to lead DePaul over South Dakota 72-60

By The Associated Press undefined

CHICAGO (AP) — Jeremiah Oden had 16 points in DePaul's 72-60 victory over South Dakota on Tuesday night.

Oden also contributed five rebounds for the Blue Demons (1-2). Caleb Murphy scored 13 points while going 4 of 5 and 5 of 5 from the free throw line. K.T. Raimy shot 3 for 6 from beyond the arc to finish with 11 points.

Lahat Thioune finished with 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Coyotes (2-1). South Dakota also got 15 points and two steals from Kaleb Stewart. In addition, Bostyn Holt finished with seven points.

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

### Many parents don't know when kids are behind in school. Are report cards telling enough?

By ANNIE MA Associated Press

Nearly nine out of 10 parents believe their child is performing at grade level despite standardized tests showing far fewer students are on track, according to a poll released Wednesday by Gallup and the non-profit Learning Heroes.

Report cards, which many parents rely on for a sense of their children's progress, might be missing the whole picture, researchers say. Without that knowledge, parents may not seek opportunities for extra support for their children.

"Grades are the holy grail," said Bibb Hubbard, founder and president of Learning Heroes. "They're the number one indicator that parents turn to to understand that their child is on grade level, yet a grade does not equal grade-level mastery. But nobody's told parents that."

In the Gallup survey, 88% of parents say their child is on grade level in reading, and 89% of parents believe their child is on grade level in math. But in a federal survey, school officials said half of all U.S. students started last school year behind grade level in at least one subject.

In a report examining grade point averages and test scores in the state of Washington over the past decade, researchers found grades jumped during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many districts had eased their grading policies to account for the chaos and hardship students were experiencing.

Some of that leniency could still be in place, masking gaps in learning that are showing up in standardized tests, but not in grades, said Dan Goldhaber, a co-author of the report and the director of the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.

Districts across the U.S. have invested federal pandemic relief money in programs to get students back on track academically, from intensive tutoring to summer academic programs. But often far fewer students show up than the district had planned, Goldhaber said.

For programs like summer school or online tutoring, where the family chooses whether to participate, "what we see is that it's only a fraction of the students that are invited or eligible to that are actually participating," he said.

The Gallup poll findings underscore that trend, pointing to families who may not realize they should take action about their child's academic performance.

In the poll of more than 2,000 parents of K-12 students, half the respondents say they've discussed their child's academic progress with a teacher. But among parents who know their child is behind grade level in math, the percentage skyrockets: 74% have spoken with the teacher.



Report cards generally don't convey enough information, said Sarah Carpenter, director of The Memphis Lift, a parent advocacy organization in Tennessee.

"A report card is really tricky in our opinion, because you're just looking at A's and B's and C's," Carpenter said. Nowhere on the report card does it say "what reading level your baby's on, and that's what's throwing parents for a loop."

By talking to parents about issues like literacy and the nuances of grading, families are better able to advocate for their children in the school system and work in partnership with educators, said Trenace Dorsey-Hollins, a parent and founder of the advocacy group Parent Shield Fort Worth in Texas.

"Knowledge is power," she said. "Parents don't know what they don't know. So we don't want them to blame themselves. But now that you have the information, use the information to demand better and ensure that your child and all children get exactly what they need."

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The Associated Press education team receives support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **The Bird flu outbreak isn't over, but it's less severe, helping egg and poultry prices recover**

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nearly 5 million chickens, turkeys and other birds have been slaughtered this year because of a persistent bird flu outbreak that began in 2022, but as big as that number may sound, it's far less than the number of birds killed last year which means consumers aren't seeing as much impact on poultry and egg prices.

The 4.6 million birds killed this year compares to the nearly 58 million birds the U.S. Department of Agriculture said were slaughtered last year in the first year of the outbreak. While that decline is welcome news, the fact that infections continue is a worrisome indication that unlike earlier outbreaks, the current virus has found a way to survive through the summers, and poultry will likely always be at risk of the disease.

The key problem with bird flu is that the highly contagious virus is spread easily by wild birds through droppings and nasal discharges, and it mutates over time. Despite the best efforts of farmers, it is hard to keep the virus out.

"The industry is definitely on really high alert," said veterinarian Denise Heard with the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association trade group.

As geese and ducks have started to head south for the winter, cases of bird flu have predictably begun popping up primarily at farms in Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota along one of the major flyways for migrating birds. Most of those cases involve only tens of thousands of birds, but 1.2 million birds at one Iowa egg farm and another 940,000 chickens at one Minnesota egg farm had to be slaughtered last week after the disease was found.

Still, only a small portion of the total flock nationwide has been affected this year, allowing prices to fall closer to where they were before the outbreak began.

Egg prices peaked at a nationwide average of \$4.82 per dozen in January — more than double the \$1.93 per dozen charged a year earlier before the first bird flu case was confirmed in Indiana in February of 2022. They remained at \$2.07 per dozen last month, according to new numbers released Tuesday.

Turkey and chicken prices also spiked over the past two years, but bird flu wasn't the only factor as feed, fuel and labor costs also soared as part of the widespread inflation that weighed on the entire economy.

The average price per pound of a whole chicken has climbed pretty steadily since it was at \$1.62 in January 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics latest consumer price data. But it was only at \$1.93 per pound in October, up from \$1.86 a year ago. Chickens raised for meat haven't been hit as hard by bird flu because that industry is focused in the southeast where there haven't been as many cases, and because those chickens don't live as long before they're killed for meat so there's less chance of infection.

Retail turkey prices aren't tracked the same way, but USDA reports show that wholesale frozen turkey

prices averaged \$1.15 per pound in October, down from last year's \$1.79 per pound and the previous year's \$1.35 per pound. And many of this year's turkeys are already in cold storage, so even if more turkey farms get hit by the virus the current holiday supply won't be affected.

Plus, as the National Turkey Federation trade group points out, many retailers like to discount turkey prices heavily in the hopes that consumers will buy the rest of their Thanksgiving fixings at their stores, so consumers might find even lower prices.

"We're in a really good spot for Thanksgiving turkeys," said Jada Thompson, an agricultural economist at the University of Arkansas. "I think there should be a lot of relief coming in the holiday season."

A combination of factors contributed to the sharp drop in bird flu cases this year. Perhaps the most important is that the number of virus cases the USDA has been finding among wild birds has dropped precipitously, suggesting that some ducks and geese may be developing immunity. But farmers also doubled efforts to keep the virus from infecting their flocks by tightening up biosecurity practices.

Farmers have gone to great lengths by requiring workers to shower and change clothes before entering barns, sanitizing trucks that enter a farm and investing in separate sets of tools for every barn. Some farms have even upgraded barn ventilation and installed laser systems to discourage wild birds from congregating.

"The biggest thing, of course, that we would stress from here is biosecurity, biosecurity, biosecurity," Heard said.

The USDA says the response to the outbreak has cost the government \$757 million so far with most of that going to compensate farmers who have to destroy their flocks. Agriculture economists estimate that the industry has also suffered at least another \$1 billion in damages from lost sales and other costs though the total cost to the industry hasn't been tallied up.

This outbreak is more widespread than the last big one in 2015 that killed about 50 million chickens and turkeys in 15 states, but it remains less costly as the industry and government apply the lessons learned from that experience.

Officials say bird flu doesn't represent a significant health threat. Human cases are extremely rare and none of the infected birds are allowed into the nation's food supply. Properly cooking poultry and eggs to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (73.89 degrees Celsius) will also kill any viruses.

Bird flu vaccines are being developed and might help in the future, but at this point they remain impractical. Export markets might not accept vaccinated birds, every bird would have to get shots individually and costly testing would be needed.

"It's not economically feasible right now. And not just from the trade aspects, but just for the whole administration of it to the surveillance of it and the cost of all of that," said John Clifford, who advises the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council on trade issues as the former chief veterinary officer for the United States.

## **The Biden-Xi meeting is aimed at getting the relationship on better footing, but tough issues loom**

By AAMER MADHANI, COLLEEN LONG and DIDI TANG Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping head into their big meeting at a country estate on Wednesday hoping to stabilize U.S.-China relations after a period of tumult, but the U.S. president also is prepared to confront his counterpart on difficult issues such as trade, Beijing's burgeoning relationship with Iran and human rights concerns.

The two leaders, who will meet on the sidelines of a summit of Asian-Pacific leaders, last spoke a year ago. Since then, already fraught ties between the two economic superpowers have been further strained by the U.S. downing of a Chinese spy balloon that had traversed the continental U.S. and over differences on the self-ruled island of Taiwan, China's hacking of a Biden official's emails and other incidents.

The two leaders are in California for the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, but will hold their one-on-one talks at Filoli Estate, a country house and museum about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of San Francisco, according to three senior administration officials. The officials requested anonymity to

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discuss the location, which had not yet been confirmed by the White House or the Chinese government due to tight security.

Both men are seeking to show the world that while the U.S. and China are economic competitors, they are not locked in a winner-take-all faceoff with global implications. Their relationship has been increasingly defined by differences over export controls, Taiwan and the conflicts in the Middle East and Europe.

Biden is expected to let Xi know that he would like China to use its 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. The Biden administration also sees the Chinese, a big buyer of Iranian oil, as having considerable leverage with Iran, which is a major backer of Hamas.

Biden on Tuesday billed the meeting as a chance to get Washington and Beijing back "on a normal course corresponding" once again.

But White House National Council spokesman John Kirby said Biden was "not going to be afraid to confront where confrontation is needed on issues where we don't see eye to eye."

"We're also not going to be afraid, nor should we be afraid, as a confident nation, to engage in diplomacy on ways which we can cooperate with China -- on climate change, for instance, and clean energy technology," Kirby said.

Biden will be focused on managing the countries' increasingly fierce economic competition and keeping open lines of communication to prevent misunderstandings that could lead to direct conflict between the two powers.

While he's expected to defend U.S. expansion of export controls on semiconductor chips, he also will assure Xi that the U.S. is not trying to wage economic war with Beijing amid continuing signs that China's economy is struggling to recover from the disruptions of the pandemic.

Xi, meanwhile, is looking for assurances from Biden that the U.S. will not support Taiwan independence, start a new cold war or suppress China's economic growth. He's also keen to show the U.S. that China is still a good place to invest.

Even before their meeting, there were some signs of a thaw: The State Department on Tuesday announced that the U.S. and China -- two of the world's biggest polluters -- had agreed to pursue efforts to triple renewable energy capacity globally by 2030, through wind, solar and other renewables.

There was also hope for some concrete agreements to come out of the meeting Wednesday, including on re-establishing military-to-military communications that have largely gone dark since August 2022, and on efforts to curb illicit fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is increasingly responsible for U.S. drug overdoses. Many of the chemicals used to manufacture the drug come from China.

The APEC summit events already have attracted considerable demonstrations and more were expected Wednesday, including protests against Xi and against multinational corporations focused on profits.

In the hours before the meeting, White House officials said Biden was coming into the talks bolstered by signs the U.S. economy is in a stronger position than China's, and that the U.S. is building stronger stronger alliances throughout the Pacific.

The U.S. president, speaking at a campaign fundraiser on Tuesday evening, pointed to his upcoming meeting as an example of how "reestablished American leadership in the world is taking hold." As for China, the president told donors, it has "real problems."

The International Monetary Fund recently cut growth forecasts for China, predicting economic growth of 5% this year and 4.2% in 2024, down slightly from previous forecasts. Last month, Beijing released economic data that showed prices falling due to slack demand from consumers and businesses.

Biden, meanwhile, has taken pride in proving wrong a large swath of economists who predicted that millions of layoffs and a recession might be needed to bring down inflation. The Labor Department said Tuesday that consumer prices rose at an annual pace of 3.2% annually, down from a June 2022 peak of 9.1%. Meanwhile, employers keep hiring and the unemployment rate has held below 4% for nearly two years.

Xi, after his meeting with Biden on Wednesday, will address American business executives at a \$2,000-per-



plate dinner that will be a rare opportunity for U.S. business leaders to hear directly from the Chinese leader as they seek clarification on Beijing's expanding security rules that may choke foreign investment.

Foreign companies operating in China say tensions with Washington over technology, trade and other issues and uncertainty over Chinese policies are damaging the business environment and causing some to reassess their plans for investing in the giant market.

A senior Biden administration official who briefed reporters ahead of the meeting said one big reason why Xi decided to make the trip to the U.S. was to send the message to American CEOs that China was still a good place to invest. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Tuesday that during a recent visit to Beijing, he and other lawmakers made the case directly to Xi that he could bolster China's reputation in the U.S. and around the globe by taking action to stop the flow of chemicals used to produce fentanyl.

"It is reported he's very worried about the negative opinion of China in the United States," Schumer said. "And I told him nothing could help raise China's image a little bit in the United States more than stopping the flow of fentanyl."

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Associated Press journalist Sagar Meghani in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Asian economies must ramp up wind and solar power to keep global warming under 1.5C, report says**

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — To meet the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), nine major Asian economies must increase the share of electricity they get from renewable energy from the current 6% to at least 50% by 2030, according to a report by a German thinktank released Wednesday.

Nearly a third of that renewable energy should come from wind and solar power, said the report by researchers of Berlin-based Agora Energiewende. A fifth would be hydropower and other clean sources and the remainder, fossil fuels.

The study analyzed energy plans of both developing nations like Indonesia and Vietnam, where demand for energy is growing rapidly, and wealthier places like Japan and South Korea, which have among the highest burdens of per capita greenhouse gas emissions. It did not include China, the world's biggest emitter of carbon, or India, another major contributor.

A global temperature increase of 1.5C (2.7F) since pre-industrial times is considered a critical climate threshold beyond which risks of catastrophes rise. The world will likely lose most of its coral reefs, a key ice sheet could kick into irreversible melt, and water shortages, heat waves and death from extreme weather may surge, according to an earlier United Nations scientific report.

Agora Energiewende researchers found that Asian nations are united in their heavy reliance on fossil fuels and national plans are not aligned with ambitious climate pledges announced by their governments.

By using proven technologies like wind and solar power, countries can avoid exceeding limits they have set and also limit investment in fossil fuel infrastructure they won't need, said Mathis Rogner, the Southeast Asia project lead for Agora Energiewende and a co-author of the report.

To conform with 1.5C (2.7F) limit, the nine countries included in the study need to add 45 to 55 gigawatts of solar energy and 20 gigawatts of wind energy every year. In 2021, they had installed a total of just 11.9 gigawatts of solar energy and 1.5 gigawatts of wind energy.

The study reviewed energy plans of Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Taiwan.

As of the end of 2022, the U.S. had installed capacity of more than 144 GW of wind power and 110 GW of solar photovoltaic power.

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The need for urgent action was echoed by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who called for a “climate ambition supernova” after a U.N. analysis released Tuesday found that countries’ climate plans still lagged far behind what was needed.

Much of the clean energy capacity the world has added since 2016 has been concentrated in the U.S., China and India. Even though wind and solar technologies have been getting cheaper every year, among other Asian nations, only Japan and Vietnam derive more than a tenth of their capacity from the wind and the sun.

The vast increases in Chinese and Indian renewable energy capacity are an example for other Asian countries that lag behind. They also show how such transitions can create jobs and improve energy security, said Kanika Chawla, chief of staff at Sustainable Energy for All, the United Nations’ sustainable energy unit, who was not involved in the report.

Many countries still rely heavily on large hydropower dams, which can involve hefty social and environmental costs and are vulnerable to drought.

The report estimates that South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia each should add between 8 and 14 gigawatts of solar power annually. Indonesia now gets less than 1% of its power from wind and solar energy, according to a study by the U.K.-based thinktank Ember. South Korea and Thailand also still mostly depend on fossil fuel.

Japan needs to add an average of 9 gigawatts of solar power a year and Vietnam, around 10 gigawatts, to meet end-of-the-decade targets. But the report says the goals are achievable since both countries have managed similar increases in the past.

The report says Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines need to add between 1 and 3 gigawatts of energy from the sun each year to their grid.

South Korea needs the biggest spurt in wind power — an average increase of 8 gigawatts each year — while Japan needs to add about 3 gigawatts. Vietnam should be deploying around 4 gigawatts in new wind power capacity, the report said.

Lower potential for wind power in other countries means they should target between one and 2 gigawatts each year.

The report calls for a “paradigm shift” to speed up the transition to wind and solar power. That would include removing subsidies for oil and gas that make renewables less competitive, simplifying bureaucratic hurdles such as permits and facilitating investments.

At the same time, power grids need to be upgraded to allow for the variability and unpredictability of wind and solar power, it said.

Despite a common misconception that wind and solar are more expensive and less stable than fossil fuel-powered generation, “Our analysis shows that often much higher shares of wind and solar can be reliably integrated into the power system than the operators expect,” Rogner of Agora said.

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Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP’s climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Live updates | Israeli tanks enter Gaza’s Shifa Hospital compound

By The Associated Press undefined

Two and a half weeks after sending tanks and ground troops into northern Gaza, Israeli forces entered a hospital early Wednesday that they claim Hamas operates out of. Mohammed Zaqout, the director of hospitals in Gaza, said Israeli tanks were inside the medical compound and that soldiers had entered buildings, including the emergency and surgery departments, which house intensive care units.

Shifa Hospital has become a symbol of the widespread suffering of Palestinian civilians during the war between Israel and Hamas, which erupted after the militant group killed some 1,200 people and seized around 240 captives in a surprise Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel.

The Israeli army claims the militant group uses hospitals as cover for its fighters, and has set up its main

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command center in and beneath Shifa Hospital, the largest in the besieged territory. Both Hamas and Shifa Hospital staff deny the Israeli allegations.

More than 11,200 Palestinians — two-thirds of them women and minors — have been killed since the war began, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths. About 2,700 people have been reported missing.

Currently:

- The U.N. Security Council is trying for a fifth time to adopt a resolution on the Israel-Hamas war.
- ASEAN defense chiefs call for the fighting in Gaza to cease, but they struggle to address Myanmar.
- Thousands flee Gaza's main hospital but hundreds, including babies, are still trapped by fighting.
- Israel supporters rally in Washington, crying 'never again.'
- Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>

Here's what's happening in the latest Israel-Hamas war:

**FIRST FUEL TRUCK ENTERS GAZA SINCE OCT. 7, REPORT SAYS**

JERUSALEM — Egypt's state-run al-Qahera television station reported Wednesday that the first fuel truck to enter the Gaza Strip since the war started on Oct. 7 has crossed the Egyptian gate of the Rafah crossing, the border crossing between Egypt and Gaza. The truck reportedly headed to Kerem Shalom crossing for screening.

Israeli defense officials said on Wednesday that they have agreed to allow fuel shipments into the Gaza Strip for humanitarian operations.

Israel declared war and barred fuel shipments after Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, saying the militant group would divert the supplies for military use. But fuel is key to operations at Gaza hospitals, which run on generators, and the shortages hindered the United Nations from delivering humanitarian aid.

Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian affairs, announced early Wednesday that it would allow United Nations trucks to refill at the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border later Wednesday. It said the decision was in response to a request from the United States, but gave no details on when the shipments would be delivered, other than to say it's allowing 24,000 liters (6,340 gallons) of fuel into Gaza.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees warned late Tuesday that its fuel storage facility in Gaza had run dry and that it would soon be forced to halt operations.

**UN OFFICIAL CONDEMNS ISRAELI RAIDS ON HOSPITAL, SAYS HAMAS MUST NOT USE IT AS A 'SHIELD'**

GENEVA — The U.N.'s top emergency relief official on Wednesday condemned reported Israeli military raids on Gaza's embattled Shifa Hospital and insisted Hamas militants must not use it as a "shield" for their activities.

Martin Griffiths underscored growing international concern for the plight of patients in the Gaza City hospital who are too sick or frail to be moved.

"Look, Hamas must not, should not, use a place like a hospital as a shield for their presence," he said in a video statement. He added, "hospitals should not become a place of -- a war zone -- of danger."

Griffiths said earlier on X, previously called Twitter, that he was "appalled" by overnight reports of Israeli raids on Shifa.

The U.N. World Health Organization says Shifa patients have needs that are "well beyond basic care." Images reportedly from the facility showed medics trying to keep newborns warm in blankets because power for incubators had failed.

"The babies have no incubators," Griffiths said. "Some are dead already. We can't move them out. It's too dangerous."

"I understand the Israelis' concern for trying to find the leadership of Hamas, that's not our problem," he added. "Our problem is protecting the people of Gaza from what's being visited upon them."

**TURKEY'S PRESIDENT INCREASES CRITICISM OF ISRAEL**

ANKARA, Turkey -- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan increased his criticism of Israel on Wednesday, calling it a "terrorist state" intent on destroying Gaza along with all of its residents.



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In a fiery speech to members of his party, Erdogan also said his country would take steps to ensure that Israel's political and military leaders are brought to trial in international courts.

"Israel is implementing a strategy of total destruction of a city and its people," Erdogan said. "I say openly that Israel is a terrorist state."

The Turkish leader described Hamas militants as "resistance fighters" trying to protect their lands and people.

Turkey recently normalized relations with Israel but its war with Hamas in Gaza has again strained their ties. Israel recalled its diplomats from Turkey last month after Erdogan accused Israel of committing war crimes. Turkey later also recalled its ambassador from Israel.

## ISRAELI MILITARY STRESSES IT'S TARGETING HAMAS, NOT CIVILIANS

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's military insisted Wednesday its forces in and around the largest hospital in Gaza are specifically targeting Hamas, which it claims set up a command center there. Both Hamas and Shifa Hospital staff deny the Israeli allegations.

"Israel is at war with Hamas, not with the civilians in Gaza," said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, a spokesperson for the Israeli Defense Forces. "The IDF has publicly warned time and again that Hamas's continued military use of Shifa Hospital jeopardizes its protected status under international law."

Hagari said Israeli forces in Gaza included medics and Arabic speakers to try and provide assistance in the "complex and sensitive environment."

## REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN GAZA FACE CONTINUAL AIRSTRIKES

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — A rainbow appeared in the sky over southern Gaza on Wednesday as residents, many of them refugees from the northern part of the strip, struggled for survival amid round-the-clock airstrikes. Residents in cars and on bicycles and makeshift carts pulled by donkeys weaved their way through the city's roads, littered with rubble from the bombardment.

Egyptian Mohammad al-Abdallah has been trying to leave Gaza since the bombing started. "They asked us to come from the north. And when we arrived, we stayed in an apartment here, and we were bombed. Do they want us to die? This is enough," he said.

## NORWAY SAYS 51 OF ITS CITIZENS ARE ALLOWED TO LEAVE GAZA

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Norway said 51 of its citizens have been allowed to leave Gaza on Wednesday, with Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide saying that those remaining "are in a very demanding situation."

"The Norwegian authorities continue to work to ensure that Norwegian citizens will be allowed to leave Gaza as soon as possible," Barth Eide said. "We will continue the work to halt the hostilities and ensure humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza."

Norwegian news agency NTB said that there are about 270 people with ties to Norway in Gaza with approximately half of them being children.

## GUN PERMIT REQUESTS SKYROCKET AFTER HAMAS INCURSION, ISRAELI MINISTRY SAYS

JERUSALEM — Requests for gun permits in Israel have skyrocketed since Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 incursion, according to a press release from the Ministry of National Security.

More than 236,000 new requests for permits have been filed since the attack — a figure equal to the number filed over 20 years, the statement said.

A sense of insecurity gripped Israel following the attack and the army's hourslong delay in responding, leading to a rush to buy guns. At least 1,200 people were killed and more than 240 taken hostage after Hamas militants breached Israel's border fence and fanned out across the country's south.

Armed civilian security squads entered the breach in the army's absence to fight off some of the attackers. Shortly after, Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir said he would expand and arm such squads with 10,000 assault rifles that would be distributed particularly in border towns, mixed Jewish-Arab cities and West Bank settlements. Ben-Gvir has a long record of anti-Arab rhetoric, and Palestinians feared these guns would be used against them.

Some 1,700 permits are being issued daily after the Ministry of National Security eased restrictions, the report said. By comparison, an average of 94 were issued daily in November 2022, and an average of 42 a year earlier.

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UNICEF DIRECTOR SAYS HER VISIT TO THE GAZA STRIP WAS DEVASTATING AND CALLS FOR UNRESTRICTED AID

JERUSALEM — The United Nations children's agency says its top official visited the Gaza Strip early Wednesday and met with children and their families in the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, in the south of the territory.

"What I saw and heard was devastating. They have endured repeated bombardment, loss and displacement," UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement sent to The Associated Press. "Inside the Strip, there is nowhere safe for Gaza's one million children to turn."

Russell is among the few international officials to have visited the Gaza Strip since the war began following a surprise attack by Hamas on Oct. 7.

In the statement she called for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" and for aid to be allowed unrestricted, saying that "in the hospital's neonatal ward, tiny babies were clinging to life in incubators, as doctors worried how they could keep the machines running without fuel," Russell said in the statement.

She also met UNICEF staff and their families. Over 100 U.N. staff have been killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched a war aimed at destroying Hamas.

ISRAEL SAYS IT'S CARRYING OUT A 'PRECISE AND TARGETED OPERATION' INSIDE GAZA'S SHIFA HOSPITAL

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military says its forces have entered Gaza's Shifa hospital, the site of a lengthy standoff.

The army had surrounded the facility as part of its ground offensive against Hamas, claiming the militant group conceals military operations in the hospital complex. But with hundreds of patients and medical personnel inside, it had refrained from entering.

Early Wednesday, the army said its forces were carrying out "a precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area" in the hospital. It gave no further details but said it was taking steps to avoid harm to civilians.

In a statement, the Israeli military said it had warned "the relevant authorities in Gaza once again that all military activities within the hospital must cease within 12 hours. Unfortunately, it did not."

Hamas has denied the Israeli accusations that it uses the hospital for cover.

## A key US spy tool will lapse at year's end unless Congress and the White House can cut a deal

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With just seven weeks until the end of the year, the Biden administration is running out of time to win the reauthorization of a spy program it says is vital to preventing terrorism, catching spies and disrupting cyberattacks.

The tool, Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, will expire at the end of December unless the White House and Congress can cut a deal and resolve an unusually vexing debate that has yielded unlikely alliances at the intersection of privacy and national security.

Without the program, administration officials warn, the government won't be able to collect crucial intelligence overseas. But civil liberties advocates from across the political spectrum say the law as it stands now infringes on the privacy of ordinary Americans and insist that changes are needed before the program is reauthorized.

"Renewing this law before it expires is among the most consequential national security decisions we face as a country," Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the Justice Department's top national security official, said at an event last month.

The law, enacted in 2008, permits the U.S. intelligence community to collect without a warrant the communications of foreigners overseas suspected of posing a national security threat. Importantly, the government also captures the communications of Americans citizens and others in the U.S. when they're

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in contact with those targeted foreigners.

In making the case for the law's renewal, the Biden administration over the last year has cited numerous instances in which intelligence derived from Section 702 has helped thwart an attack, including an assassination plot on U.S. soil, or contributed to a successful operation, such as the strike last year that killed al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri.

National security officials have said that 59% of articles in the president's daily brief contain Section 702 information. They also point to the need for the program at a time when Israel's war with Hamas has led to elevated concerns about attacks inside the U.S.

But while both sides of the debate are in broad agreement that the program is valuable, they differ in key ways on how it should be structured, creating a stalemate as the deadline approaches and as Congress is consumed by a busy year-end agenda, including a government shutdown deadline and disputes over border security and war spending. The White House has already dismissed as unworkable the one known legislative proposal that's been advanced.

Another complicating factor for the administration to navigate: the coalition of lawmakers skeptical of government surveillance includes both privacy-minded liberal Democrats and Republicans deeply supportive of former President Donald Trump who still regard the intelligence community with suspicion over the investigation of ties between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign.

Despite the clear challenges in reaching a compromise, the last-minute scramble between the White House and Congress has come to be expected each time the government's surveillance powers are set to be renewed. This particular program was last renewed in January 2018 following a splintered vote in Congress and signed into law by Trump, who in a statement praised the tool's value for having "saved lives" but also cheered a new requirement that was meant to protect privacy.

"A lot of these in the past have gone up to the brink. There is a history here of this brinksmanship when you have these statutory sunsets," said Jamil Jaffer, founder and executive director of the National Security Institute at George Mason University's law school and a senior Justice Department official at the time the law was created.

This year, a key point of contention is the insistence by some in Congress, over the strong objection of the White House, that federal agencies be required to get a warrant before they can access intelligence collected on people in the U.S.

That's been a priority in light of a succession of revelations over the past year about improper searches of the intelligence database by FBI analysts for information related to the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the Capitol and the racial justice protests of 2020, as well as about state and federal political figures.

The Biden administration has said compliance errors by the FBI are exceedingly rare given the massive number of overall database queries and that the bureau has made important reforms to minimize the prospect for civil liberties intrusions.

A warrant requirement is supported by Republican Rep. Jim Jordan, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and one of the most pro-Trump members of Congress, and Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, a reliable champion of civil liberties and liberal standard bearer for decades.

Wyden last week released a bill with a bipartisan group of lawmakers — including Republican Rep. Andy Biggs, a vocal Trump supporter — that would mandate a warrant to access the communications of people inside the U.S., except for limited exemptions such as when officials need to stop an imminent threat to public safety or if the subject of the query has consented to the search.

A senior administration official told reporters before the bill was even announced that a warrant requirement crosses a "red line" for the White House given that it would limit officials' ability to detect, and act on, potentially vital intelligence in real time. The official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said such a mandate would not only be operationally unworkable but also legally unnecessary because it would force officials to get a warrant to examine intelligence that was already lawfully collected.

In an interview, Wyden said that though he felt strongly about the need for warrants — they're "important because the Founding Fathers thought they were important" — he also believed that his team had



adopted a measured approach by including significant exceptions to the warrant requirement.

"We're not negotiating with ourselves," Wyden said. "We've got an open-door policy. If there are concerns from the administration, they ought to come up, make the case and talk them through."

Associated Press writer Farnoush Amiri contributed to this report.

## **UK top court says a plan to send migrants to Rwanda is unlawful because they would be at risk**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that the government's contentious plan to send some migrants on a one-way trip to Rwanda is illegal, striking a major blow to a key policy of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government that has drawn international attention and criticism.

Five justices on the country's top court ruled unanimously that asylum-seekers sent to Rwanda would be "at real risk of ill-treatment" because they could be returned to the home countries they'd fled.

Sunak, who has pledged to stop migrants reaching Britain in small boats across the English Channel, said the ruling "was not the outcome we wanted."

But he added, "we have spent the last few months planning for all eventualities and we remain completely committed to stopping the boats."

Refugee and human rights groups welcomed the decision. Charity ActionAid U.K. called it a vindication of "British values of compassion and dignity." Amnesty International urged the British government to "draw a line under a disgraceful chapter in the U.K.'s political history."

Britain and Rwanda signed a deal in April 2022 to send some migrants who arrive in the U.K. as stowaways or in boats to the East African country, where their asylum claims would be processed and, if successful, they would stay.

Britain's government argued that the Rwanda policy would deter people from risking their lives crossing one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and would break the business model of people-smuggling gangs. Opposition politicians, refugee groups and human rights organizations said the plan was unethical and unworkable.

No one has yet been sent to the country as the plan was challenged in the courts.

Reading the unanimous decision, President of the Supreme Court Robert Reed said Rwanda could not be relied on to keep its promises not to mistreat asylum-seekers sent from Britain.

He cited the country's poor human rights record, including enforced disappearances and torture, and said Rwanda practiced "refoulement" — sending migrants back to unsafe home countries.

The judges concluded there were "substantial grounds for believing that asylum-seekers would face a real risk of ill-treatment by reason of refoulement in the event that they were removed to Rwanda."

The U.K. government has argued that while Rwanda was the site of a genocide that killed more than 800,000 people in 1994, the country has since built a reputation for stability and economic progress.

Critics say that stability comes at the cost of political repression. The court's judgment noted multiple rights breaches, including political killings that had led U.K. police "to warn Rwandan nationals living in Britain of credible plans to kill them on the part of that state." They said Rwanda has a 100% rejection record for asylum-seekers from war-torn countries including Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan.

"The evidence establishes substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk that asylum claims will not be determined properly, and that asylum-seekers will in consequence be at risk of being returned directly or indirectly to their country of origin," the judges said. "In that event, genuine refugees will face a real risk of ill-treatment in circumstances where they should not have been returned at all."

The ruling leaves in tatters a policy that has cost the British government at least 140 million pounds (\$175 million) in payments to Rwanda, without anyone being sent to that country. The first deportation flight was stopped at the last minute in June 2022, when the European Court of Human Rights intervened.

In December, the High Court in London ruled that the Rwanda plan is legal, but that the government must consider the individual circumstances of each case before putting anyone on a plane.

The Court of Appeal in June backed a challenge by asylum-seekers from countries including Syria, Vietnam and Iran. The court ruled that the plan was unlawful because Rwanda is not a "safe third country."

That was challenged at the Supreme Court by the government, which argued at a hearing last month that it had thoroughly assessed the risks and would ensure that Rwanda's government abides by its agreement to protect migrants' rights.

It's unclear whether the British government will try to keep the policy alive. The Supreme Court judges ruled that "the structural changes and capacity-building needed" to make Rwanda a safe country "may be delivered in the future," but are not in place now.

Some U.K. Conservatives have called for dramatic action. Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who was fired by Sunak on Monday, has said the U.K. to leave the European Convention on Human Rights and its court if the Rwanda plan was blocked.

Justice Reed stressed that the "legal rule that refugees must not be returned to their country of origin ... if their life or freedom" would be at risk is enshrined in multiple U.K. laws and international treaties, not just the European convention.

Much of Europe and the U.S. is struggling with how best to cope with migrants seeking refuge from war, violence, oppression and a warming planet that has brought devastating drought and floods.

Though Britain receives fewer asylum applications than countries such as Italy, France or Germany, thousands of migrants from around the world travel to northern France each year in hopes of crossing the English Channel.

More than 27,300 migrants have crossed the Channel this year, with the year's total on track to be fewer than the 46,000 who made the journey in 2022. The government says that shows its tough approach is working, though others cite factors including the weather.

## **China's state media take a new tone toward the US ahead of meeting between their leaders**

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

Ahead of the highly anticipated meeting on Wednesday between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Chinese state media have taken a new tone toward the U.S. with less negative coverage, calls for a return to warmer ties and stories of Americans with positive connections to the country.

The messaging follows several years of unprecedented tensions between the two countries over issues including trade and technology, the status of Taiwan and Hong Kong and the origins of COVID-19.

Chinese media have focused on a recent visit by members of the Philadelphia Orchestra marking the 50th anniversary of its history-making trip to China that helped build then-fledgling U.S.-China ties, and on another visit by members of the Flying Tigers, a group of American military pilots who helped China fight Japan in World War II.

"The Chinese people will never forget an old friend, and that's an important message we want to send to the American people," the official Communist Party newspaper People's Daily said in its overseas edition on Wednesday.

In recent days the official Xinhua news agency carried a five-part series on U.S.-China relations which called for the countries to "meet each other halfway" and "work together to return to the path of healthy and stable development."

But it also urged the U.S. to follow through on agreements made by Biden and Xi when they met in Bali last November.

"Only if we return to Bali, can we look forward to San Francisco," it said.

The two leaders agreed in Bali on areas of cooperation including tackling climate change and maintaining global financial, health and food stability. China says the U.S. has deviated from pledges to "not seek out a new Cold War," to "respect China's system" and "not oppose China through strengthening its relation-

ships with allies.”

“Only by handling well U.S.-China relations can the well-being of the two peoples increase, the progress of human society be promoted, and can there be a contribution to the peaceful development of the world,” the People’s Daily said in an op-ed on Wednesday. Op-eds in state media are widely seen as reflections of official policy.

Even the nationalistic and confrontational Global Times newspaper called for the two countries to cooperate in an op-ed Wednesday.

Chinese state media have often focused heavily on negative coverage of the United States in recent years. During the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States in the summer of 2020, Chinese media provided extensive coverage of violence at protests and clashes with police.

The critical coverage of the U.S. and other Western countries aims to show how well China is doing in comparison, said David Bandurski, executive director of the independent China Media Project. “Everything is negative in the U.S. (according to Chinese media) ... and this is the flip side of the bigger picture of the constructing of legitimacy by Xi Jinping in his third term,” he said.

During the coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests, relations between the countries were at a low point, with China defensive over U.S. accusations about the origin of COVID-19.

Ahead of the Biden-Xi talks at a country estate near San Francisco, state media have not played up the city’s homelessness problem, although some social media users have posted photos of homeless people urinating and sleeping in the streets along with commentary on how dangerous the city can be.

In one video on Douyin, the Chinese version of Tiktok, a young Chinese man living in San Francisco showed how he kept two bank cards in separate locations, one in his bag and one in his pocket. The point? “If I was robbed, I’d still have one bank card left,” he said.

He also showed his sneakers, saying if he ran into trouble, “I can run a bit faster.”

The new language of cooperation with the U.S. in state media mirrors what China has said in recent months as it has worked to mend strained relations with Australia and some European countries, Bandurski said.

Despite the change in tone, few expect substantial changes to the overall direction of relations between the two countries.

“There’s no fundamental change, they have marked you as a competitor,” said Sima Nan, an international affairs commentator with more than 3 million followers on Weibo, a popular social media app.

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AP researcher Wanqing Chen in Beijing contributed to this report.

## **Some of the 40 workers trapped in India tunnel collapse are sick as debris and glitches delay rescue**

By BISWAJEET BANERJEE Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — Some of the 40 construction workers trapped in a collapsed road tunnel for a fourth day were getting sick as falling debris and technical glitches delayed the work to free them, officials in northern India said Wednesday.

Rescuers have been trying to drill wide pipes through excavated rubble to create a passage to free the workers trapped since Sunday after a portion of the under-construction road collapsed in mountainous Uttarakhand state. But the government-run national highway authority said that the process was slower than expected and that another high-power drilling machine was being airlifted from New Delhi to be used as soon as possible.

The authority also said the workers “confirmed the receipt of food items” and that all of them were safe “as communicated by them.”

Relatives and friends of the trapped workers, gathered outside the tunnel, were growing frustrated and angry.

Most of the workers are migrant laborers from across India.



Magistrate Abhishek Ruhela said some workers had sent messages that they were suffering from fever, body aches, and were getting worried. Medicine has been sent through pipes that were set up earlier to get water and food to the workers.

"Essential eatables such as chickpeas and almonds are being sent through the same channels," Ruhela said.

About 200 disaster relief personnel have been using drilling equipment and excavators in the rescue operation with the plan to push steel pipes 2.5-foot (0.76 meter) -wide through an opening of excavated debris with the help of hydraulic jacks to safely pull out the stranded workers.

Falling debris also delayed the start of the drilling on Tuesday. "These are challenges in such rescue operations, but we will overcome them," Ranjit Sinha, a disaster management official, said.

Two of the rescuers were reported to have minor injuries because of debris.

A landslide Sunday caused a portion of the 4.5-kilometer (2.7-mile) tunnel to collapse about 200 meters (500 feet) from the entrance. It is a hilly tract of land, prone to landslide and subsidence.

Uttarakhand is a mountainous state dotted with Hindu temples that attract many pilgrims and tourists and construction of highways and buildings has been constant to accommodate the influx. The tunnel is part of the busy Chardham all-weather road, a flagship federal project connecting various Hindu pilgrimage sites.

## **Israeli forces raid Gaza's largest hospital, where hundreds of patients are stranded by fighting**

By WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli forces raided Gaza's largest hospital early Wednesday, where hundreds of patients, including newborns, have been stranded with dwindling supplies and no electricity, as the army extended its control across Gaza City and the north.

Shifa Hospital has become a symbol of the widespread suffering of Palestinian civilians during the war between Israel and Hamas, which erupted after the militant group killed some 1,200 people and seized around 240 captives in a surprise Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel.

The hospital is also at the heart of clashing narratives over who is to blame for the thousands of deaths and widespread destruction in the besieged territory. Israel accuses Hamas of using Palestinians as human shields, while Palestinians and rights groups say Israel has recklessly endangered civilians as it seeks to eradicate the group.

### **'A TERRIFYING SITUATION'**

Mohammed Zaqout, the director of hospitals in Gaza, said Israeli tanks were inside the medical compound and that soldiers had entered buildings, including the emergency and surgery departments, which house intensive care units. It was not clear if he was speaking from inside the compound.

"The occupation forces stormed the buildings," he said angrily over the phone. He said the patients, including children, are terrified. "They are screaming. It's a very terrifying situation ... we can do nothing for the patients but pray."

The Israeli military said it was carrying out a "precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area in the Shifa Hospital." It said the soldiers were accompanied by medical teams and had brought medical supplies and baby food as well as incubators and other equipment.

Israel says Hamas has a massive command center inside and beneath Shifa, but has not provided visual evidence, while Hamas and the hospital staff have repeatedly denied the allegations.

Hours before the raid, the United States said its own intelligence indicated militants have used Shifa and other hospitals — and tunnels beneath them — to support military operations and hold hostages.

The Israeli military said that the forces raiding Shifa are also searching for hostages. The plight of the captives, who include men, women and children, has galvanized Israeli support for the war, and families and supporters of the hostages are holding a protest march from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

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Two and a half weeks after sending tanks and ground troops into northern Gaza, Israeli forces also claimed control of several key buildings and a downtown neighborhood in Gaza City.

## A TRICKLE OF FUEL FOR AID WORKERS

Most of the hundreds of thousands of people living in Gaza City and surrounding areas have fled after weeks of Israeli bombardments. Hardly any aid has been delivered to the north, which has been without power or running water for weeks.

More than 11,200 people, two-thirds of them women and minors, have been killed in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah, and two thirds of the territory's 2.3 million people have fled their homes. About 2,700 people have been reported missing, with most believed to be buried under the rubble. The ministry's count does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths.

Almost the entire population of Gaza has squeezed into the southern two-thirds of the tiny territory, where conditions have been deteriorating as bombardment there continues.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday that its fuel depot in Gaza was empty and that it would soon cease relief operations, including bringing limited supplies of food and medicine in from Egypt for the more than 600,000 people sheltering in severely overcrowded U.N.-run schools and other facilities in the south.

Israeli defense officials changed course early Wednesday to allow some 24,000 liters (6,340 gallons) of fuel in for humanitarian efforts, officials said. Earlier, they repeatedly rejected allowing fuel into Gaza, saying Hamas would divert it for military use.

COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian affairs, said it would allow U.N. trucks to refill at the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border later Wednesday. It said the decision was made in response to a request from the U.S.

## HOSPITALS OUT OF SERVICE

The raid into Shifa sparked condemnation from Jordan and the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which called it a violation of international law. U.N. aid chief Martin Griffiths said he was "appalled" by the raid, saying the protection of civilians "must override all other concerns."

Hospitals can lose their protected status if combatants use them for military purposes, but civilians must be given ample time to flee, and any attack must be proportional to the military objective.

Thousands of displaced people who had been sheltering at Shifa, along with patients who were able to move, had fled the medical compound in Gaza City through a corridor established by Israeli forces in recent days as Israeli troops encircled the complex and battled Hamas militants outside its gates. Some Palestinians who made it out said Israeli forces had fired at evacuees.

Shifa had stopped operations over the weekend, as its supplies dwindled and a lack of electricity left it no way to run incubators and other lifesaving equipment. After days without refrigeration, morgue staff dug a mass grave Tuesday for 120 bodies in a courtyard.

The Health Ministry said 40 patients, including three babies, have died since Shifa's emergency generator ran out of fuel Saturday. Another 36 babies are at risk of dying because there is no power for incubators, according to the ministry.

## BATTLE IN GAZA CITY

Israeli troops have extended their control across northern Gaza, capturing the territory's legislature building and police headquarters. But independent accounts of the fighting in Gaza City have been nearly impossible to gather, as communications with the north have largely collapsed.

Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said Israeli forces have completed the takeover of Shati refugee camp, a densely built district, and are moving about freely in the city as a whole.

Inside some of the newly captured buildings, soldiers held up the Israeli flag and military flags in celebration. In a nationally televised news conference, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Hamas had "lost control" of northern Gaza and that Israel made significant gains in Gaza City.

But asked about the time frame for the war, Gallant said: "We're talking about long months, not a day or two."

The military says its forces have found weapons and eliminated fighters in government buildings, schools

and residential buildings.

Israel says it has killed several thousand fighters, including important mid-level commanders, while 46 of its own soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Magdy reported from Cairo. Associated Press writer Amy Teibel in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

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

## **Cuban private grocery stores thrive but only a few people can afford them**

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Until recently, the space was the one-car garage of a private home in Cuba's capital, Havana. Today, it is a well-stocked, if small, grocery store whose big board at the gate entices shoppers with such offerings as cooking oil, tomato sauce, Hershey's cocoa powder, Nutella, shampoo, cookies and jam — a treasure trove in a country that is short of supplies.

The nameless shop in the residential neighborhood of El Vedado is one of dozens of tiny grocery stores that have sprung up around Cuba in recent months. Locals refer to them as "mipymes" — pronounced MEE-PEE-MEHS. The name derives from the Spanish words for the small- and medium-sized enterprises that were first allowed to open in 2021.

By allowing the new businesses, the Cuban government hoped to help an economy in crisis and strengthen local production. The almost 9,000 enterprises approved so far include the likes of sewing workshops, fisheries and construction firms, but it is small retail shops like the one in Vedado that seem to be setting up the fastest.

They also have greater visibility among the population because they offer many products not available elsewhere and usually operate out of private homes or garages.

Yet despite their modest setup, their prices are far from affordable, even for a doctor or a teacher, who make about 7,000 Cuban pesos a month (about \$28 in the parallel market).

For example, one kilo (2.2 pounds) of powdered milk from the Czech Republic costs 2,000 Cuban pesos (about \$8). A jar of Spanish mayonnaise goes for \$4. Two and a half kilos (about 5 pounds) of chicken imported from the U.S. cost \$8. There are also less essential goods: a jar of Nutella for \$5, a bottle of bubbly Spanish wine for \$6.

The customers able to use these small shops include Cuban families who receive remittances from abroad, tourism workers, diplomats, employees of other small- and medium-sized businesses, artists and high-performance athletes.

"This is a luxury," Ania Espinosa, a state employee, said as she left one store in Havana, where she paid \$1.50 (350 Cuban pesos) for a packet of potato chips for her daughter. "There are people who don't earn enough money to shop at a mipyme, because everything is very expensive," she added.

In addition to her monthly state salary, Espinosa makes some additional income and receives remittances from her husband, who has lived in the U.S. for a year and a half and previously lived in Uruguay.

A few meters (yards) away, Ingracia Virgen Cruzata, a retiree, lamented the high prices at the shop. "I retired with 2,200 (Cuban pesos a month or \$8.80) last year and I can't even buy a package of chicken," she said.

Most of the products found in these stores are imported directly by the entrepreneurs through state-run import agencies, a system that has also opened the door to the emergence of bigger, better stocked stores.

In recent weeks, a private store, accessible only to those who own a car, opened on the outskirts of Havana, featuring giant shelves full of imported products such as Tide detergent, M&M's candy and Goya brand black beans. Because of its size (it's at least 10 times larger than the store in Vedado) — and diverse offerings — it has come to be known as the "Cuban Costco."

Cuba's retail market has been very limited, and for decades the communist state held a monopoly on



most forms of retail sales, import and export, under the argument that it is necessary to distribute products equitably.

The ration books that allow Cubans to buy small quantities of basic goods like rice, beans, eggs and sugar each month for payment equivalent to a few U.S. cents continue to be the basis of the model, allowing families to subsist for about 15 days. The rest of their diet must be acquired through other outlets, including state-owned stores and now the mipymes.

There are also state-run businesses offering a little more variety to complete domestic needs, but they charge in local debit or international credit cards. The novelty is that the small shops like the one in Vedado and bigger bodegas like the "Cuban Costco" are entirely private and accept payments in Cuban pesos.

"For the first time in 60 years, small- and medium-sized private corporations are now authorized by law. Now the challenge is for them to prosper in a very arid landscape for private initiative," said Pedro Freyre, an analyst with the Florida-based Akerman Consulting and professor at Miami Law School.

"Cuba is a socialist country. The fundamental ideology has not changed. That's still there. But I think that Cuba is in a very difficult economic moment and that has opened a door," Freyre added.

Follow AP's coverage of Latin America and the Caribbean at <https://apnews.com/hub/latin-america>

## **Biden aims for improved military relations with China when he meets with Xi**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to agree Wednesday to restore some military-to-military communications between their armed forces when they meet on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco.

The plan is to revive the regular talks under what's known as the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement, which until 2020 had been used to improve safety in the air and sea, said a U.S. official, who requested anonymity to preview the leaders' expected announcement.

U.S. military leaders have expressed repeated concerns about the lack of communications with China, particularly as the number of unsafe or unprofessional incidents between the two nations' ships and aircraft has spiked.

According to the Pentagon's most recent report on China's military power, Beijing has "denied, canceled or ignored" military-to-military communications and meetings with the Pentagon for much of last year and this year. The report warns that the lack of such talks "raises the risk of an operational incident or miscalculation spiraling into crisis or conflict."

The U.S. views military relations with China as critical to avoiding any missteps and maintaining a peaceful Indo-Pacific region. Here's a look at the often fraught relationship between the U.S. and Chinese militaries.

### **A DECADE OF TALKS AND VISITS**

More than 15 years ago, the Defense Department was making progress in a growing effort to improve relations with Beijing as both sides stepped up military activities in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. was concerned about Beijing's dramatic and rapid military growth. And China was suspicious of America's expanding presence in the region. In an effort to improve transparency and communication, defense leaders from the two countries were meeting regularly. And in a 2008 speech in Singapore, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates noted that relations with China had improved, and that a long-sought direct telephone link between the U.S. and China had finally been established. He said he had used it to speak with the defense minister.

He and other defense chiefs, Joint Chiefs chairmen and regional high-level U.S. commanders routinely traveled to China over the next decade, and Chinese defense leaders came to the Pentagon. "We don't want miscalculations and misunderstandings and misinterpretations. And the only way you do that is you talk to each other," noted then-Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in 2013.

The following year Hagel made a historic visit to Yuchi Naval Base and became the first foreign visitor

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to go aboard China's first aircraft carrier as it was docked at the base.

The Defense Department's 2014 report on China's military power referred to "sustained positive momentum" in U.S. ties with Beijing, and noted there was a growing number of agreements, conferences, calls and military exercises. It said the two militaries established new channels for dialogue and signed two agreements to improve transparency and reduce the risks of unintended miscalculations by ships and aircraft in the Pacific.

## BUT TENSIONS PERSISTED

Even as military leaders were meeting, the Obama administration's widely touted "pivot to the Pacific," which added troops, ships and other U.S. military activity in the region, triggered vehement criticism from Beijing. And China's aggressive campaign to militarize a number of manmade islands in the South China Sea alarmed the U.S. and other allies in the Pacific.

Allies worried that China would seek to limit international transit through the region, and that the islands could be used as bases for military action. In 2018, the Trump administration abruptly withdrew an invitation for Beijing to participate in the military exercise known as Rim of the Pacific, citing what it called strong evidence that China had deployed weapons systems on the islands. China has argued that it is within its rights to build up defenses in the South China Sea on what it believes is its sovereign territory.

The Pentagon routinely complained that there was little tangible progress in the press for greater transparency in China's military ambitions and its burgeoning defense budget. And China bristled at America's continued support for Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing views as its own.

More broadly, the U.S. issued sharp condemnations of China's escalating cyberattacks targeting government agencies and breaches and cyberespionage into sensitive defense programs.

## THEN CAME THE PANDEMIC AND PELOSI

Direct military contacts with Beijing dropped off during the COVID-19 pandemic, due both to travel restrictions and tensions over China's potential responsibility for the deadly virus that began within its borders. And in August 2022, Beijing suspended all military contacts with the U.S., in the wake of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

Pelosi was the highest-ranking American lawmaker to visit Taiwan since 1997, when then-Speaker Newt Gingrich traveled there. And her visit sparked a surge in military maneuvers by China. Beijing dispatched warships and aircraft across the median line in the Taiwan Strait, claiming the de facto boundary did not exist, fired missiles over Taiwan itself, and challenged established norms by firing missiles into Japan's exclusive economic zone.

U.S. officials suggested China was simply using Pelosi's visit as a convenient excuse to cut off ties, which were strained by other points of contention, including economic sanctions.

But the lack of communications heightened worries about an increase in what the Pentagon calls risky Chinese aircraft and warship incidents in the past two years. Officials noted that even as tensions with Russia have spiked over the war in Ukraine, military commanders have continued to use a telephone line to deconflict operations in Syria.

The Defense Department last month released video footage of some of the more than 180 intercepts of U.S. warplanes by Chinese aircraft that have occurred in the past two years — more than the total number over the previous decade. Defense officials said the Chinese flights were risky and aggressive, but stopped short of calling most of them unsafe — a term used in egregious cases. They said this was part of a larger trend of regional intimidation by China that could accidentally lead to conflict.

Carolyn Bartholomew, chairwoman of the congressionally mandated U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, said a key goal for the administration should be to get a commitment from the Chinese government to scale back on such dangerous incidents.

## THE MARITIME AGREEMENT

Bonnie Lin, director of the China Power project at the Center for Strategic and International Security, a Washington-based think tank, said it was important to restart the talks under the maritime agreement.

Resumption "would be a signal that the two sides can work together more," Lin said at a CSIS forum Tuesday.

Associated Press writer Tara Copp contributed to this report.

## **Biden says his goal for Xi meeting is to get US-China communications back to 'normal'**

By AAMER MADHANI, COLLEEN LONG and DIDI TANG Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping swept into San Francisco on Tuesday as the two leaders made their final preparations for their first engagement in a year at a historic estate outside of the city.

Biden expressed hope that the talks would help put a shaky U.S.-China relationship — marked by sharp differences over the last year — in a better place. The two leaders arrived in the city to be greeted by hundreds of demonstrators who lined up along their motorcade routes, waving Chinese, Taiwanese and Tibetan flags as well as signs in support of and opposition to the Chinese leader.

Biden, before leaving Washington to make his way West on Tuesday to attend this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, said his broad goal was to get Washington and Beijing "on a normal course corresponding" once again even as they have sharp differences on no shortage of issues.

"Being able to pick up the phone and talk to one another if there's a crisis. Being able to make sure our militaries still have contact with one another," Biden told reporters at the White House. "We're not trying to decouple from China, but what we're trying to do is change the relationship for the better."

The two leaders will meet at Filoli Estate, a country house museum about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of San Francisco, according to three senior administration officials. The officials requested anonymity to discuss the venue, which has not yet been confirmed by the White House and Chinese government.

The State Department announced Tuesday that the two countries, the world's two biggest polluters, have agreed to "pursue efforts to triple renewable energy capacity globally by 2030," an effort to step up wind, solar and other renewable energy.

The announcement came after John Kerry, Biden's climate envoy, met earlier this month with his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, at the Sunnylands estate in southern California for talks on the matter.

Separately, a U.S. official confirmed that Biden and Xi are expected to announce an agreement that would restore talks under what's known as the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement. The agreement is used by the U.S. and People's Liberation Army navies and air forces to improve safety in the air and sea. Until 2020, they had been meeting regularly since 1998 for the talks. The official requested anonymity to preview the expected leaders' announcement.

Biden arrived at San Francisco International Airport Tuesday afternoon and Xi landed shortly after. The Chinese president was welcomed on the tarmac by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns.

Hundreds of onlookers gathered on the leaders' motorcade route, some holding signs that read "End CCP," the initials of Chinese Communist Party. Another sign read "Warmly Welcome President Xi Jinping" and was affixed to concrete bollards.

Pro-China and anti-China demonstrators also gathered near the Moscone Center, the venue where many APEC meetings were being held.

Beijing supporters waved U.S. and Chinese flags as they waited for Xi's motorcade to arrive at the swanky hotel near the convention center where the Chinese delegation is staying. Several supporters used oversized Chinese national flags to obscure the few Xi critics there and used loudspeakers to play the patriotic "Ode to the Motherland."

Scuffles broke out between the two groups, but police quickly intervened to maintain order. The crowds were kept out of the road by tall, metal barriers.

Wei Gong, of Charlottesville, Virginia, brought her 9-year-old daughter, Deanna Wei, to welcome Xi. Her child wore a traditional Chinese, horse-face skirt and held U.S. and Chinese flags.

"I have never seen him," the mother said of Xi. "We just want to see him."

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Later, protesters gathered just blocks from the Moscone Center to call for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden, despite his busy diplomatic agenda, took some time Tuesday evening to tend to his 2024 reelection campaign, joining Newsom and Vice President Kamala Harris for a fundraiser at San Francisco's iconic Merchant Exchange Club.

The long complicated U.S.-Chinese relationship has come under heavy strain over 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.

The talks at Filoli will give the leaders a chance to try to dial back tensions in a picturesque backdrop.

The sprawling estate along Northern California's coastal range features a Georgian revival-style mansion and English Renaissance gardens. It was built in 1917 as a private residence but was opened to the public in 1975 as a nonprofit and site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Wealthy San Francisco socialite William Bowers Bourn II named Filoli by taking the first two letters of key words of his personal credo, according to the estate's website: "Fight for a just cause. Love your Fellow Man. Live a Good Life." The estate's gardens feature in Jennifer Lopez's film "The Wedding Planner."

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Biden is coming to Wednesday's meeting in a strong position.

"He's not going to be afraid to — to confront where confrontation is needed on issues where we don't see eye to eye with President Xi and the PRC," said Kirby, using the initials for the People's Republic of China.

Biden will also be looking to use this week's summit of Asia-Pacific leaders to demonstrate that the United States has the gumption, attention span and money to focus on the region even as it grapples with a multitude of foreign and domestic policy crises.

The White House wants to demonstrate that Biden can remain focused on the Pacific while also trying to keep the Israel-Hamas war from exploding into a broader regional conflict and to persuade Republican lawmakers to continue to spend billions more on the costly Ukrainian effort to repel Russia's nearly 21-month old invasion.

White House officials say they are also cognizant that fellow APEC nations want to see better dialogue between the U.S. and China because it reduces the risk of regional conflict. At the same time, they also know that others in the region are concerned that the Pacific is too often seen through a prism in which the dominant power centers in Washington and Beijing make decisions for the region without engagement from less powerful nations.

Biden enters the Xi meeting feeling buoyed by the U.S. economy's strong performance. While the majority of U.S. adults believe the economy is weak, Biden has managed to prove wrong a large swath of economists who predicted that millions of layoffs and a recession might be needed to bring down inflation. The Labor Department said Tuesday that consumer prices rose at an annual pace of 3.2% annually, down from a June 2022 peak of 9.1%. Meanwhile, employers keep hiring and the unemployment rate has held below 4% for nearly two years.

Beijing released economic data last month that shows prices falling due to slack demand from consumers and businesses. The International Monetary Fund recently cut growth forecasts for China, predicting economic growth of 5% this year and 4.2% in 2024, down slightly from its forecasts in July.

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Long reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor, Josh Boak, Matthew Lee, Chris Megerian, Darlene Superville and Zeke Miller in Washington and Janie Har and Godofredo Vasquez in San Francisco contributed to this report.



## The man accused of attacking Pelosi's husband apologizes for hammer assault

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The man accused of attacking former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband with a hammer apologized Tuesday, echoing right-wing conspiracy theories to explain to jurors that he went to the Pelosis' home as part of a bigger plot to end what he viewed as government corruption.

David DePape spoke for more than an hour in which he tearfully recounted about how his political leanings went from leftist to right wing after reading a comment on a YouTube video about former President Donald Trump. He said he bludgeoned Paul Pelosi after realizing his larger plan might be unraveling.

Testimony wrapped up later Tuesday, with closing arguments expected Wednesday. DePape has pleaded not guilty to attempted kidnapping of a federal official and assault on the immediate family member of a federal official with intent to retaliate against the official for performance of their duties. His attorneys argue that he was not seeking to go after Nancy Pelosi because of her official duties as a member of Congress and so the charges do not fit.

The attack happened in the early hours of Oct. 28, 2022, just days before the midterm elections.

DePape, 43, said he went to the Pelosis' home to talk to Nancy Pelosi about Russian involvement in the 2016 election, and that he planned to wear an inflatable unicorn costume and upload his interrogation of her online. Prosecutors say he had rope and zip ties with him.

DePape testified that his plan was to get Nancy Pelosi and other targets to admit to their corruption. "If she lied, I would break her kneecaps," he said. "The choice is on her."

He then wanted President Joe Biden to pardon the targets "so we can move forward as a country," he said.

In testimony Monday, Paul Pelosi recounted the attack publicly for the first time. He recalled being awakened by a man bursting into the bedroom door and asking, "Where's Nancy?" He said that when he responded that his wife was in Washington, DePape said he would tie him up while they waited for her.

Paul Pelosi said he managed to call police, but when officers arrived, DePape hit him with a hammer. He said DePape told him he was going to have "to take you out."

DePape said that he felt bad for Pelosi after hearing testimony from a neurosurgeon who operated on him after the attack and testified Pelosi had two wounds on his head, including a fracture to his skull that had to be mended with plates and screws. Pelosi also needed stitches on injuries to his right arm and hand.

"He was never my target and I'm sorry that he got hurt," DePape said.

"I reacted because my plan was basically ruined," he said when asked why he hit Pelosi.

DePape testified he first was drawn to right-wing conspiracies after learning about "Gamergate," an on-line harassment campaign against women in the video gaming community that took place about a decade ago. He said he often played videogames for up to six hours a day while listening to political podcasts.

He said he believed news outlets repeatedly lied about Trump, and specifically mentioned CNN. In rants posted on a blog and online forum that were taken down after his arrest, DePape echoed the baseless, right-wing QAnon conspiracy theory that claims the U.S. government is run by a cabal of devil-worshipping pedophiles, but he did not mention that Tuesday.

He allegedly told authorities his other targets included a women's and queer studies professor at the University of Michigan, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, actor Tom Hanks and President Joe Biden's son Hunter. He told jurors that he heard about the professor while listening to conservative commentator James Lindsay.

"The takeaway I got is that she wants to turn our schools into pedophile molestation factories," said DePape, a Canadian citizen who moved to the U.S. more than 20 years ago.

The professor testified that some of her writings have been misconstrued to fit a narrative against the gay movement. U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley ordered her name not be put in the public record because of threats against her.

Asked by DePape's defense attorney if she supported the abuse of children, the professor responded,

"Absolutely not."

She said that after Paul Pelosi was attacked, the FBI informed her that she was DePape's main target. She said that she told university administrators and that they have taken measures to protect her, her students, and other staff.

Other witnesses who testified Tuesday included Daniel Bernal, Nancy Pelosi's San Francisco chief of staff, and DePape neighbor Elizabeth Yates, who said she allowed him to shower at her home once a week.

If convicted, DePape faces life in prison. He has pleaded not guilty to charges in state court of attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, elder abuse, residential burglary and other felonies. A state trial has not been scheduled.

This story has been corrected to reflect that defense witness Elizabeth Yates is a neighbor of DePape, not an extremism and antisemitism researcher.

## **Worsening warming is hurting people in all regions, US climate assessment shows**

By SETH BORENSTEIN and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

Revved-up climate change now permeates Americans' daily lives with harm that is "already far-reaching and worsening across every region of the United States," a massive new government report says.

The National Climate Assessment, which comes out every four to five years, was released Tuesday with details that bring climate change's impacts down to a local level. Unveiling the report at the White House, President Joe Biden blasted Republican legislators and his predecessor for disputing global warming.

"Anyone who willfully denies the impact of climate change is condemning the American people to a very dangerous future. Impacts are only going to get worse, more frequent, more ferocious and more costly," Biden said, noting that disasters cost the country \$178 billion last year. "None of this is inevitable."

Overall, Tuesday's assessment paints a picture of a country warming about 60% faster than the world as a whole, one that regularly gets smacked with costly weather disasters and faces even bigger problems in the future.

Since 1970, the Lower 48 states have warmed by 2.5 degrees (1.4 degrees Celsius) and Alaska has heated up by 4.2 degrees (2.3 degrees Celsius), compared to the global average of 1.7 degrees (0.9 degrees Celsius), the report said. But what people really feel is not the averages, but when weather is extreme.

With heat waves, drought, wildfire and heavy downpours, "we are seeing an acceleration of the impacts of climate change in the United States," said study co-author Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth.

And that's not healthy.

Climate change is "harming physical, mental, spiritual, and community health and well-being through the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events, increasing cases of infectious and vector-borne diseases, and declines in food and water quality and security," the report said.

Compared to earlier national assessments, this year's uses far stronger language and "unequivocally" blames the burning of coal, oil and gas for climate change.

The 37-chapter assessment includes an interactive atlas that zooms down to the county level. It finds that climate change is affecting people's security, health and livelihoods in every corner of the country in different ways, with minority and Native American communities often disproportionately at risk.

In Alaska, which is warming two to three times faster than the global average, reduced snowpack, shrinking glaciers, thawing permafrost, acidifying oceans and disappearing sea ice have affected everything from the state's growing season, to hunting and fishing, with projections raising questions about whether some Indigenous communities should be relocated.

The Southwest is experiencing more drought and extreme heat – including 31 consecutive days this summer when Phoenix's daily high temperatures reached or exceeded 110 degrees – reducing water supplies and increasing wildfire risk.

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Northeastern cities are seeing more extreme heat, flooding and poor air quality, as well as risks to infrastructure, while drought and floods exacerbated by climate change threaten farming and ecosystems in rural areas.

In the Midwest, both extreme drought and flooding threaten crops and animal production, which can affect the global food supply.

In the northern Great Plains, weather extremes like drought and flooding, as well as declining water resources, threaten an economy dependent largely on crops, cattle, energy production and recreation. Meanwhile, water shortages in parts of the southern Great Plains are projected to worsen, while high temperatures are expected to break records in all three states by midcentury.

In the Southeast, minority and Native American communities -- who may live in areas with higher exposures to extreme heat, pollution and flooding — have fewer resources to prepare for or to escape the effects of climate change.

In the Northwest, hotter days and nights that don't cool down much have resulted in drier streams and less snowpack, leading to increased risk of drought and wildfires. The climate disturbance has also brought damaging extreme rain.

Hawaii and other Pacific islands, as well as the U.S. Caribbean, are increasingly vulnerable to the extremes of drought and heavy rain as well as sea level rise and natural disaster as temperatures warm.

The United States will warm in the future about 40% more than the world as a total, the assessment said. The AP calculated, using others' global projections, that that means America would get about 3.8 degrees (2.1 degrees Celsius) hotter by the end of the century.

Hotter average temperatures means weather that is even more extreme.

"The news is not good, but it is also not surprising," said University of Colorado's Waleed Abdalati, a former NASA chief scientist who was not part of this report. "What we are seeing is a manifestation of changes that were anticipated over the last few decades."

The 2,200-page report comes after five straight months when the globe set monthly and daily heat records. It comes as the U.S. has set a record with 25 different weather disasters this year that caused at least \$1 billion in damage.

"Climate change is finally moving from an abstract future issue to a present, concrete, relevant issue. It's happening right now," said report lead author Katharine Hayhoe, chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy and a professor at Texas Tech University. Five years ago, when the last assessment was issued, fewer people were experiencing climate change firsthand.

Surveys this year by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research show that.

In September, about 9 in 10 Americans (87%) said they'd experienced at least one extreme weather event in the past five years — drought, extreme heat, severe storms, wildfires or flooding. That was up from 79% who said that in April.

Hayhoe said there's also a new emphasis in the assessment on marginalized communities.

"It is less a matter ... of what hits where, but more what hits whom and how well those people can manage the impacts," said University of Colorado's Abdalati, whose saw much of his neighborhood destroyed in the 2021 Marshall wildfire.

Biden administration officials emphasize that all is not lost and the report details actions to reduce emissions and adapt to what's coming.

By cleaning up industry, how electricity is made and how transport is powered, climate change can be dramatically reduced. Hausfather said when emissions stops, warming stops, "so we can stop this acceleration if we as a society get our act together."

But some scientists said parts of the assessment are too optimistic.

"The report's rosy graphics and outlook obscure the dangers approaching," Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson said. "We are not prepared for what's coming."

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Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland, and Webber from Fenton, Michigan.

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Follow AP's climate and environment coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment> and follow Seth Borenstein and Tammy Webber on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/borenbears> and <https://twitter.com/twebber02>

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Israeli military forces raid Gaza's largest hospital in operation against Hamas

By NAJIB JOBAIN, JACK JEFFERY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — The Israeli military raided Gaza's largest hospital early Wednesday, conducting what it called a targeted operation against Hamas as troops seized broader control of northern Gaza, including capturing the territory's legislature building and its police headquarters.

In recent days, the focus of the war has been Shifa Hospital, with hundreds of patients, staff and displaced people trapped inside. Shifa had stopped operations over the weekend, as its supplies dwindled and a lack of electricity left it no way to run incubators and other lifesaving equipment. After days without refrigeration, morgue staff dug a mass grave Tuesday for 120 bodies in the yard.

Amid the standoff, the hospital in the center of Gaza City became a focal point of clashing narratives about the war, now in its sixth week. Israel claims Hamas is using civilians as human shields, while Palestinians, rights group and international critics say Israel is recklessly harming civilians.

The Israeli military said early Wednesday that it raided specific areas of the sprawling Shifa complex, while trying to avoid harming civilians. The statement gave no further details.

Israel has long alleged that the militants conceal military assets in the facility and other hospitals, a claim denied by Hamas and medical staff.

Elsewhere, the Palestinian Red Crescent said Tuesday it had evacuated patients, doctors and displaced families from another Gaza City hospital, Al-Quds.

Israel vowed to end Hamas rule in Gaza after the Oct. 7 attack, which killed some 1,200 people and resulted in the taking of roughly 240 hostages. The Israeli government has acknowledged it doesn't know what it would do with the territory long-term after Hamas' defeat.

The Israeli onslaught has been disastrous for Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians.

More than 11,200 people, two-thirds of them women and minors, have been killed in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah. About 2,700 people have been reported missing. The ministry's count does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths.

Almost the entire population of Gaza has squeezed into the southern two-thirds of the tiny territory, where conditions have been deteriorating as bombardment there continues. About 200,000 fled the north in recent days, the U.N. said Tuesday, though tens of thousands are believed to remain.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday that its fuel storage facility in Gaza was empty and that it would soon cease relief operations, including bringing limited supplies of food and medicine in from Egypt for the more than 600,000 people sheltering in U.N.-run schools and other facilities in the south.

"Without fuel, the humanitarian operation in Gaza is coming to an end. Many more people will suffer and will likely die," said Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of UNRWA.

Israeli defense officials changed course early Wednesday to allow some 24,000 liters (6,340 gallons) of fuel in for humanitarian efforts, officials said. Earlier, they repeatedly rejected allowing fuel into Gaza saying Hamas would divert it for military use.

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian affairs, said it would allow U.N. trucks to refill at the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border later Wednesday. It said the decision was in response to a request from the U.S.

### PLIGHT OF HOSPITALS

Fighting has raged for days around the Shifa Hospital complex at the center of Gaza City, turning it "into



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a cemetery," its director said in a statement.

The Health Ministry said 40 patients, including three babies, have died since Shifa's emergency generator ran out of fuel Saturday. Another 36 babies are at risk of dying because there is no power for incubators, according to the ministry.

The Israeli military said it started an effort to transfer incubators to Shifa. But they would be useless without electricity, said Christian Lindmeier, a World Health Organization spokesman.

The Health Ministry has proposed evacuating the hospital with the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross and transferring the patients to hospitals in Egypt, but it has not received any response, ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said.

While Israel says it is willing to allow staff and patients to evacuate, some Palestinians who have made it out say Israeli forces have fired at evacuees.

Israel says its claims of a Hamas command center in and beneath Shifa are based on intelligence, but it has not provided visual evidence to support them. Denying the claims, the Gaza Health Ministry says it has invited international organizations to investigate the facility.

The evacuation at the Al-Quds Hospital followed "more than 10 days of siege, during which medical and humanitarian supplies were prevented from reaching the hospital," Palestinian Red Crescent officials said.

In a post on social media, they blamed the Israeli army for bombarding the hospital and firing at those inside.

The White House's national security council spokesperson, John Kirby, said the U.S. has unspecified intelligence that Hamas and other Palestinian militants use Shifa and other hospitals and tunnels underneath them to support military operations and hold hostages.

The intelligence is based on multiple sources, and the U.S. independently collected the information, a U.S. official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Kirby said the U.S. doesn't support airstrikes on hospitals and does not want to see "a firefight in a hospital where innocent people" are trying to get care.

## MARCH FOR HOSTAGES

Families and supporters of the around 240 people being held hostage by Hamas started a protest march from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The plight of the hostages has dominated public discourse since the Oct. 7 attack, with solidarity protests held across the country. The marchers, who expect to reach Jerusalem on Saturday, say the government must do more to bring home their loved-ones.

"Where are you?" Shelly Shem Tov, whose 21-year-old son, Omer, is among the captives, called out to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "We have no strength anymore. We have no strength. Bring back our children and our families home."

## BATTLE IN GAZA CITY

Independent accounts of the fighting in Gaza City have been nearly impossible to gather, as communications to the north have largely collapsed.

Inside some of the newly captured buildings, soldiers held up the Israeli flag and military flags in celebration. In a nationally televised news conference, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Hamas had "lost control" of northern Gaza and that Israel made significant gains in Gaza City.

But asked about the time frame for the war, Gallant said: "We're talking about long months, not a day or two."

One Israeli commander in Gaza, identified only as Lt. Col. Gilad, said in a video that his forces found weapons and eliminated fighters in government buildings, schools and residential buildings.

Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said Israeli forces have completed the takeover of Shati refugee camp, a densely built district bordering Gaza City's center, and are moving about freely in the city as a whole.

Israel says it has killed several thousand fighters, including important mid-level commanders, while 46 of its own soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Jeffery and Keath reported from Cairo. Associated Press writers Amy Teibel in Jerusalem, Wafaa Shurafa in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip; and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

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

## The UN Security Council is trying for a fifth time to adopt a resolution on the Israel-Hamas war

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — After four failed attempts, the U.N. Security Council is trying for a fifth time to come up with a resolution on the Israel-Hamas war, but it remains to be seen whether serious divisions can be overcome to produce a consensus on wording.

The current draft under negotiation would demand “immediate extended humanitarian pauses” throughout the Gaza Strip to provide civilians with desperately needed aid. It also would demand that “all parties” comply with international humanitarian law that requires protection for civilians, calls for special protections for children, and bans hostage-taking.

But the draft, proposed by council member Malta and obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press, makes no mention of a ceasefire. It also doesn’t refer to Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7 that killed around 1,200 people and took some 240 others hostage. Nor does it cite Israel’s retaliatory airstrikes and ground offensive in Hamas-ruled Gaza that the Gaza health ministry says has killed more than 11,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children.

The 15-member council, which has the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, has been paralyzed since the war began by its internal divisions. This is especially the case between China and Russia, which want an immediate ceasefire, and the United States, Israel’s closest ally that has called for humanitarian pauses but objects to any mention of a ceasefire.

In the four previous tries, a Brazil-drafted resolution was vetoed by the United States, a U.S.-drafted resolution was vetoed by Russia and China, and two Russian-drafted resolutions failed to get the minimum nine “yes” votes needed for adoption.

Several council diplomats said the opposing sides were getting closer. Two said that a vote on the latest draft could come as early as Wednesday but that delegations were still checking with their capitals. The diplomats insisted on speaking anonymously because the negotiations are supposed to be private.

The resolution under consideration says the humanitarian pauses should be “for a sufficient number of days” to open corridors for unhindered access by U.N., Red Cross and other aid workers to get water, electricity, fuel, food and medical supplies to all those in need. It says the pauses also should allow repair of essential infrastructure and enable urgent rescue and recovery efforts.

After the failure of the fourth Security Council resolution, Arab nations turned to the 193-member General Assembly and succeeded in getting wide approval for a resolution calling for a “humanitarian truce” in Gaza meant to lead to a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas.

It was the first United Nations response to the war. But unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, though they are a barometer of world opinion.

The vote was 120-14 with 45 abstentions. Of the five veto-holding Security Council members, Russia, China and France voted in favor, the United States voted against and the United Kingdom abstained.

The General Assembly resolution was adopted Oct. 27 and Israel agreed Nov. 9 to four-hour pauses. But only very limited aid has been delivered to Gaza through the Rafah crossing from Egypt, and a humanitarian catastrophe has been brewing.

Richard Gowan, U.N. director for the International Crisis Group, said U.S. opposition to a ceasefire “is a gift that keeps on giving for Russia diplomatically.” He said that while many diplomats think Russia is demanding a ceasefire “for largely cynical reasons to make the Americans look bad,” Moscow’s position “is closer to the mainstream of council thinking, and the U.S. looks isolated.”

The irony is that the Security Council has called for ceasefires in wars from the Balkans to Syria “with

little or no impact," Gowan said.

"A U.N. ceasefire call would embarrass but not really constrain the Israelis," he said. "But the U.S. clearly feels that even such a symbolic move is too much of a political risk."

## House votes to prevent a government shutdown as GOP Speaker Johnson relies on Democrats for help

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to prevent a government shutdown after new Republican Speaker Mike Johnson was forced to reach across the aisle to Democrats when hard-right conservatives revolted against his plan.

Johnson's proposal to temporarily fund the government into the new year passed on a bipartisan 336-95 tally, but 93 Republicans voted against it. It was the first time the new speaker had to force vital legislation through the House, and he showed a willingness to leave his right-flank Republicans behind — the same political move that cost the last House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, his job just weeks ago.

For now, Johnson of Louisiana appeared on track for a better outcome. His approach, which the Senate is expected to approve by week's end, effectively pushes a final showdown over government funding to the new year.

"Making sure that government stays in operation is a matter of conscience for all of us. We owe that to the American people," Johnson said earlier Tuesday at a news conference at the Capitol.

The new Republican leader faced the same political problem that led to McCarthy's ouster — angry, frustrated, hard-right GOP lawmakers rejected his approach, demanded budget cuts and voted against the plan. Rather than the applause and handshakes that usually follow passage of a bill, several hardline conservatives animatedly confronted the speaker as they exited the chamber.

Without enough support from his Republican majority, Johnson had little choice but to rely on Democrats to ensure passage to keep the federal government running.

Johnson's proposal puts forward a unique — critics say bizarre — two-part process that temporarily funds some federal agencies to Jan. 19 and others to Feb. 2. It's a continuing resolution, or CR, that comes without any of the deep cuts conservatives have demanded all year. It also fails to include President Joe Biden's request for nearly \$106 billion for Ukraine, Israel, border security and other supplemental funds.

"We're not surrendering," Johnson assured after a closed-door meeting of House Republicans Tuesday morning, vowing he would not support another stopgap. "But you have to choose fights you can win."

Johnson, who announced his endorsement Tuesday of Donald Trump as the Republican nominee for president, hit the airwaves to sell his approach and met privately Monday night with the conservative Freedom Caucus.

Johnson says the innovative approach would position House Republicans to "go into the fight" for deeper spending cuts in the new year, but many Republicans are skeptical there will be any better outcome in January.

Rep. Chip Roy, a Texas Republican who is part of the House Freedom Caucus, did not hold back on his opinion of the stopgap bill: "It's crap."

He said he would give "a little bit of room" to Johnson, who is three weeks into the job of speaker. But Roy threatened to seize control of the House floor if conservative demands for cuts are not met in the months ahead.

The opposition from hardline conservatives left Johnson with few other options than to skip what's typically a party-only procedural vote, and rely on another process that requires a two-thirds tally with Democrats for passage.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said Democrats were willing to find common ground with Republicans "while pushing back against Republican extremism whenever necessary."

In a statement with the other top Democratic leaders, Jeffries pointed out that a federal shutdown "would hurt the economy, our national security and everyday Americans." He had noted in a letter to col-

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leagues that the GOP package met Democratic demands to keep funding at current levels without steep reductions or divisive Republican policy priorities.

Winning bipartisan approval of a continuing resolution is the same move that led McCarthy's hard-right flank to oust him in October, days after the Sept. 30 vote to avert a federal shutdown. For now, Johnson appears to be benefiting from a political honeymoon in one of his first big tests on the job.

"Look, we're going to trust the speaker's move here," said Rep. Drew Ferguson, R-Ga.

But Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., a McCarthy ally who opposed his ouster, said Johnson should be held to the same standard. "What's the point in throwing out one speaker if nothing changes? The only way to make sure that real changes happen is make the red line stay the same for every speaker."

The Senate, where Democrats have a slim majority, has signaled its willingness to accept Johnson's package ahead of Friday's deadline to fund the government.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell called the House package "a solution" and said he expected it to pass Congress with bipartisan support.

"It's nice to see us working together to avoid a government shutdown," he said.

But McConnell, R-Ky., has noted that Congress still has work to do toward Biden's request to provide U.S. military aid for Ukraine and Israel and for other needs. Senators are trying to devise a separate package to fund U.S. supplies for the overseas wars and to bolster border security, but it remains a work in progress.

If approved, passage of the continuing resolution would be a less-than-triumphant capstone to the House GOP's first year in the majority. The Republicans have worked tirelessly to cut federal government spending only to find their own GOP colleagues unwilling to go along with the most conservative priorities. Two of the Republican bills collapsed last week as moderates revolted.

Instead, the Republicans are left funding the government essentially on autopilot at the levels that were set in bipartisan fashion at the end of 2022, when Democrats had control of Congress but the two parties came together to agree on budget terms.

All that could change in the new year when 1% cuts across the board to all departments would be triggered if Congress failed to agree to new budget terms and pass the traditional appropriation bills to fund the government by springtime.

The 1% automatic cuts, which would take hold in April, are despised by all sides — Republicans say they are not enough, Democrats say they are too steep and many lawmakers prefer to boost defense funds. But they are part of the debt deal McCarthy and Biden struck earlier this year. The idea was to push Congress to do better.

The legislation also extends farm bill programs through September, the end of the current fiscal year. That addition was an important win for some farm-state lawmakers. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., for example, warned that without the extension, milk prices would have soared and hurt producers back in his home state.

"The farm bill extension was the biggest sweetener for me," said Pocan.

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Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Farnoush Amiri and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## Tens of thousands of supporters of Israel rally in Washington, crying 'never again'

By REBECCA SANTANA and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supporters of Israel rallied by the tens of thousands on the National Mall under heavy security Tuesday, voicing solidarity in the fight against Hamas and crying "never again."

The "March for Israel" offered a resounding and bipartisan endorsement of one of America's closest allies as criticism has intensified over Israel's offensive in Gaza, set off by the bloody Hamas incursion on Oct. 7.

Overlooking a sea of Israeli and U.S. flags, the top Democrats in Congress — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries — came together on the stage with Republicans Mike Johnson, the House speaker, and Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa. They joined hands as Schumer



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chanted, "We stand with Israel."

Yet underneath that projection of unity, Democrats are sharply divided over Israel's course and its treatment of Palestinians. President Joe Biden now is urging Israel to restrain some of its tactics to ease civilian suffering in Gaza after voicing full-throated solidarity with the Israelis in the war's early weeks.

A succession of speakers took the stage to denounce the Hamas attack and what they said was a virulent spread of antisemitism internationally, "an embarrassment to all civilized people and nations," in the words of Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who addressed the crowd by video from the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

After "the largest massacre since the Holocaust," he said, "let us call out together, never again."

"No one will break us," he vowed. "We will rise again. ... There is no greater and just cause than this."

Ernst said Hamas' brutality cannot be overstated. "They murder babies," she said. "They rape women. They abuse the elderly. How anyone in America could sympathize with these terrorists is unfathomable."

Hamas militants stormed into Israel from Gaza in the surprise incursion Oct. 7, killing more than 1,200 people and taking more than 200 hostages. Israel has responded with weeks of attacks in Gaza, which have killed more than 11,000 Palestinians, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry.

Rachel Goldberg, mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was taken hostage while attending a music festival attacked by Hamas, said the days since the attack have been "slow motion torment."

"These children of God range in age from 9 months to 87 years," Goldberg said of the hostages taken to Gaza. "They are Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Hindu. Why are they being left underground in the dirt?"

The Homeland Security Department designated the march a "level 1" security event, the highest classification in its system and one usually used for the Super Bowl and other major events, two law enforcement officials told The Associated Press. The designation means the event required substantial law enforcement assistance from federal agencies, the officials said.

The FBI and Homeland Security sent a joint bulletin to law enforcement officials in Washington warning about the potential for violence or an attack inspired by the Israel-Hamas war, the officials said. But the bulletin said clearly that federal officials haven't identified any "specific, actionable threat" to the march, they said.

The officials were not authorized to discuss details of the law enforcement bulletin publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Many of the demonstrators wore Israeli flags wrapped around their shoulders, flowing behind them, or held small Israeli flags in their hands. They also held placards with names and photos of the people who had been taken hostage in Gaza, often holding them up as the crowd shouted, "Bring them home!" Security was tight, with dump trucks blocking access to the mall and police dispersed throughout the area and on horseback.

"I hope that it shows solidarity" with Israel, said Jackie Seley of Rockville, Maryland, who came with friends from New York. "And I hope that it raises awareness for the hostages that are currently in danger."

Melanie Lubin of Olney, Maryland, wore a flag half made up with the Stars and Stripes and half with Israel's blue and white Star of David. Asked about the death toll in Gaza and criticism of the way Israel has conducted its military campaign, she said: "I think everyone is concerned about what is happening in Gaza and to civilians in Israel. Israel is doing its best. This is a war. Israel did not start this war."

At one point during the rally, organizers played a video with Jewish students talking about antisemitism, reflecting how the conflict is playing out on college campuses.

Noa Fay, a Columbia University student, said many of her peers were feeling helpless about antisemitism they were seeing on campus, but she vowed not to be silenced.

"I will continue to shout," she said. "We should not have to do this. But we can do this, we must do this."

## The Biden administration is slow to act as millions are booted off Medicaid, advocates say

By AMANDA SEITZ and KENYA HUNTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Up to 30 million of the poorest Americans could be purged from the Medicaid program, many the result of error-ridden state reviews that poverty experts say the Biden administration is not doing enough to stop.

The projections from the health consulting firm Avalere come as states undertake a sweeping reevaluation of the 94 million people enrolled in Medicaid, government's health insurance for the neediest Americans. A host of problems have surfaced across the country, including hourslong phone wait times in Florida, confusing government forms in Arkansas, and children wrongly dropped from coverage in Texas.

"Those people were destined to fail," said Trevor Hawkins, an attorney for Legal Aid of Arkansas.

Hawkins helped hundreds of people navigate their Medicaid eligibility in Arkansas, as state officials worked to "swiftly disenroll" about 420,000 people in six months' time. He raised problems with Arkansas' process — like forms that wrongly told people they needed to reapply for Medicaid, instead of simply renew it — with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Nothing changed, he said.

"They ask questions but they don't tell us what is going on," Hawkins said of CMS. "Those should be major red flags. If there was a situation where CMS was to step in, it would have been Arkansas."

Nearly a dozen advocates around the country detailed widespread problems they've encountered while helping some of the estimated 10 million people who've already been dropped from Medicaid. Some fear systemic problems are being ignored.

In a statement Tuesday, the Health and Human Services Department said it is monitoring states like Texas, Florida and Arkansas, which account for a quarter of the country's Medicaid disenrollments.

"These and other states need to do more to protect coverage," HHS said in an email. "We have put all states on notice and will not be afraid to take enforcement action."

Congress ended a COVID-19 policy last year that barred states from kicking anyone off Medicaid during the pandemic, requiring them to undertake a review of every enrollee's eligibility over the next year. But the Democratic-led Congress also gave HHS Xavier Becerra the power to fine states or halt disenrollments if people were improperly being removed.

HHS has shared little about problems it has uncovered.

Earlier this year, the agency briefly paused disenrollments in 14 states, but it did not disclose which states were paused or for what reasons.

In August, HHS announced thousands of children had been wrongly removed in 29 states that were automatically removing entire households, instead of individuals, from coverage. CMS required the states to reinstate coverage for those who had been terminated under that process, said Daniel Tsai, the director of the CMS Center for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Services.

"We are using every lever that we have to hold states accountable," Tsai said.

Florida tried twice to remove Lily Mezquita, a 31-year-old working mom in Miami, from Medicaid during her pregnancy this year. She pleaded her case in 17 phone calls — some with wait times stretching as long as two hours — before she was finally reinstated in August from her hospital bed while in preterm labor. Mezquita would explain the state's law, which says she's guaranteed coverage through her pregnancy and 12 months after giving birth.

"No matter how much I tried to explain, no one was willing to listen," she said. "They're making errors, and they're very confident in their errors."

Because her coverage didn't immediately register in the state's system, Mezquita paid out-of-pocket for pills doctors prescribed to prevent pre-term labor from arising again, and she missed follow-up appointments to check on her baby girl.

If trends continue, as many as 30 million people could end up being dropped from Medicaid at some point once states finish reviewing their Medicaid rolls, according to Avalere's projections. The numbers dwarf

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the Biden administration's initial projections that only 15 million people would lose coverage throughout the process.

"We have to say it's going poorly," Massey Whorley, a principal at Avalere, said of the Medicaid redeterminations. "This has been characterized by much higher-than-expected disenrollment."

Most have been removed for procedural reasons, like failing to send back their renewal form or mail in proper paperwork. That points to bigger problems with how the states are determining Medicaid eligibility: Their notices aren't reaching people, don't make sense or they're requiring unnecessary paperwork. Many of the people removed for those reasons may still qualify for Medicaid and might eventually be re-enrolled.

In Arkansas, which has finished its Medicaid redeterminations, public records shared with the AP show more than 70% of people were kicked off Medicaid because the state couldn't reach them or they didn't return their renewal form or provide requested paperwork.

"I can't say how many calls I've gotten from people who just got out of the emergency room and found out they don't have coverage," Hawkins said.

The state's Department of Human Services says it tried to reach people with additional calls, emails and texts. It believes the high number of procedural disenrollments were the result of people who no longer qualified for Medicaid not mailing back their renewal forms, spokesman Gavin Lesnick told AP in an email. Lesnick said CMS has never asked Arkansas to pause disenrollments.

Long phone wait times and notices that don't include reasons why people are being kicked off Medicaid have plagued the process in Florida, said Lynn Hearn, an attorney at the Florida Health Justice Project. Hearn helped Mezquita appeal her case to the state. Earlier this year, the nonprofit sued the state over its handling of the process.

"We've seen CMS reluctant to step in on the issues that we've raised," Hearn said. "We have seen errors in state processing that indicate more than anomalies — more like systemic issues."

The Florida Department of Children and Families has had an 87% response rate to its renewal forms and call wait times are under five minutes, spokeswoman Mallory McManus said in an email.

Medicaid enrollees in North Carolina, meanwhile, are also having trouble reaching their local office by phone or getting calls returned when they leave a message, said Cassidy Estes-Rogers, the director of family support and healthcare at the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy. State officials didn't immediately respond to questions about phone troubles.

Estes-Rogers said she meets regularly with local CMS officials about problems.

"They just don't come back to us with any information on how that was resolved, and we don't see any immediate effects from it," she said.

Similar problems have arisen in Texas, where website and app outages have meant families don't even get the electronic notices stating their Medicaid coverage was up for renewal, said Graciela Camarena, the child health outreach program director for the Children's Defense Fund in Texas.

"They were visiting the doctor's office or the pediatricians' office — that's where they found out they were denied," Camarena said.

Camarena said CMS has met with her organization to go over some of the issues and has been pleased with its help. Some Texas lawmakers have asked CMS to investigate issues in the state, where nearly 1 million have lost Medicaid.

CMS has not asked the state to stop the process, Texas Health and Human Services spokeswoman Jennifer Ruffcorn said in an email. The agency "is continuously working to improve" its app and website, she added.

Local groups have also been funneling up problems to national groups that CMS meets with weekly, Tsai said. In some cases, issues raised to the agency don't violate federal regulations.

"However," Tsai said, "You look at what's happening and you say, 'how is this a good, consumer friendly-process?'"

CMS has tried to play nice with states on Medicaid, hoping they can help improve the enrollment process for many years to come said Jennifer Wagner, the director of Medicaid eligibility and enrollment for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The organization has been working with local groups to notify CMS of problems.

"There is a question, in some states, if it's time to shift toward enforcement," she said.

Hunter reported from Atlanta.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Michigan judge says Trump can stay on primary ballot, rejecting challenge under insurrection clause

By COREY WILLIAMS and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A Michigan judge ruled Tuesday that former President Donald Trump will remain on the state's primary ballot, dealing a blow to the effort to stop Trump's candidacy with a Civil War-era Constitutional clause.

It marks the second time in a week that a state court declined to remove Trump from a primary ballot under the insurrection provision of the 14th Amendment.

In Michigan, Court of Claims Judge James Redford rejected arguments that Trump's role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol meant the court had to declare him ineligible for the presidency. Redford wrote that, because Trump followed state law in qualifying for the primary ballot, he cannot remove the former president.

Additionally, he said it should be up to Congress to decide whether Trump is disqualified under the section of the U.S. Constitution that bars from office a person who "engaged in insurrection."

Redford said deciding whether an event constituted "a rebellion or insurrection and whether or not someone participated in it" are questions best left to Congress and not "one single judicial officer." A judge, he wrote, "cannot in any manner or form possibly embody the represented qualities of every citizen of the nation — as does the House of Representatives and the Senate."

Free Speech For People, a liberal group that has brought 14th Amendment cases in a number of states, said it will immediately appeal the ruling to the Michigan Court of Appeals, but also asked the state supreme court to step in and take the case on an expedited basis.

"We are disappointed by the trial court's decision, and we're appealing it immediately," said Ron Fein, Legal Director of Free Speech For People.

In a statement, Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung rattled off other losses in the long-shot effort to bar Trump from the ballot.

"Each and every one of these ridiculous cases have LOST because they are all un-Constitutional left-wing fantasies orchestrated by monied allies of the Biden campaign seeking to turn the election over to the courts and deny the American people the right to choose their next president," Cheung said.

Left-leaning groups have filed similar lawsuits in other states seeking to bar Trump from the ballot, portraying him as inciting the Jan. 6 attack, which was intended to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election win.

The two-sentence clause in the 14th Amendment has been used only a handful of times since the years after the Civil War. It's likely that one of the active cases eventually will be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has never ruled on the insurrection clause.

Last week, the Minnesota Supreme Court sidestepped the issue by ruling that Trump could stay on that state's primary ballot because the election is a party-run contest during which constitutional eligibility isn't an issue. It left the door open to another lawsuit to keep Trump off the state's general election ballot.

A Colorado judge is expected to rule on a similar lawsuit there by Friday. Closing arguments in that case are scheduled for Wednesday.

Riccardi reported from Denver.



## What's pushing inflation down? More goods, workers and housing

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Long past its painful peak, inflation in the United States may be heading steadily back toward its pre-pandemic levels, without the need for further interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

Such a scenario became more likely, if hardly guaranteed, after Tuesday's surprisingly tame report on consumer prices for October. The Labor Department's data showed a broad-based easing of inflation across most goods and services. The price of gas? Down. Appliances? Down. Autos? Down. Same for airfares, hotel rooms and doctors' fees.

Overall inflation didn't rise from September to October, the first time that consumer prices collectively haven't budged from one month to another in more than a year. Compared with a year earlier, prices rose 3.2% in October, the smallest such rise since June, though still above the Fed's 2% inflation target.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core inflation was just 0.2% last month, slightly below the pace of the previous two months. Economists closely track core prices, which are thought to provide a good sign of inflation's likely future path. Measured year over year, core prices rose 4% in October, down from 4.1% in September, the smallest rise in two years.

"The inflation fever has broken," said Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank. "Rising petroleum production is holding down gas prices, house prices are rising more slowly after mortgage rates surged in 2023 and rents are also rising more gradually" as more apartment buildings are completed.

October's milder-than-expected price figures make it much less likely that the Fed will impose another rate hike. Many economists now say that the Fed's most likely next move will be to cut rates, likely sometime next year, though that would depend on whether inflation continues to cool.

### WHAT'S DRIVING INFLATION LOWER, AND WILL IT CONTINUE?

A major factor has been a big improvement in the supply of many things — workers, housing and components for manufactured goods.

Millions of Americans have come off the sidelines in the past year and flooded back into the workforce, seeking and (mostly) finding jobs. Immigration has increased, too, and with it more people looking for work. With more hires available, businesses haven't had to raise wages as much to fill jobs, thereby easing the pressure on those businesses to raise their prices.

At the same time, the largest number of new apartment buildings nationwide in decades are being completed, a trend that is helping slow rent increases. Rental costs, after a spike in September, rose at a much more gradual pace last month.

Rents and other housing costs are likely to keep coming down, economists say, as the cost of new leases continues to fall, according to real-time data providers such as Zillow. Those lower prices show up in the government's data with a lag.

And the supply chains that were badly snarled during the pandemic have pretty much unwound. An ample availability of products, parts and components help keep a lid on their prices. Automakers, for example, are having a much easier time finding semiconductors.

Partly as a result, new car prices declined last month, defying fears that the now-settled autoworkers' strike would reduce dealers' inventories and send prices higher. Used car prices, too, are down. They fell for a fifth straight month in October and have tumbled 7% from a year ago.

"We're finally undoing that and getting the benefits," Austan Goolsbee, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, said Tuesday in remarks at the Detroit Economic Club.

Separately, consumers are widely expected to pull back on spending after a blowout summer, with credit card debts — and delinquencies — rising and average savings falling. Cooler demand should force businesses to compete more on price.

Gas costs have kept falling this month, with the national average price at the pump averaging \$3.35 Tuesday, down 42 cents from a year earlier. Those price declines could push overall inflation, measured year-over-year, below 3% by December.

### BUT AREN'T THINGS STILL PRETTY EXPENSIVE?

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Yes, inflation is still painfully apparent in many areas. They include auto and health insurance and some groceries, like beef and bread.

The average cost of auto insurance, which jumped 1.9% just from September to October, has soared nearly 20% from a year earlier. As new and used vehicles have grown more expensive, so has the cost of insuring them. And health insurance prices rose 1.1% last month, though that was largely due to a change in the government's methodology.

But even as overall price increases slow, it doesn't mean inflation is reversing or that most prices are falling back to pre-pandemic levels. The consumer price index, the most widely followed measure of inflation, remains about 20% higher than it was before the pandemic.

Milk prices, which have ticked down compared with the past year, are still 23% higher than they were pre-pandemic. Ground beef prices are 31% higher. Gas prices, despite a steep decline from a year ago, are still 46% higher than before the pandemic.

Many economists say a key reason why so many Americans hold a gloomy view of the economy despite very low unemployment and steady hiring is that these prices — on items that they buy regularly — remain much higher than they were three years ago.

## ARE PAYCHECKS KEEPING UP?

Barring a deep and painful recession, prices aren't going to fall to their pre-pandemic levels. Instead, economists say, Americans' wages need to rise to help pay for the higher costs.

Wages and salaries trailed inflation in 2021 and 2022, exacerbating the pain of higher prices. Yet this year, as inflation has cooled, average pay has pulled ahead of inflation. By most measures, average paychecks, adjusted for inflation, are back to where they were before the pandemic.

Yet that essentially means that Americans, on average, have had scant real pay increases compared with three years ago. And while average pay may be back to pre-pandemic levels, many people have received below-average pay raises and are still behind inflation.

## HOW MIGHT THE FEDERAL RESERVE RESPOND?

The Fed will likely welcome Tuesday's report as evidence of further progress toward getting inflation back to its target of 2%. Fed officials, led by Chair Jerome Powell, are considering whether their benchmark rate is high enough to quell inflation or if they need to impose another increase in coming months.

Powell had said last week that Fed officials were "not confident" that rates were sufficiently high to tame inflation. The Fed has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times in the past year and a half, to about 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years.

But the central bank has raised its key rate just once since May. Since its last meeting on Nov. 1, a government report showed that hiring cooled in October compared with September, and wage growth slowed, thereby easing pressure on companies to raise prices in the coming months.

Adams, the Comerica economist, said he thinks the Fed's most likely next move will be to cut rates, likely by mid-2024.

The prospect that the Fed may end its rate hike campaign and eventually cut rates ignited a stock market rally Tuesday. The Dow Jones industrial average soared nearly 1.4% in mid-afternoon trading. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note fell to 4.46%, down from nearly 4.6%, reflecting investors' expectations that borrowing rates will decline.

The Fed's rate hikes have increased the costs of mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and many forms of business borrowing, part of a concerted drive to slow growth and cool inflation pressures. The central bank is trying to achieve a "soft landing" — raising borrowing costs just enough to curb inflation without tipping the economy into a deep recession.

"Things are proceeding in a way that is very consistent with what (the Fed) would want to see," said Eric Winograd, chief economist at AB Global, an asset management firm. "They look like they are on course to generate a soft landing. There's no guarantee that they will actually manage to accomplish it. But right now, that's the story that the data are telling."

## A missing sailor's last message from Hurricane Otis was to ask his family to pray for him

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

ACAPULCO, Mexico (AP) — During the first minutes of Oct. 25 when Hurricane Otis roared into Acapulco Bay with 165 mph winds, sailor Ruben Torres recorded a 10-second audio message from a yacht called the Sereno.

"All things considered I'm alright, but it's really horrible, it's really horrible, it's really horrible," he said over the howling wind and the boat's beeping alarms. "Family, I don't want to exaggerate, but pray for us because it's really awful out here."

The Sereno was one of 614 boats — yachts, ferries, fishing boats — that according to Mexico's Navy were in the bay that night and ended up damaged or on the ocean floor. Of those aboard the Sereno, one person survived, while Torres and the boat's captain remain missing.

Otis killed at least 48 people officially, most drowned, and some 26 are missing. Sailors, fishermen and their families believe there are many more.

Sailors in the region typically board their boats during a storm rather than stay on land where they'd be safe, so that they can bring the boats to sheltered parts of Acapulco Bay instead of leaving them where a storm could slam them against docks and do damage.

But Otis was no normal storm. When sailors went to sea that day no one expected that the tropical storm would strengthen to a Category 5 hurricane in 12 hours and make a direct hit on Acapulco, leaving no part of the bay safe.

Susana Ramos, the wife of Ruben Torres, heard her husband's message only days later.

Torres' family knew his routine when a hurricane approached: He went aboard to help care for the boat and the crew sailed it near the naval base in an area more protected by mountains that ring the bay. Ramos prepared dry clothing for his return.

Around 7 p.m. Oct. 24, Torres spoke to his oldest son, now 14. Ramos overheard him describe how it looked then with whole hillsides in Acapulco going dark as the power started to fail. But Torres said he had his lifejacket at the ready and the engines going in case.

Hours later, the family's home began to flood. Buckets of water were entering. "The walls were like they were crying," Ramos said. But the really scary part was "the penetrating hissing of the air" like the screeching of a tire over their heads and the creaking of the house.

She remembered that her husband always said don't fear the water, fear the wind.

When Torres recorded that last message asking his family to pray for him, a dozen members were huddled inside the concrete house.

Otis' damage on land was evident at first light. The city awoke isolated, without power, phone signal or water. Tens of thousands of homes were destroyed, entire neighborhoods flooded, luxury hotels were hollowed out without walls or windows. Trees, power poles and debris were everywhere.

Details of the situation at sea have trickled in more slowly.

Alejandro Martínez Sidney, a business leader and member of a fishing cooperative, has been hearing the accounts of surviving sailors. He said they were caught by surprise at the storm's sudden strength. An alert went out about 10 p.m. on the night before Otis made landfall, telling sailors to beach their boats.

"It was too late," Martínez Sidney said.

Many, like Torres, had already sailed to what were believed to be more protected parts of the bay. Others, who didn't want to damage their boats by beaching them, followed suit but ended up trapped in a whirlpool in the middle of bay, he said survivors told him.

It was like a "mega tornado" that devoured them, Martínez Sidney said.

Ramos was worried. The next day she crossed 8 miles of devastated cityscape — walking through mud,

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riding a motorcycle, and hitching rides on trucks -- to reach the Sereno's dock.

Seeing boats aground on Acapulco's waterfront boulevard shook her. Looking out to the bay, the boats looked like old, wrecked toys, she said.

Shouting her husband's name, she pushed through other families looking for their loved ones. She was taken to see six bodies that had been recovered. None was from the Sereno.

Then she started to check hospitals, lists of dead and missing that began to circulate. She went to the naval base, the morgue. There she had just enough battery on her phone to show them a photo of Torres.

She said that when she heard an official say that if they confirmed anything they would call her, she understood that she would have to be the one to look for him.

Several days later, when power and a phone signal began to return sporadically in some areas, she finally got her husband's message. It made her feel powerless.

"It's so heartbreaking for me to have that last message," she said.

Sailors and fishermen immediately started searching in whatever craft remained seaworthy. Sometimes they had to siphon gasoline from parked cars for their motors.

Some yacht owners, like that of the Sereno, rented boats and small planes to search while also getting necessities to crew members' families who had lost everything.

Ramos and her brother-in-law crisscrossed Acapulco on a motorcycle, chasing rumors of survivors. A crew member from the Sereno was found alive on an island in the bay.

The sailor told Ramos through tears how they had all jumped into the water with their lifejackets on, but that he had managed to cling to a floating marine fender, a bumper-like device from the boat that saved him.

Families have protested that authorities should lead the search because they have better equipment.

Enrique Andrade, a teacher searching for his younger sister Abigail who was aboard a ship called the Litos, said he has accompanied the Navy, divers and agents from the state prosecutor's office on searches. Of the Litos, they've only found "a little door," he said.

Andrade said authorities did not do enough to warn crew members. "The Navy knew what was coming, the sea terminals knew too and they still didn't share the information" soon enough, Andrade said.

The Navy has recovered 67 small boats, but there are more than 500 more longer than 40 feet, according to Alejandro Alexandres González, a captain who spoke to reporters during one search effort.

Ramos' life now consists of a daily visit to the morgue, where samples of her children's DNA have been taken, and perching her cell phone at a window of her home where there sometimes is a signal, in case of news about her husband's whereabouts.

Sleeping in her mother's embrace and thinking of her children has given her strength.

The small grocery she had rented to help her husband pay off their debts and live in a neighborhood with less violence was one of the thousands of businesses cleared out by desperate residents after Otis. She tries to convince herself she will be able to start over.

Showing photos of the 10th birthday of their youngest daughter they had celebrated a week earlier, Ramos said the girl had kept her eyes on the door hoping her father would return.

Ramos hopes that on Nov. 17, when her husband would turn 33, they will have news.

"It would be really great if they told me, at least, there he is; a miracle if they would tell me, he's hospitalized there, come ... and I would carry him back."

AP videojournalist Fernanda Pesce contributed to this report.



## Renowned Canadian-born Israeli peace activist Vivian Silver is confirmed killed in Hamas attack

By AMY TEIBEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Vivian Silver, a Canadian-born Israeli activist who devoted her life to seeking peace with the Palestinians, was confirmed killed in Hamas' Oct. 7 incursion into southern Israel.

For 38 days, Silver, who had moved to Israel in the 1970s and made her home in Kibbutz Be'eri, was believed to be among the nearly 240 hostages held in the Gaza Strip. But identification of some of the most badly burned remains has gone slowly, and her family was notified of her death on Monday.

Silver was a dominant figure in several groups that promoted peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as a prominent Israeli human rights group. She also volunteered with a group that drove Gaza cancer patients to Israeli hospitals for medical care.

"On the one hand, she was small and fragile. Very sensitive," her son Yonatan Zeigen told Israel Radio on Tuesday. "On the other hand, she was a force of nature. She had a giant spirit. She was very assertive. She had very strong core beliefs about the world and life."

Zeigen said he texted with his mother during the attack. The exchanges started out lighthearted, with Silver maintaining her sense of humor, he said. Suddenly, he said, there was a dramatic downturn when she understood the end had come, and militants stormed her house.

"Her heart would have been broken" by the events of Oct. 7 and its aftermath, Zeigen said. "She worked all her life, you know, to steer us off this course. And in the end, it blew up in her face."

At least 1,200 people were killed in Hamas attacks on Israel while more than 11,000 Palestinians have been killed so far in the Israeli war in Gaza, now in its 39th day.

"We went through three horrific wars in the space of six years," Silver said in a 2017 interview with The Associated Press. "At the end of the third one, I said: 'No more. We each have to do whatever we can to stop the next war. And it's possible. We must reach a diplomatic agreement.'"

Zeigen said he has now taken on his mother's baton.

"I feel like I'm in a relay race," he said. "She has passed something on to me now. I don't know what I'll do with it, but I think we can't turn the clock back now. We have to create something new now, something in the direction of what she worked for."

## New Speaker Mike Johnson formally endorses Donald Trump, a step beyond predecessor Kevin McCarthy

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson endorsed Donald Trump for president on Tuesday, a move that was a symbolic departure from his ousted predecessor leading the House.

Johnson, an ally and defender of the former president, said in an interview on CNBC Tuesday morning, "I have endorsed him wholeheartedly."

He added a bit later: "I'm all in for President Trump."

Johnson, a little-known Louisiana congressman, became speaker late last month when Kevin McCarthy was ousted by a hard-right band of their fellow Republicans. Though McCarthy was a longtime Trump ally and one of the first elected officials to publicly align himself with Trump in the wake of the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by Trump's supporters, he had stopped short of formally backing Trump's third White House bid.

McCarthy had drawn the ire of Trump allies after he questioned in an interview this summer whether Trump was the strongest candidate among the then-crowded field of GOP rivals. The field has shrunk in recent weeks, though Trump's lead has remained fixed.

Trump has celebrated Johnson's ascension to speaker, calling him "MAGA Mike Johnson."

Johnson's comments came hours after The New York Times reported on an August 2015 Facebook post Johnson made before he was elected to Congress in which he criticized Trump, then the Republican nomi-

nee, saying "he lacks the character and the moral center we desperately need again in the White House."

In a response to someone commenting on the post, the newspaper reported that Johnson said: "I am afraid he would break more things than he fixes. He is a hot head by nature, and that is a dangerous trait to have in a Commander in Chief."

Johnson, a social conservative, later became a steadfast defender of Trump, notably during his first impeachment in 2019 and through the 2020 election, echoing some of Trump's conspiracy theories about his loss to Joe Biden in the presidential election and filing a brief in a lawsuit that sought to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election win.

Johnson reiterated that on Tuesday, saying in the interview that he was "one of the closest allies President Trump had in Congress."

Johnson's endorsement only firms up what is increasingly politically clear — that Trump is the Republican party's front-runner heading toward 2024 and few GOP leaders are willing or able to stand in his way.

The speaker's backing of Trump charts the course for other House Republicans and leaves those GOP lawmakers who prefer an alternative candidate increasingly isolated in their party, with few options.

While some more centrist conservative Republicans may not want to support Trump, particularly in congressional districts Biden won last time, they have few avenues in the Republican Party to muscle a different outcome in the presidential nominating contest.

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Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

## **A third round of US sanctions against Hamas focuses on money transfers from Iran to Gaza**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States on Tuesday said it imposed a third round of sanctions on a group of Hamas officials, members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad who work to transfer money from Iran to Gaza, and a Lebanese money exchange service that facilitates the transfers.

The Treasury Department sanctions, coordinated with the United Kingdom, come in response to the surprise Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel that left roughly 1,200 people dead or kidnapped. The sanctions block access to U.S. property and bank accounts and prevent the targeted people and companies from doing business with Americans.

This and two previous rounds of sanctions against Hamas and its affiliates are aimed at protecting the international financial system from abuse by Hamas militants and their enablers, the Treasury Department said.

The State Department also is designating a Palestinian Islamic Jihad military leader for diplomatic sanctions.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in an emailed statement that "together with our partners we are decisively moving to degrade Hamas's financial infrastructure, cut them off from outside funding, and block the new funding channels they seek to finance their heinous acts."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "we will continue to work with our partners and allies to disrupt Hamas' terrorist financing channels."

The White House has said it has yet to uncover information that Iran, the principal financial and military sponsor of Hamas, was directly involved in the multipronged Hamas operation against Israel.

However, the U.S. has conducted three strikes over the last two weeks against Iranian-tied weapons depots in Syria to retaliate for the more than 50 rocket and drone attacks that militant groups have launched since Oct. 7 against U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria, which have caused dozens of minor injuries among U.S. personnel.

President Joe Biden and other officials in his Democratic administration have traveled to the Middle East to show support for Israel and have tried to tamp down tensions in the escalating war between Israel and Hamas. But those efforts have faced massive setbacks.

More than 11,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children, have been killed since the war began, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths.

U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron said "the Palestinian people are victims of Hamas too. We stand in solidarity with them and will continue to support humanitarian pauses to allow significantly more life-saving aid to reach Gaza."

The U.K.'s Tuesday sanctions target four Hamas senior leaders and two Hamas financiers.

The shadowy leader of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, said the Oct. 7 assault on Israel was in response to the 16-year blockade of Gaza, Israeli raids inside West Bank cities over the past year, increasing attacks by settlers on Palestinians and the growth of settlements, among other reasons.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who declared Israel to be at war, said its military would use all of its strength to destroy Hamas' capabilities. "All the places that Hamas hides in, operates from," he said, "we will turn them into ruins."

Follow the AP's coverage of the Israel-Hamas war at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

## Satellite photos analyzed by the AP show Israeli forces pushed further into Gaza late last week

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Israeli tanks and armored vehicles pushed further into the Gaza Strip late last week as part of an offensive squeezing Gaza City as fighting raged between its forces and Hamas militants in the coastal enclave, satellite photos analyzed Tuesday by The Associated Press show.

Images from Planet Labs PBC taken Saturday showed Israeli forces just south of the marina in Gaza City, with over three dozen vehicles positioned on the beach. Some stood behind sand berms likely providing some cover.

That position corresponds with AP reporting, as well as an analysis by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War. The institute attributed those vehicles as belonging to an Israeli push that saw troops cut off Gaza City to the south before reaching the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and moving north toward the marina.

That apparent forward operating base of Israeli forces resembled a similar defensive position seen last week to the north of the marina in images analyzed by the AP. Around all those positions, deep impact craters from missile fire could be seen. Some of them on the beach are now filled with seawater.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the AP regarding the satellite photos.

Plumes of smoke could be seen from several sites around Gaza City, some of it passing over Gaza City's main hospital, Shifa, where several thousand people remain. Israel insists Shifa and other hospitals provide cover to Hamas militant tunnels and command centers. Both Hamas and Shifa staff deny the allegations.

Staff members there have performed surgery on war-wounded patients, including children, without anesthesia as supplies run low.

International law gives hospitals special protections during war. But hospitals can lose those protections if combatants use them to hide fighters or store weapons, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The war began with Hamas' unprecedented Oct. 7 incursion into southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people. That assault sparked a punishing campaign of airstrikes and the Israeli military offensive into the Gaza Strip that has killed over 11,000 people — two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run enclave.

After ordering civilians out of Gaza City, Israeli soldiers have moved on the city from three positions.

They cut across the southern edge of the city all the way to the Mediterranean — those troops seen in the images Saturday now farther north. Meanwhile, two other forces have pushed in from the north, with

some around Beit Hanoun to the east and others seen in the satellite images along the Mediterranean, to the west.

With journalists outside the city unable to enter, gathering independent information remains difficult.

Apart from videos and images on social media, the growing supply of satellite imagery from commercial companies has become increasingly valuable for reporting on closed-off areas and countries. The AP has a subscription to access Planet Labs imagery to aid its reporting worldwide and distributes those photos to its subscribers and members.

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

## The head of China's state-backed Catholic church begins historic trip to Hong Kong

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — The head of the Catholic church in China began a trip to Hong Kong on Tuesday at the invitation of the city's pope-appointed Roman Catholic cardinal, marking the first official visit by a Beijing bishop in history.

Joseph Li, who was installed by China's state-controlled Catholic church as an archbishop, visited the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in the morning, public broadcaster RTHK said.

Li's five-day tour came after the city's newly installed Cardinal Stephen Chow invited him to visit Hong Kong during a landmark trip to Beijing in April — the first visit to the Chinese capital by the city's bishop in nearly three decades. Experts said the invitation was a symbolic gesture that could strengthen the fragile relationship between China and the Vatican.

Earlier this month, Chow said his job is to foster better communication between the sides, and underscored the importance of human connections when asked about the significance of Li's visit.

The Hong Kong diocese said Li would meet with Chow and "different diocesan offices to promote exchanges and interactions between the two dioceses." It said this is the first time a Beijing bishop has officially visited Hong Kong, without disclosing further details about Li's trip.

Li took part in an evening prayer service at a chapel on Monday and exchanged gifts with Chow, according to Sunday Examiner, a publication operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. It added Li would visit educational organizations and the Holy Spirit Seminary.

Beijing and the Vatican severed diplomatic ties in 1951 following the Communist Party's rise to power and the expulsion of foreign priests. Since the break in ties, Catholics in China have been divided between those who belong to an official, state-sanctioned church and those in an underground church loyal to the pope. The Vatican recognizes members of both as Catholics but claims the exclusive right to choose bishops.

The installation of Li in 2007, however, was well-regarded by the Vatican and church officials at that time said it was done with its approval.

The Vatican and China signed an accord in 2018 over the thorny issue of bishop nominations, but Beijing has violated it. Most recently Pope Francis was forced to accept the unilateral appointment of a new bishop of Shanghai.

Francis in September insisted that the Vatican's relations with China were going well but said work must still be done to show Beijing that the Catholic church isn't beholden to a foreign power. During his trip to Mongolia that month, he also sent a special greeting to China's "noble" people, giving them a special shout-out at the end of a Mass.

The 2018 agreement has been harshly criticized by Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen, who was detained in May last year on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces under a Beijing-imposed national security law that jailed or silenced many activists. He was released on bail and has yet to be formally charged, but he and five others were fined in a separate case last November for failing to register a now-defunct fund set up to help arrested protesters.



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## Today in History: November 15, Sherman's 'March to the Sea' brings Civil War closer to end

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 15, the 319th day of 2023. There are 46 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 15, 1864, late in the U.S. Civil War, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh (teh-KUM'-seh) Sherman began their "March to the Sea" from Atlanta; the campaign ended with the capture of Savannah on Dec. 21.

On this date:

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the Articles of Confederation.

In 1806, explorer Zebulon Pike sighted the mountaintop now known as Pikes Peak in present-day Colorado.

In 1937, at the U.S. Capitol, members of the House and Senate met in air-conditioned chambers for the first time.

In 1942, the naval Battle of Guadalcanal ended during World War II with a decisive U.S. victory over Japanese forces.

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In 1959, four members of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas, were found murdered in their home. (Ex-convicts Richard Hickock and Perry Smith were later convicted of the killings and hanged in a case made famous by the Truman Capote book "In Cold Blood.")

In 1961, former Argentine President Juan Peron, living in exile in Spain, married his third wife, Isabel.

In 1966, the flight of Gemini 12, the final mission of the Gemini program, ended successfully as astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. splashed down safely in the Atlantic after spending four days in orbit.

In 1969, a quarter of a million protesters staged a peaceful demonstration in Washington against the Vietnam War.

In 1984, Stephanie Fae Beauclair, the infant publicly known as "Baby Fae" who had received a baboon's heart to replace her own congenitally deformed one, died at Loma Linda University Medical Center in California three weeks after the transplant.

In 2003, two Black Hawk helicopters collided and crashed in Iraq; 17 U.S. troops were killed.

In 2012, the Justice Department announced that BP had agreed to plead guilty to a raft of charges in the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill and pay a record \$4.5 billion, including nearly \$1.3 billion in criminal fines.

In 2018, the number of confirmed dead from the wildfire that had virtually destroyed the Northern California town of Paradise reached 63. (It would eventually total 85.)

In 2019, Roger Stone, a longtime friend and ally of President Donald Trump, was convicted of all seven counts in a federal indictment accusing him of lying to Congress, tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation of whether Trump coordinated with Russia during the 2016 campaign.

In 2022, Russia pounded Ukraine's energy facilities with its biggest barrage of missiles since the start of its invasion, striking targets across the country and causing widespread blackouts.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Petula Clark is 91. Actor Sam Waterston is 83. Classical conductor Daniel Barenboim is 81. Pop singer Anni-Frid "Frida" Lyngstad (ABBA) is 78. Actor Bob Gunton is 78. Actor Beverly D'Angelo is 72. Director-actor James Widdoes is 70. Rock singer-producer Mitch Easter is 69. News correspondent John Roberts is 67. Former "Tonight Show" bandleader Kevin Eubanks is 66. Comedian Judy Gold is 61. Actor Rachel True is 57. Rapper E-40 is 56. Country singer Jack Ingram is 53. Actor Jay Harrington is 52. Actor Jonny Lee Miller is 51. Actor Sydney Tamiia (tuh-MY'-yuh) Poitier is 50. Rock singer-musician Chad Kroeger is 49. Rock musician Jesse Sandoval is 49. Actor Virginie Ledoyen is 47. Actor Sean Murray is 46. Pop singer Ace Young (TV: "American Idol") is 43. Golfer Lorena Ochoa is 42. Hip-hop artist B.o.B is 35. Actor Shailene Woodley is 32. Actor-dancer Emma Dumont is 29.