

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Dec. 3

10:00 a.m.: Girls BB Junior High Jamboree in Groton
10 a.m.: Girls wrestling at Dell Rapids
10 a.m.: Boys wrestling at Clark
6 p.m.: Olive Grove Holiday Party at the club house
Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 3

United Methodist: Conde worship with communion, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school and Christmas practice, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship with communion, 10 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: St. John's worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Zion worship with communion, 11

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

The shop.
cans.



a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, Dec. 4

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, cauliflower, apricots, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pancakes

School Lunch: Chicken patty, fries.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Junior High Girls Basketball hosts Northwestern. 7th grade game at 6 p.m., 8th grade game at 7 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.; Hanging of the Greens service, 11 a.m.

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

"substantial" proof that he had broken federal criminal laws.

Sandra Day O'Connor: Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has died at the age of 93, the court announced in a statement. Legal analyst and George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley said that O'Connor left "a lasting legacy on the court."

Climate Change: The U.S. will contribute \$17.5 million to a Climate Impact and Response Fund after reaching an agreement with other global leaders on Thursday at the COP28 conference in Dubai.

Guyana Invasion: Brazilian intelligence has warned that the Venezuelan army is going to invade Guyana in the coming days, raising concerns about regional stability and territorial disputes in South America.

Jobless Figures: Unemployment in the U.S. is expected to increase from a current rate of 3.6% to 4.1% in 2024, the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) said in its economic outlook.

Philippines Dispute: China lashed out at Washington Thursday for continuing to side with U.S. treaty ally the Philippines in an escalating territorial dispute in the South China Sea.

Von Miller Arrested: Buffalo Bills star Von Miller turned himself in on an outstanding warrant for his arrest in an alleged domestic violence case involving his pregnant girlfriend in Dallas. He was released after posting a \$5,000 bond.

War in Ukraine: During an OSCE ministerial conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared to issue an implicit warning to Moldova, cautioning the country against its aspirations to join the European Union, amidst ongoing assertions by the Kremlin that the conflict in Ukraine was instigated by Western powers.

Donald Trump: The federal judge overseeing former President Donald Trump's election subversion case in Washington, D.C., ruled that Trump does not have immunity from criminal charges regarding his activities when in the White House.

George Santos: New York Republican Santos became only the sixth congressman in United States history to be expelled from the House on Friday. More than 100 Republicans joined almost every Democrat to oust Santos after a House Ethics Committee report said investigators found

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Groton Area
Tigers
GT

Any interest in any of
these basketball games on
GDILIVE.COM?
They are \$25 each.

Girls James Valley Christian JV
Boys Hamlin JV
Girls Hamlin JV
Boys Sisseton JV
Girls Sisseton JV
Girls Roncalli C
Girls Roncalli JV
Boys Roncalli C
Boys Roncalli JV
Girls Aberdeen Christian JV

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

Veteran's Day Profile: Steve Dresbach

Editor's Note:

We thought it would be nice to publish the Veteran's Day stories that were told at the Veteran's Day Program. This will be the first in a series of those presented at the program. The stories were told by the high school students. The first is Richard Taylor as told by Cadence Feist.

Steve Dresbach joined the Army branch in 1969 when he was 25 years old and served for two terms, 1969-1972 and 1986-2004. He joined when most of his family was in the service and believed that was the most important thing to do. Steve rejoined in 1986 when he was 42 years old and most of the others were 18.

He wanted to go into the Air Force but went into the Army because the training was not as extreme as the Air Force. For the first three years, Steve worked at Fort Bedding and was in charge of soldiers who were responsible for mental health.

When Steve was active on duty, he spent much of his time consulting with captains and leaders about PTSD and how to respond to it. Steve also created a children's involvement Program. He spent a great deal of time in the Sioux Falls area, counseling individuals and couples after being in the Army.

Steve has two sons, one in Kansas and one in Nebraska and five grandchildren. He had been married for 51 years, but sadly his wife passed away five years ago, and Steve later remarried a high school sweetheart he dated in high school.

He still has bad dreams, but never experiences major trauma, even though he dealt with several soldiers who had difficult times in combat. Steve remembers the time he went to Louisiana and ended up getting



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a report that a man was very depressed and had ammunition. Steve, along with others, had to deal with the situation and keep firearms away until the man got better.

While being in the Army, Steve gained a great deal of respect for men and women in the military and for him of the impact was a huge sense of pride. He also earned many medals and ribbons for his service. Steve still has many close friendships and has stayed in contact with four soldiers to this day. When he had time off, Steve would hang out with his family, go to church, socialize with friends, and go to a movie occasionally. Steve retired at the age of 60.

If you are planning on joining the military, Steve's advice is to study and investigate your options closely with each branch, be prepared to take orders and accept duties that require travel and separations from family, and don't enter the military solely to "see the world." The benefits of military service are great, but you have to be prepared to defend our country.

Present the quilt.

Steve, on behalf of the community and nation, with our deepest appreciation, we honor your service with this quilt of honor.

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RAISING THE ROOFING STANDARDS,
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Early this morning as I was half asleep I suddenly felt a disturbance in the force, if you will. I thought the power was off, but when I looked outside, the inflatables were still fully blown up.

I laid back down in bed. Then a couple of minutes later, my phone beeps with a text message. It was Laura Clark. She was having a major catastrophe at her house. They couldn't make coffee. They had no power.

I jumped out of bed. It was not my imagination. There was a disturbance in the power grid. I told her I'd start looking for the cause.

I called Landon and told him what was happening and that I would begin looking until he arrived.

Based on who was without power, we figured the issue had to be at West Second Avenue at Lincoln Street. Normally, when a fuse blows, the fuse holder pops open and will dangle. Both fuses appeared to be good at that intersection. Apparently, there was an issue that was hidden from us. It took deeper investigation. Landon examined the fuse holder and the fuse within. As you can tell in the photo, the fuse was partially burnt. It was not burnt all the way through to release the fuse holder. Once the issue was discovered, a new fuse was installed and Laura was able to make coffee!

On our way back to the shop, Landon noticed a fuse holder that was actually dangling. It was over by Deb Tietz. Why we had two outages was a mystery. Deb happened to come outside as we were working on it. Landon threw in the fuse holder. Deb was asking how long it would be. I said turn around - your Christmas tree is on! She turned around and was surprised. I said you now you can make coffee. "I don't drink coffee, but I'll make hot chocolate," she said.

The outages affected Second Avenue West from Lincoln Street to State Street and to the west side of Third Avenue from State Street and west.

What a way to start out a Saturday!

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NSU Wrestling

No. 11 Wolves Run Past Cougars in 2023 NSIC Opener

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The No. 11 Northern State University wrestling team handed Sioux Falls their first NCAA Division II loss, defeating the Cougars by 36. The Wolves out-scored the Cougars 93-20 in individual dual competition recording one major decision, four technical falls, and three victories by fall.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 42, USF 6

Records: NSU 3-2 (1-0 NSIC), USF 0-1 (0-1 NSIC)

HOW IT HAPPENED

Sioux Falls took their first and only lead of the dual after a decision win at 125-pounds

That lead lasted just over two minutes, as Jason Henschel Jr. pinned Beau Klingensmith in the first period of the 133-pound bout

Braydon Mogle added four team points in the following weight, downing Beau Beavers with a score of 15-4

Northern then rattled off four straight technical falls led off by No. 1 Wyatt Turnquist defeating Cooper Sanders 15-0 at 2:34 in the first

No. 7 Devin Bahr added a 16-1 win over John Tyler at the 7-minute mark and Chase Bloomquist defeated Jayden Coulter 17-1 at 5:14 in the third, leading the team in points scored

Sam Kruger capped off the techs with a 16-0 win over Ashtin Johnson with 16 seconds remaining in the first, and Northern held a 30-3 lead over Sioux Falls

No. 12 Treyton Cacek put together the fast match of the evening, recording a fall over Daevon Vereen at 1:58

USF grabbed their final win of the evening at 197-pound with a 6-2 decision

Nathan Schauer capped off the dual for NSU with six team points, pinning Logan Huckfelt at 3:24 in the second

FINAL RESULTS

USF NSU

125 Paul Garcia (Sioux Falls) over Landen Fischer (Northern State) (Dec 4-1) 3 0

133 Jason Henschel Jr. (Northern State) over Beau Klingensmith (Sioux Falls) (Fall 2:01) 0 6

141 Braydon Mogle (Northern State) over Beau Beavers (Sioux Falls) (MD 15-4) 0 4

149 #1 Wyatt Turnquist (Northern State) over Cooper Sanders (Sioux Falls) (TF 15-0 2:34) 0

5

157 #7 Devin Bahr (Northern State) over John Tyler (Sioux Falls) (TF 16-1 7:00) 0 5

165 Chase Bloomquist (Northern State) over Jayden Coulter (Sioux Falls) (TF 17-1 5:14) 0 5

174 Sam Kruger (Northern State) over Ashtin Johnson (Sioux Falls) (TF 16-0 2:44) 0 5

184 #12 Treyton Cacek (Northern State) over Daevon Vereen (Sioux Falls) (Fall 1:58) 0 6

197 Isaiah Laguna (Sioux Falls) over Ryan Hirschhorn (Northern State) (Dec 6-2) 3 0

285 Nathan Schauer (Northern State) over Logan Huckfelt (Sioux Falls) (Fall 3:24) 0 6

Team Score: 6 42

UP NEXT

Northern returns to the mat next Thursday hosting No. 15 Augustana from Wachs Arena. Dual start time is set for 7 p.m. between the Wolves and Vikings.

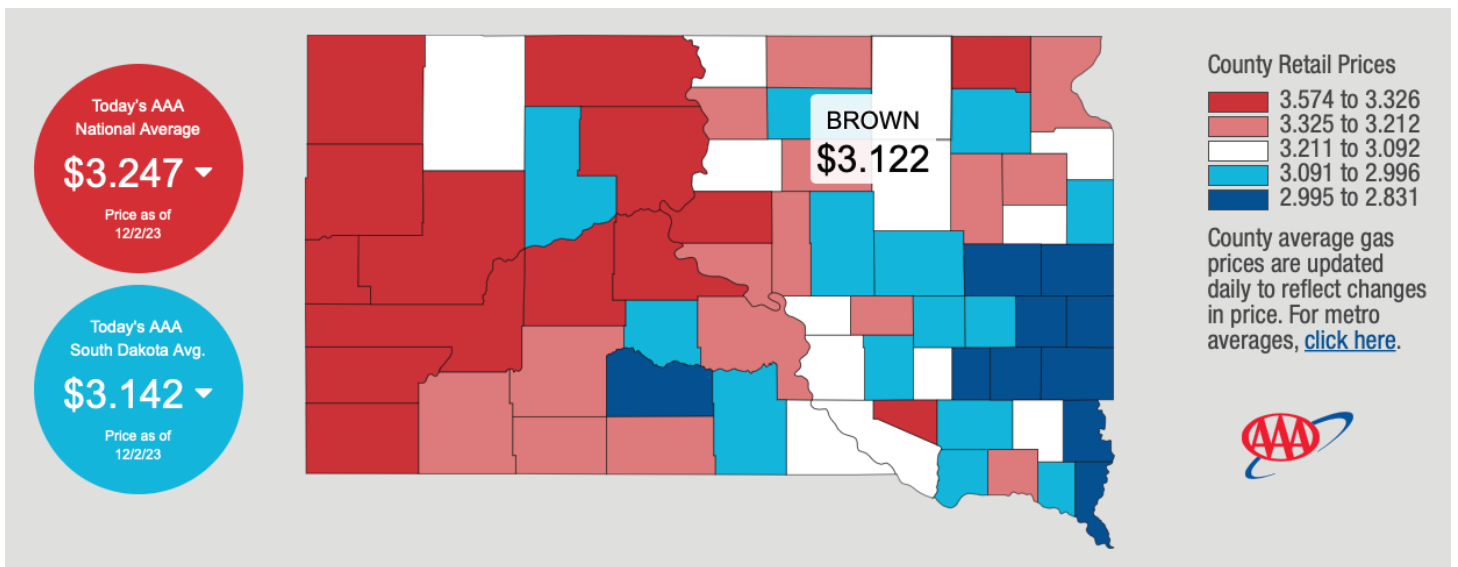
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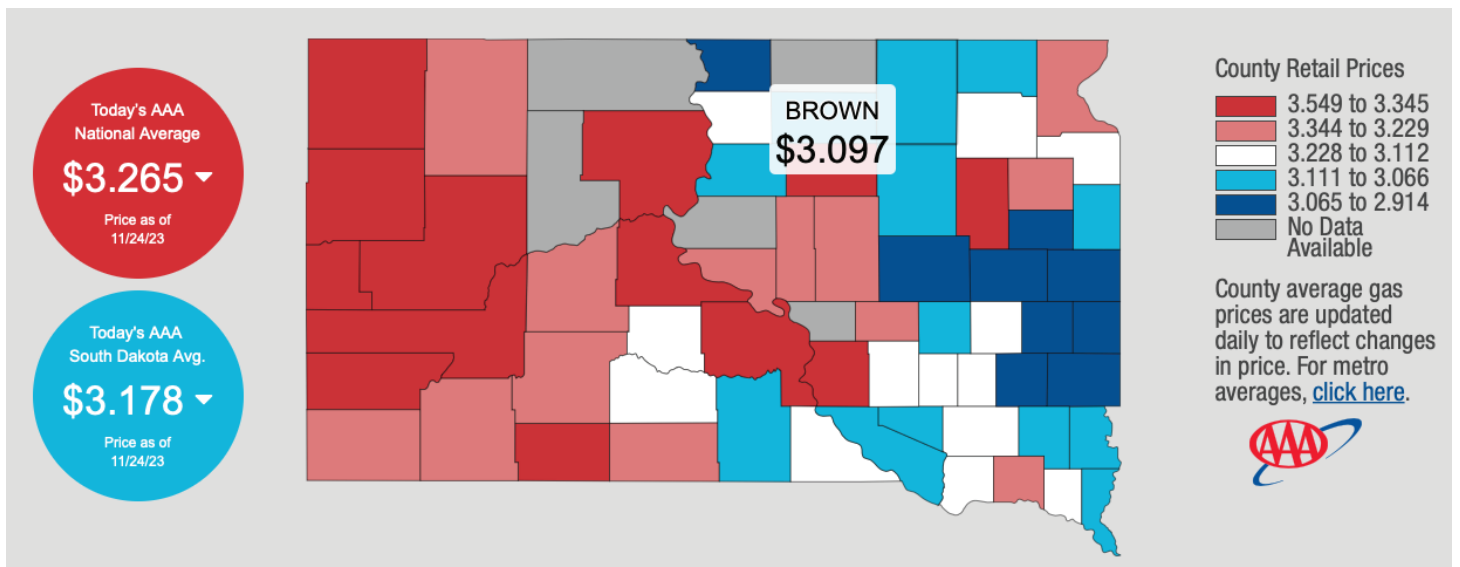
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.142	\$3.302	\$3.791	\$4.019
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.149	\$3.313	\$3.802	\$4.023
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.155	\$3.367	\$3.868	\$4.086
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.460	\$3.617	\$4.115	\$4.484
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.353	\$3.521	\$4.014	\$4.789

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



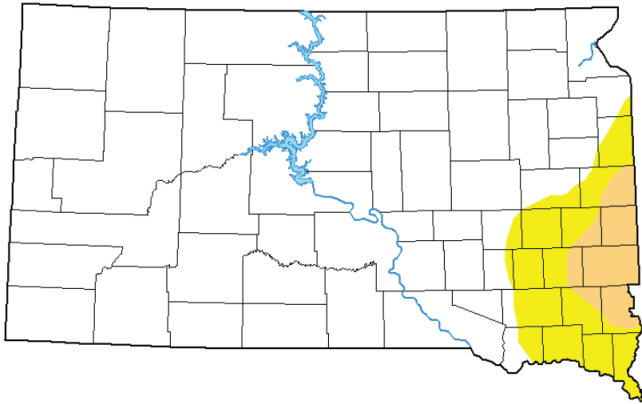
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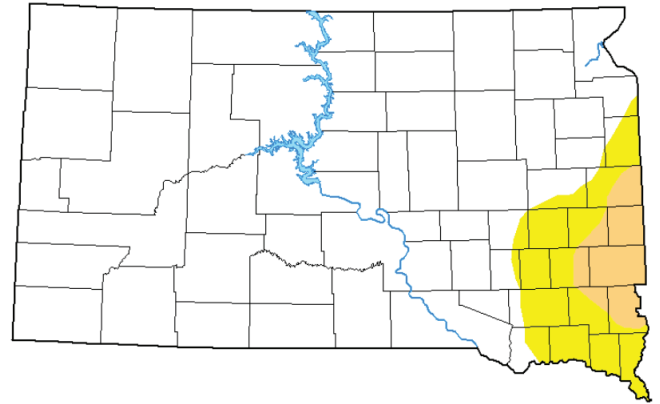
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



November 28



November 21

On this week's map, some minor improvements were made in areas of Kansas in response to improving conditions during the past 30-60 days, including beneficial snowfall observed over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Elsewhere, degradations were made in areas of eastern Colorado where drier-than-normal conditions have prevailed during the past 30-60-day period. In the Dakotas, conditions on the map remained status quo. In terms of snowpack conditions, the NWS NOHRSC reports the Upper Midwest Region (which includes the Dakotas and eastern portions of Montana) is currently 3.1% covered by snow as compared to 66.3% last month. Average temperatures for the week were below normal (2 to 8 degrees F) with the greatest departures observed in the plains of Colorado and Wyoming as well as in Kansas.

Aberdeen Farmer Announces Run for Second Term as NFU Vice President

By Lura Roti for South Dakota Farmers Union

Jeff Kippley, Aberdeen farmer and National Farmers Union Vice President, announced his run for a second term of service during the South Dakota Farmers Union State Convention held Nov. 30 – Dec. 1 in Huron.

“There is more work to do, so I hope you elect me again so I can continue to work hard for you,” Kippley said.

Members first elected Kippley to serve as National Farmers Union Vice President in 2022 during the National Farmers Union Convention. They will have another opportunity to elect him during the 2024 National Farmers Union Convention held in Scottsdale, Arizona March 10-12.

“Jeff Kippley has been such a great addition to National Farmers Union,” said Doug Sombke, President of South Dakota Farmers Union and Treasurer of National Farmers Union. “His background as a farmer and an accountant is valuable in the national boardroom and in the offices of D.C. policymakers.”

The same day he announced his run for a second term, South Dakota family farmers and ranchers elected Kippley to serve as Vice President of South Dakota Farmers Union. Sombke said he looks forward to serving with Kippley on the state and national level because Kippley is serving for the right reasons.

“Like all of us serving in Farmers Union leadership, Jeff is a family farmer who wants a better future on the farm for his kids,” said Sombke, who farms with his three grown sons. “Policy changes need to be made to ensure fair prices for crops and livestock so the next generation can earn an income farming and ranching.”

Jeff and his wife, Rachel, have four children: Noah, 17; Titus, 15; Aaron, 11 and Moriah, 9.

Advocating for policy to support fair prices for farmers & ranchers

Kippley raises crops and cattle together with his dad, John, wife, Rachel and their four children near Aberdeen. But like so many family farmers and ranchers across the nation, the Kippley farm income is not enough to support their family. So, together with family, the Kippleys own a tax preparation service. Rachel also works off the farm as the Fair and Park Manager for Brown County.

“As tax advisors, we see the numbers behind many family farms and ranches. And it’s not just our family farm that needs off-farm income to stay afloat financially – it is the majority of family agriculture producers,” Kippley said.

As National Farmers Union Vice President Kippley will continue to advocate for:

- Price Transparency
- MCOOL (mandatory country of origin labeling)
- Landowner Rights
- Higher ethanol blends like E30

“Policy changes need to take place soon, so our children can earn a fair living on the family farm or ranch,” Kippley said.

A farmer fighting for farmers

Over the last two years, Kippley has traveled across the nation to meet with Farmers Union members. He has worked to grow membership and guarantee the voice of farmers and ranchers is heard by policymakers in D.C.

“Although family farming and ranching operations in other parts of the U.S. may not look like they do in South Dakota – regardless of commodities raised or size, the challenges we as family farmers and ranchers face do look much the same,” Kippley said. “When I meet with policymakers, I make sure they understand that they are talking to a family farmer about real issues impacting family farmers and ranchers. It is important the policies put in place for agriculture producers actually work for us.”

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Angel Tree Cards Still Left

There are still plenty of cards left on Groton's Angel Trees. The left one is at Lori's Pharmacy on the counter. The right one is at Dollar General right when you walk in.

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Some of the award amounts were wrong on the first release. The text remains the same, the award values for about 20% have been corrected.

South Dakota Volunteer Fire Departments Receive \$5 Million in Grant Funding

PIERRE, S.D. – December 1, 2023 – 251 South Dakota volunteer fire departments from across the state have been awarded grants totaling \$5 million in funding for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Earlier this year, the South Dakota Legislature passed and Governor Noem signed HB1127 appropriating state general funds to the Department of Public Safety creating the grant program to support local volunteer fire departments.

“Volunteer fire departments play a crucial role in safeguarding communities and ensuring public safety by providing rapid response and dedicated service in emergencies,” said State Fire Marshal, Paul Merriman. “They serve as a vital backbone of the state’s overall firefighting and disaster management infrastructure. Regular financial support is critical to ensuring their safety and readiness.”

Volunteer fire departments purchase and maintain personal protective equipment for their firefighters. This grant program will help departments purchase new and replacement PPE to protect their firefighters.

PPE includes items such as bunker gear, boots, gloves, wildland firefighting apparel, and self-contained breathing apparatus.

“This funding will have a significant impact for departments statewide that have encountered budget and fundraising challenges,” said Charlie Kludt, President of the South Dakota Firefighters Association. “The funding is very much appreciated and will be put to good use.”

Seventy-five percent of eligible volunteer fire departments participated in the program and received awards ranging from \$720 to \$40,500 depending on their application and need. The grant program is administered by the South Dakota Firefighters Association and the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal.

#

Fire Department	Award
Aberdeen Rural VFD	\$7,775.00
Academy VFD	\$18,000.00
Akaska VFD	\$33,300.00
Alcester VFD	\$33,300.00
Alexandria VFD	\$18,000.00
Alpena VFD	\$12,735.00
Andover VFD	\$21,600.00
Angostura VFD	\$9,287.00
Argyle VFD	\$18,000.00
Arlington VFD	\$6,137.50
Armour VFD	\$22,500.00
Artesian VFD	\$22,500.00
Ashton VFD	\$11,925.00
Astoria VFD	\$13,050.00
Aurora VFD	\$22,500.00
Avon VFD	\$22,500.00
Badger VFD	\$33,300.00
Baltic VFD	\$13,050.00
Batesland VFD	\$33,300.00
Belle Fourche VFD	\$18,000.00
Beresford VFD	\$22,500.00
Big Stone City VFD	\$13,050.00
Bison VFD	\$18,000.00
Blackhawk VFD	\$4,326.53
Blunt Rural VFD	\$15,170.00
Bonesteel VFD	\$22,500.00
Bowdle VFD	\$33,300.00
Box Elder VFD	\$13,940.00
Bradley VFD	\$18,000.00
Brandon VFD	\$9,600.00
Brandt VFD	\$15,854.50
Bridgewater VFD	\$22,500.00
Bristol VFD	\$33,300.00
Brookings VFD	\$9,990.00
Browns Valley VFD	\$33,300.00
Brownsville VFD	\$1,600.00
Bruce VFD	\$18,000.00
Bryant VFD	\$10,400.80

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Buffalo Rural VFD	\$33,300.00	Gayville VFD	\$40,500.00
Burke VFD	\$10,200.00	Geddes VFD	\$18,000.00
Camp Crook VFD	\$4,125.00	Gettysburg VFD	\$22,500.00
Canistota VFD	\$22,500.00	Glenham VFD	\$22,500.00
Canova VFD	\$22,500.00	Goodwin VFD	\$22,500.00
Castle Rock VFD	\$6,900.00	Gregory VFD	\$22,500.00
Cavour VFD	\$18,000.00	Groton Area VFD	\$22,500.00
Centerville VFD	\$7,500.00	Harrisburg VFD	\$22,500.00
Chamberlain VFD	\$22,500.00	Hartford VFD	\$18,237.50
Chancellor VFD	\$14,310.00	Hayti VFD	\$22,500.00
Claire City VFD	\$22,500.00	Hazel VFD	\$18,000.00
Claremont VFD	\$16,357.70	Hecla VFD	\$15,120.00
Clark VFD	\$18,000.00	Henry VFD	\$22,500.00
Colman VFD	\$8,505.00	Herreid VFD	\$30,192.00
Colome VFD	\$7,548.00	Highmore VFD	\$19,480.50
Colton VFD	\$15,350.00	Hill City VFD	\$10,430.00
Columbia VFD	\$16,200.00	Hitchcock VFD	\$13,050.00
Corona VFD	\$18,000.00	Hosmer Rural VFD	\$18,000.00
Corsica VFD	\$14,400.00	Hot Springs VFD	\$18,000.00
Cresbard VFD	\$33,300.00	Hoven VFD	\$18,000.00
Crooks VFD	\$14,280.00	Hudson VFD	\$29,497.51
Custer VFD	\$12,900.00	Humboldt VFD	\$22,500.00
Dante VFD	\$10,350.00	Hurley VFD	\$16,200.00
De Smet VFD	\$3,750.00	Huron Rural VFD	\$33,300.00
Deadwood VFD	\$14,400.00	Ipswich VFD	\$13,218.00
Dell Rapids VFD	\$22,500.00	Irene VFD	\$22,500.00
Delmont VFD	\$16,901.60	Iroquois VFD	\$22,500.00
Doland VFD	\$40,500.00	Isabel VFD	\$22,500.00
Doty VFD	\$22,500.00	Java VFD	\$17,836.96
Eagle Butte VFD	\$11,437.50	Jefferson VFD	\$22,500.00
Eden VFD	\$18,000.00	Johnson Siding VFD	\$22,500.00
Edgemont VFD	\$22,500.00	Kadoka VFD	\$33,300.00
Elk Point VFD	\$22,500.00	Kennebec VFD	\$15,873.00
Elkton VFD	\$18,000.00	Kimball VFD	\$3,596.00
Enning VFD	\$33,300.00	Lake Andes VFD	\$22,500.00
Estelline VFD	\$11,100.00	Lake Norden VFD	\$40,500.00
Ethan VFD	\$22,500.00	Lake Preston VFD	\$11,100.00
Eureka VFD	\$2,360.70	Langford VFD	\$19,000.00
Fairburn VFD	\$33,300.00	Lead VFD	\$8,565.50
Fairfax VFD	\$19,388.00	Lemmon VFD	\$16,576.00
Faulkton VFD	\$22,500.00	Lennox VFD	\$10,748.50
Fedora VFD	\$22,500.00	Leola VFD	\$40,500.00
Florence VFD	\$22,500.00	Lesterville VFD	\$22,500.00
Fort Pierre VFD	\$18,000.00	Letcher VFD	\$33,300.00
Frankfort VFD	\$9,361.00	Lodgepole VFD	\$720.00
Frederick VFD	\$22,500.00	Long Lake VFD	\$2,598.43
Freeman VFD	\$33,300.00	Ludlow VFD	\$21,423.00
Garden City VFD	\$22,500.00	Lyons VFD	\$22,500.00
Garretson VFD	\$13,050.00	Madison VFD	\$33,300.00
Gary VFD	\$4,680.00	Marion VFD	\$22,107.50

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Martin VFD	\$40,500.00	Ree Heights VFD	\$33,300.00
Marvin VFD	\$22,500.00	Reliance VFD	\$22,500.00
McIntosh VFD	\$33,300.00	Renner VFD	\$33,300.00
McLaughlin VFD	\$15,133.00	Rochford VFD	\$15,614.00
Mellette VFD	\$22,500.00	Rockerville VFD	\$27,935.00
Menno VFD	\$20,112.50	Roscoe VFD	\$29,470.50
Milbank VFD	\$22,500.00	Rosebud Sioux	
Milesville VFD	\$22,500.00	Tribes VFD	\$33,300.00
Miller VFD	\$33,300.00	Roslyn VFD	\$22,500.00
Minnekahta VFD	\$22,500.00	Salem VFD	\$2,400.00
Mission VFD	\$18,000.00	Scenic VFD	\$22,500.00
Mobridge VFD	\$19,471.50	Scotland VFD	\$18,000.00
Monroe VFD	\$6,068.00	Selby VFD	\$13,050.00
Montrose VFD	\$21,362.50	Seneca VFD	\$18,000.00
Mound City VFD	\$11,660.00	Silver City VFD	\$22,500.00
Mt. Vernon VFD	\$7,200.00	Sinai VFD	\$10,440.00
Murdo VFD	\$22,500.00	Sisseton VFD	\$33,300.00
Nemo VFD	\$33,300.00	Sorum VFD	\$6,119.65
New Effington VFD	\$22,500.00	South Hand VFD	\$15,632.50
New Underwood VFD	\$33,300.00	South Shore VFD	\$20,375.00
Newell VFD	\$22,500.00	Spencer VFD	\$18,648.00
Nisland-Arpan VFD	\$33,300.00	Split Rock VFD	\$12,137.50
North Haines VFD	\$22,500.00	Springfield VFD	\$40,500.00
North Marshal VFD	\$22,500.00	St. Onge VFD	\$22,500.00
North Sioux City VFD	\$22,500.00	Stickney VFD	\$18,000.00
Northville VFD	\$22,500.00	Stockholm VFD	\$22,500.00
Nunda VFD	\$19,462.50	Stratford VFD	\$14,662.76
Oelrichs VFD	\$13,050.00	Sturgis VFD	\$22,500.00
Oldham VFD	\$15,688.00	Summit VFD	\$18,900.00
Onaka VFD	\$33,300.00	Sunset Colony VFD	\$4,033.00
Onida VFD	\$33,300.00	Tabor VFD	\$23,051.00
Orient VFD	\$15,875.00	Tea VFD	\$8,312.50
Parker VFD	\$23,088.00	Timber Lake VFD	\$22,500.00
Parkston VFD	\$33,300.00	Toronto VFD	\$9,715.00
Parmelee VFD	\$4,203.20	Town & Country VFD	\$33,300.00
Philip VFD	\$33,300.00	Trent VFD	\$22,500.00
Piedmont VFD	\$22,500.00	Tripp VFD	\$22,500.00
Pierpont VFD	\$33,300.00	Tulare VFD	\$33,300.00
Pierre Rural VFD	\$12,210.00	Turton VFD	\$22,500.00
Pierre VFD	\$13,050.00	Vale VFD	\$33,300.00
Plankinton VFD	\$22,500.00	Valley Springs VFD	\$18,000.00
Platte VFD	\$8,075.00	Veblen VFD	\$16,350.00
Pollock VFD	\$22,500.00	Vermillion VFD	\$22,500.00
Quinn VFD	\$22,500.00	Viborg VFD	\$24,679.00
Ramona VFD	\$16,350.00	Vivian VFD	\$4,440.00
Rapid Valley VFD	\$33,300.00	Volga VFD	\$7,200.00
Ravinia VFD	\$22,500.00	Wagner VFD	\$19,950.00
Raymond VFD	\$22,181.50	Wakonda VFD	\$22,500.00
Redfield Rural VFD	\$1,687.50	Wallace VFD	\$21,600.00

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Warner VFD	\$22,500.00
Wasta VFD	\$1,750.00
Waubay VFD	\$33,300.00
Wessington	
Springs VFD	\$22,500.00
Wessington VFD	\$15,810.00
White Lake VFD	\$13,050.00
White River VFD	\$18,037.50
White VFD	\$18,000.00
Willow Lake VFD	\$22,500.00
Wilmot VFD	\$13,050.00
Winner VFD.....	\$13,050.00
Wispering Pines VFD	\$18,000.00
Witten VFD	\$18,000.00
Wolsey VFD	\$22,500.00
Wood VFD	\$18,000.00
Worthing VFD	\$22,500.00
Yankton VFD	\$1,987.50



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State seeks sponsors for federal food program after declining separate funding source

\$7.5 million for hungry kids left on table in 2023 as school lunch debate looms

BY: JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 1, 2023 5:06 PM

After the state turned down federal funding for summertime child food vouchers, the South Dakota Department of Education is seeking sponsors for another program that provides summer meals to needy children.

Sponsors feed kids who qualify for free or reduced price lunch during the school year, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture reimburses sponsors. According to a Wednesday news release, sponsorships are available for Bennett, Bon Homme, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Custer, Gregory, McCook, Meade, Oglala Lakota, and Stanley counties.

Potential sponsors must complete a screening survey by Feb. 1 to be considered.

The ask comes after South Dakota's decision not to deliver \$7.5 million in food vouchers to more than 60,000 kids in the summer of 2023.

That money was available through a separate USDA program called Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), launched during the pandemic and made permanent this year.

South Dakota was one of seven states to opt out.

Unlike the summer food program now seeking brick-and-mortar hosts for meals, the summer EBT doesn't tie food aid to location. Instead, it offers EBT cards worth \$40 per child per month to eligible families through the summer, which can be used to buy fresh or packaged food, but not hot foods.

The state signed on for pandemic EBT in 2020 and 2021, but not in 2022 or 2023.

Gov. Kristi Noem's spokesperson, Ian Fury, told South Dakota New Watch in August that because of "South Dakota's record low unemployment rate, our robust existing food programs, and the administrative burden associated with running this program, we declined these particular federal dollars."

The site-based summer food program is not meant to be the only way to provide meals to kids when school's out, said Nancy Van Der Weide, spokesperson for the Department of Education.

"It is a stop-gap to help those kids who fall through the cracks — the ones who, for whatever reason, are not able to access food via SNAP," she said via email, referring to the Supplemental Nutrition Assis-



Students get their lunch at a primary school in Atlanta, Georgia. (Amanda Mills/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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tance Program.

Offering food, as opposed to money for food, "ensures that the meals these children eat are balanced and nutritious, and that meals are available throughout the month rather than until the money runs out."

"Doing it this way also ensures that money is used efficiently for food that goes to children first. Many schools also operate summer feeding programs from their buildings to achieve the same ends."

Critics: Denying funds indefensible

The programs are not an either/or proposition, however. The state could take advantage of both if it chose to. While the pandemic EBT program is over and the deadline for the first 2024 summer EBT is fast approaching, USDA guidance says that states could opt in to the program in future years.

The South Dakota arm of the nonprofit group Bread for the World has urged state residents to ask Gov. Noem and Education Secretary Joe Graves to accept the funds for next summer.

The site-based summer food program is helpful but doesn't touch all South Dakotans, the organization says, particularly those unable to access meal sites.

"Neither program by itself is enough to cover a child's nutritional needs," the organization's website says. "Kids need both."

Cathy Brechtelsbauer, Bread for the World South Dakota's leader, cited a report from the Food Research & Action Center that says just 5.5% of the children who receive free or reduced price school lunch are fed through site-based programs.

Turning away funding is indefensible, according to Brechtelsbauer.

"How can they turn down food for kids who are hungry?" she said.

She was among the signatories of a Nov. 20 letter urging the state to reverse course on the EBT funds. The other name on the letter was Xanna Burg, Director of South Dakota Kids Count.

"South Dakota has not yet committed for 2024," the letter reads. "There is still time to commit so that school-age children will not miss out on critical nutrition support during the hungriest time of the year."

Thirty-nine other organizations are listed on the letter. Among them: Augustana University, the American Heart Association, Sioux Falls Thrive, the Boys and Girls Club of Standing Rock, South Dakota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota.

Fury, the governor's spokesman, told South Dakota Searchlight via text on Thursday that he stands by the administration's earlier explanation for declining the federal funds.

Brechtelsbauer called the reference to federal requirements and administrative burdens a smokescreen.

"Forty-three other states did this, so we could figure out how to do it in South Dakota," Brechtelsbauer said. "If we can't, we've got a much bigger problem."

School lunch debate looms for 2024 session

The question of who ought to pay to feed hungry kids has become a recurring one for lawmakers and their communities in recent years.

Earlier this week, the Sioux Falls School District announced that it had secured a donor to cover unpaid balances for 1,800 students whose parents hadn't kept up with school lunch payments. Sioux Falls Simplified reported that the debt from unpaid lunch accounts has accrued at about \$3,000 a day. Without the donor, the district could have ended the year with as much as \$500,000 in school lunch debt.

Moving forward, kids whose lunch accounts fall \$20 in the red will be served a sack lunch. A \$75 negative balance will cut off meals altogether.

State Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, who brought a bill in the 2023 session that would have offered free school lunch to all children regardless of income, took to X (formerly Twitter) to express her consternation over news of a private donor paying off lunch debt.

"That should be the government's responsibility," she wrote. "It is cruel and, frankly, unbelievable that South Dakota kids can go hungry during the day if their parents fall behind on payments."

Her bill to provide free school lunch for all failed in the House Education Committee. The Department of Education opposed the bill.

Wittman plans to introduce a "scaled back" version of the bill in the 2024 session.

"Last year's bill was way too optimistic. I realize that South Dakota is not ready to offer free school lunches," Wittman said.

Rather than cover school lunch for all, her new proposal would essentially offer free meals to students who currently qualify for reduced price lunches by reimbursing schools for the reduced price charges. Families whose incomes are between 135% and 185% of the federal poverty line qualify for reduced price lunch; those with incomes lower than 135% of the poverty line qualify for free lunch.

Wittman is hopeful that a coalition of supporters will help move her fellow lawmakers to support the bill, which is estimated to cost \$578,916 annually – millions less than last year's proposal.

According to a pre-session information sheet on the bill, its cosponsors will include Tyler Tordsen, R-Sioux Falls, Sen. Liz Larson, D-Sioux Falls, and Sen. Mike Rohl, R-Aberdeen.

At least one other school lunch proposal will not appear before lawmakers in 2024, however.

Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence, had signaled plans to introduce a bill, according to the Argus Leader, that would have paid for lunch for K-8 students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Deutsch has since decided not to pursue the bill. The lawmaker told South Dakota Searchlight that concerns about a leaner budget, signaled by Gov. Noem in her weekly column in late October, have convinced him to table the proposal for now.

"Given our budget tightness, I thought this was probably not the year to bring it," Deutsch said.

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

SD Rep. Johnson votes for expulsion as House boots Santos from office

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - DECEMBER 1, 2023 11:15 AM

WASHINGTON — New York Republican George Santos on Friday became the sixth lawmaker in history and the first member of the GOP to be expelled from the U.S. House of Representatives.

The 311-114 bipartisan vote, which required two-thirds support, followed months of scandal that culminated in a federal criminal indictment and a damning report from the House Ethics Committee. Two Democrats voted "present" and 105 Republicans voted for expulsion. Among those voting for expulsion were South Dakota Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson.

Several Republicans said during debate Thursday the lies Santos allegedly told to fundraise and get elected, as well as misuse of campaign funds, should bar him from finishing his term.

"He has manufactured his entire life to defraud the voters of his district an honest choice for a member of Congress," said New York Republican Rep. Marc Molinaro. "He has lied to donors and to colleagues, taking advantage of election law, using campaign funds to personally benefit himself. And he has defamed not only his office, but the institution itself."

Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. Susan Wild, the ranking member on the Ethics Committee, said during floor debate that Santos should no longer hold a seat in the House of Representatives.

"One of our most basic obligations as members of Congress is to adhere to the principle that public office is a public trust," Wild said. "As the Ethics Committee's report lays out in thorough detail, Mr. Santos has repeatedly, egregiously and brazenly violated the public's trust."

'Santos must be held accountable'

The five-page resolution that expelled Santos was sponsored by Ethics Committee Chair Michael Guest, a Mississippi Republican.

In addition to summarizing the panel's findings, the resolution stated that "Santos must be held accountable to the highest standards of conduct in order to safeguard the public's faith in this institution."

During floor debate, Guest said that Santos had lied about his education, employment by Citigroup and

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Goldman Sachs, his religion and having employees die at the Pulse nightclub shooting.

"While troubling, those lies did not justify his removal from this body," Guest said. "But these and other misleading statements reflect directly on Mr. Santos' credibility."

The Ethics Committee report, Guest said, detailed more egregious issues, including that Santos spent campaign funds on personal rent, personal credit card payments, luxury goods, Botox and the website OnlyFans. The report also alleges Santos made fictitious loans to his campaign account that he later paid himself back for.

"In addition to these questionable expenses, there were travel expenses, questionable expenses involving trips to Atlantic City, Las Vegas, Nevada and the Hamptons," Guest said.



Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., is surrounded by journalists as he leaves the U.S. Capitol after his fellow members of Congress voted to expel him from the House of Representatives on Dec. 1, 2023, in Washington, D.C. (Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images)

Santos, Gaetz urge against expulsion

Santos, who is 35 years old, has defended himself throughout the months-long saga, and held a press conference Thursday morning to rebuke efforts to remove him as a U.S. lawmaker before his criminal case goes to trial.

"They are trying to join me to the group of three Confederates and two people convicted in a court of law," Santos said, referring to other members expelled from the House. "I will be number six in the history, the first Republican, and the only one without a conviction or without having committed treason."

During floor debate, Santos criticized Guest for including a reference to sexual misconduct in the resolution the House voted on, even though the Ethics Committee didn't conclude that Santos had participated in such behavior.

"Am I guilty of a sexual harassment claim, or am I not? The report says I'm not, his filing on this expulsion resolution says I am," Santos said. "That is a very serious allegation, one that I sought to see the end of."

The Office of Congressional Ethics, Santos said, "sent a referral to the investigative subcommittee saying that they did not suggest further investigation into the matter because it lacked credibility."

"Yet, it sits on their expulsion resolution," Santos said. "I call that hypocrisy, more lying, more swamp behavior from this body."

Florida Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz said during floor debate that if Santos is convicted during an upcoming trial, the House should expel him, but urged his colleagues not to take that step before then.

"I rise not to defend George Santos, whoever he is, but to defend the very precedent that my colleagues are willing to shatter," he said.

Gaetz expressed frustration that the House had not taken a vote to expel New York Democratic Rep. Jamaal Bowman after he pleaded guilty to pulling a fire alarm in one of the House office buildings.

Gaetz also criticized the Senate for not voting to expel New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez, who

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was indicted in September on several charges, including conspiracy to commit bribery. Menendez received a superseding indictment in October that charged him with numerous other crimes, including acting as an unregistered foreign agent.

"Whatever Mr. Santos did with Botox or OnlyFans is far less concerning to me than the indictment against Senator Menendez," Gaetz said, referring to allegations that Santos used campaign funds to purchase cosmetic procedures and a subscription to the website that is predominantly known for pornography and other types of sex work.

Special election

The expulsion means that residents in New York's 3rd District will vote in a special election within the next few months to fill the seat that has swung between Democrats and Republicans over the years.

The district covers parts of Long Island, including a northeastern section of Queens and much of Nassau County.

Santos won election to his first term in November 2022, when he garnered about 20,000 more votes than his Democratic opponent.

The district was represented by Democratic lawmakers for the prior decade. Its residents were represented by a Republican from 1993 until 2013, though the shape of the district has changed somewhat over the years.

The election could further narrow Republicans' majority in the House, making it even more difficult for GOP leaders to pass partisan legislation.

The balance of power in the House changed to 221-213 following the expulsion vote, with Republicans holding just three more seats than required to pass legislation.

News reports questioned Santos resume

A small, local newspaper on Long Island, known as The North Shore Leader, was the first news organization to raise questions about Santos' resume and claims he was making on the campaign trail.

The paper published a story before the November 2022 election noting that Santos' personal financial disclosure report said he was worth about \$11 million, when the paperwork he filed two years earlier during another run for office said he didn't have any assets worth more than \$5,000.

The story also noted that Santos had previously reported \$600,000 in loans to his own campaign in reports to the Federal Election Commission, though he didn't include that in his personal financial disclosure report.

The article never gained much attention in national publications, but questions about Santos came to the forefront after The New York Times published a story in December 2022 alleging that Santos fabricated much of his resume.

Numerous other news organizations then began looking into Santos and published dozens of stories questioning claims he made during his campaign and after winning election.

DOJ charges

The press coverage garnered the attention of federal prosecutors as well as congressional investigators.

In May, the U.S. Justice Department indicted Santos on 13 criminal charges, including wire fraud, money laundering, theft of public funds and making materially false statements to the House of Representatives.

United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace said at the time the indictment charged Santos "with relying on repeated dishonesty and deception to ascend to the halls of Congress and enrich himself."

"He used political contributions to line his pockets, unlawfully applied for unemployment benefits that should have gone to New Yorkers who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and lied to the House of Representatives," Peace said.

In October, federal prosecutors filed an additional 10 charges in what's known as a superseding indictment.

Those included conspiracy to commit offenses against the United States, wire fraud, making materially false statements to the Federal Election Commission, falsifying records submitted to obstruct the FEC, aggravated identity theft, and access device fraud.

Peace said the new charges stemmed from Santos "stealing people's identities and making charges on

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his own donors' credit cards without their authorization, lying to the FEC and, by extension, the public about the financial state of his campaign."

"Santos falsely inflated the campaign's reported receipts with non-existent loans and contributions that were either fabricated or stolen," Peace said.

House Ethics report

The House Ethics Committee released its report in November following a months-long investigation into Santos.

The 56-page report said that Santos "sought to fraudulently exploit every aspect of his House candidacy for his own personal financial profit."

"He blatantly stole from his campaign. He deceived donors into providing what they thought were contributions to his campaign but were in fact payments for his personal benefit," the report says.

Santos "reported fictitious loans to his political committees to induce donors and party committees to make further contributions to his campaign — and then diverted more campaign money to himself as purported 'repayments' of those fictitious loans."

"He used his connections to high value donors and other political campaigns to obtain additional funds for himself through fraudulent or otherwise questionable business dealings," the report says. "And he sustained all of this through a constant series of lies to his constituents, donors, and staff about his background and experience."

History of House expulsions

Congress is granted the ability to "punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member," according to the U.S. Constitution.

The U.S. House has used its authority before Friday to expel five members, while the Senate has removed 15 lawmakers.

Three of the House members previously expelled — John B. Clark and John W. Reid of Missouri, and Henry C. Burnett of Kentucky — were kicked out for "disloyalty to the Union" in 1861 amid the Civil War.

In 1980, House lawmakers expelled Michael J. Myers of Pennsylvania for bribery, conspiracy and Travel Act violations.

In 2002, the House voted to remove James A. Traficant of Ohio for illegal gratuity, conspiracy, obstruction of justice, defrauding the government, racketeering and tax evasion violations.

Senators voted to expel 14 lawmakers turned Confederates between 1861 and 1862 for "disloyalty to the Union."

The other senator expelled, William Blount of Tennessee, was removed from Congress in 1797 for "disloyalty to the United States."

Blount, who was experiencing "serious financial difficulties," had "concocted a scheme for Indians and frontiersmen to attack Spanish Florida and Louisiana, in order to transfer those territories to Great Britain," according to the U.S. Senate Historical Office.

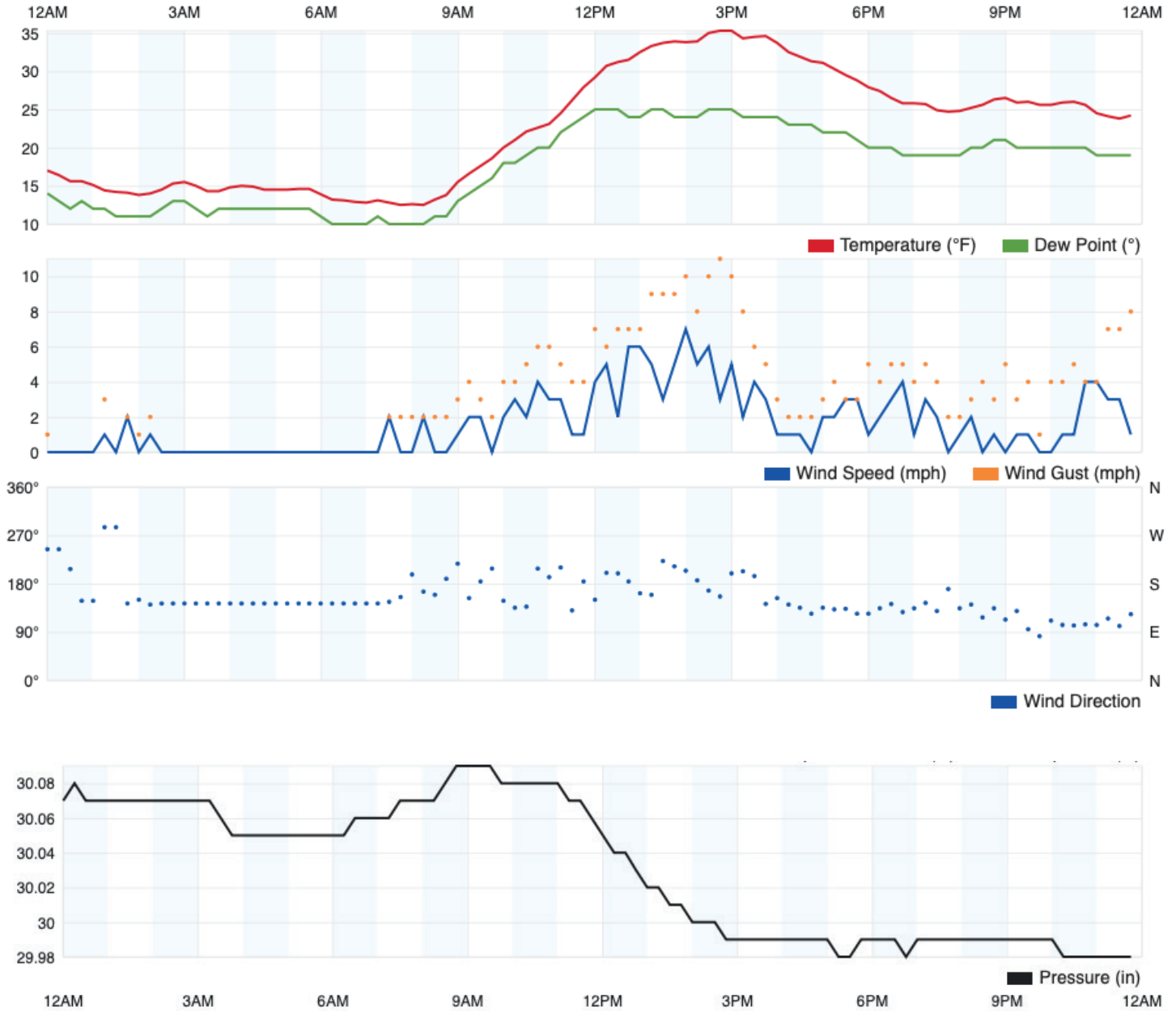
"Unfortunately for the senator, a letter, in which Blount thinly disguised his desire to arouse the Creek and Cherokee Indians to aid his plan, fell into the hands of Federalist president John Adams."

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sat Dec 2	Sun Dec 3	Mon Dec 4	Tue Dec 5	Wed Dec 6	Thu Dec 7	Fri Dec 8
						
37°F 19°F	38°F 21°F	46°F 23°F	39°F 26°F	52°F 32°F	53°F 33°F	46°F 27°F
SSE 11 MPH	S 6 MPH	SSW 16 MPH	NNW 7 MPH	S 11 MPH	SE 10 MPH	WNW 11 MPH

Gradually Warming Temperatures Through Early Next Week



•Today

- Partly-Mostly Cloudy
- Breezy Across Sisseton Hills
- Highs 34 to 43°F

•Tonight

- Clear-Partly Cloudy
- Light S-SW Winds
- Lows 15 to 22°F

•Sunday

- Partly-Mostly Cloudy
- Breezy Across Missouri Valley
- Highs 36 to 45°F

Seasonal temperatures and dry conditions will continue to persist across the area through the weekend. Breezy to windy conditions will be possible in a couple of spots today and Sunday where gusts could fall in a 20-30mph range. Temperatures will run a good 5-10 degrees above normal for early December.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36 °F at 2:50 PM

Low Temp: 12 °F at 7:47 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 2:43 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 1 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 56 in 2012

Record Low: -20 in 1896

Average High: 34

Average Low: 13

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.04

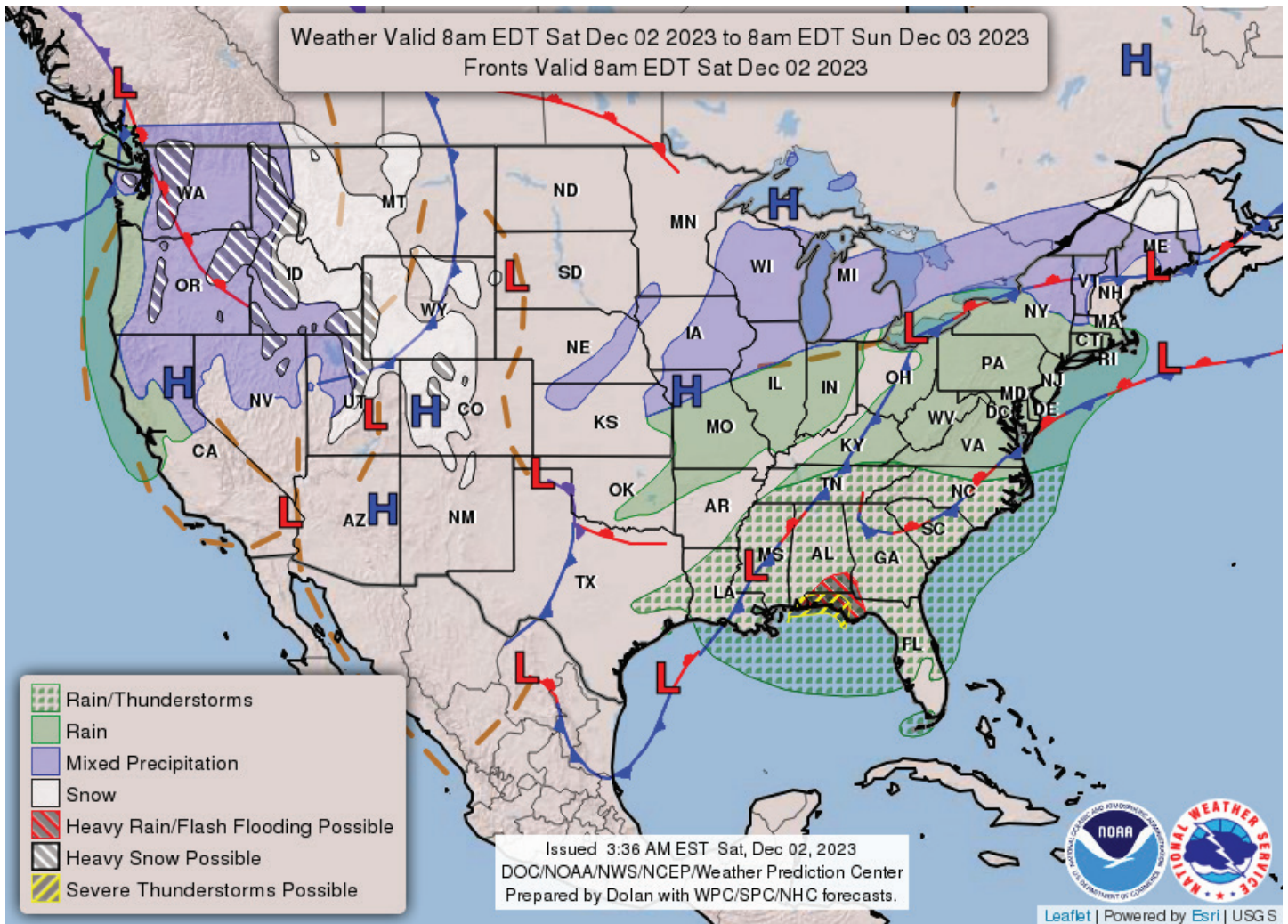
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.25

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:52:18 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:52:24 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 2, 1978: A low-pressure system moved northeast from Kansas, causing snow to fall over southern Minnesota south of a line from Alexandria to Duluth on the 2nd and 3rd, with the heaviest snow falling from west-central and southwest Minnesota to west-central Wisconsin. Snow depths of six inches or more fell in southwestern Minnesota, with 10 inches or more at Marshall, MN. Winds averaged near 20 mph, and temperatures ranged from 5 to 15 degrees above zero while the snow fell, but the snow did not cause extensive problems for the area. Wheaton had 2 inches, Artichoke Lake and Browns Valley had 3 inches.

December 2, 1984: Snow fell in the central and northeast parts of South Dakota from the late afternoon of the 1st to the morning of the 2nd, with amounts ranging from 3 to 10 inches. The most substantial amounts were in the northeast part of the state, with Day County reporting 8 to 10 inches. Five inches of snow fell at Clear Lake; six inches fell at Waubay, Clark, Miller, and 12 miles southwest of Harrold with 7 inches at Redfield.

1896: Early season snow and ice storm struck the southeastern U.S. Eleven inches of snow fell at Charlotte, NC, and 6 inches at Atlanta, GA.

1925 - A late season hurricane caused extensive damage across the Florida peninsula, then moved off the Georgia coast crossing Cape Hatteras as a tropical storm. The storm produced whole gales along the Middle Atlantic and Southern New England coast. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Block Island RI, and reached 64 mph at Atlantic City NJ. (David Ludlum)

1950 - A late season tornado killed four persons in Madison County and Bond County, east of St Louis MO. Three tornadoes touched down in Illinois that afternoon, compared to just half a dozen tornadoes in the month of December in 115 years of records up until that time. Thunderstorms also produced hail which caused more than four million dollars damage in the St Louis area, it was the most damaging hailstorm of record for Missouri. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1959: Between November 19 and December 2, an estimated 20 inches of rain fell near Frejus on the French Riviera. The rain caused the Malpasset Dam to collapse, which sent a 130-foot high wall of water into the towns of Malpasset and Bozon. The wall of water 10 feet tall reached Frejus, flooding the western half of the city. The dam breach killed 423 people and caused \$68 million in damages.

1968: The "Sacramento," a 250-foot fishing barge and former ferry between San Francisco and Oakland, succumb to a winter storm off Redondo Beach.

1970 - A tornado, 400 yards in width, touched down about one mile below the summit of Timpanogos Divide. Trees up to 18 inches in diameter were snapped, and some of the 38 inch snow cover was carried 1000 feet above the ground as the tornado traveled one mile. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A tornado destroyed a home four miles south of Eastwood MO. The owners were not injured in that tornado, but ironically one was killed Christmas Eve when another tornado hit the replacement mobile home on the same site. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm over the Gulf of Alaska continued to produced high winds and heavy rain along the northern and central Pacific coast. Winds gusted to 80 mph south of Port Orford OR, Stevens Pass WA was blanketed with sixteen inches of snow, and Blue Canyon CA was soaked with 1.63 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced ten inches of snow at Union City, PA. Gale force winds gusted to 55 mph at Buffalo NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls produced heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in Upper Michigan ranged up to 20 inches at Ironwood. Heavy snow and high winds caused 150 auto accidents in Michigan, resulting in sixteen deaths and 22 injuries. Strong northwesterly winds gusted to 73 mph at Johnstown PA, and Lowville PA received 20 inches of snow in 36 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Initially, He was named Jesus. Now we also call Him Christ.

Jesus was the name given to Him when He was born. It means the same as the Jewish name, Joshua, which literally means God is salvation! So, the message that God sent to Joseph through His angels was, "You shall call Him 'God is salvation' for He shall save His people from their sins." That name, Jesus, tells us all that we need to know because it reveals God's plan and purpose: God will save humanity through His only begotten Son.

Christ is more than a name. It is a title. It comes from the Greek word Christos, meaning "anointed" or "anointed one." Its meaning is the same as the Hebrew word Messiah. John quoted Andrew in a conversation that he had with his brother Peter. Said Andrew, "We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ)." So the terms Messiah and Christ are titles given to Jesus that assure us that He is the anointed one. Jesus is the One whom God anointed to fulfill the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament.

The name Jesus proves that He was human, lived life on our level and faced the same issues and problems that we face. But the title Christ assures us that this One, once called Jesus, can lift us up to God's level because He is the One whom God anointed to be our Savior.

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for what You did for us through Your Son, our Savior. We rejoice in Your love, mercy and grace that brought our salvation through Him. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).



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:
12.01.23

12 47 49 52 65 12

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$377,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

9 22 24 37 47 10

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,550,000

NEXT DRAW: 11 Hrs 45 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.01.23

15 33 34 41 43 17

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

7 8 14 20 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$73,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

9 13 16 30 36 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 29 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

6 47 50 61 68 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$400,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 29 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Freeman Academy-Marion 31, Colome 20

Garretson 56, Baltic 41

Great Plains Lutheran 60, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 24

Hanson 70, Kimball/White Lake 35

Yankton 33, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 20

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

Mayo scores 20 as South Dakota State downs Towson 61-48

By The Associated Press undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Zeke Mayo's 20 points helped South Dakota State defeat Towson 61-48 on Friday night.

Mayo shot 7 for 18 (1 for 9 from 3-point range) and 5 of 5 from the free throw line for the Jackrabbits (4-4). William Kyle III added 14 points while shooting 7 of 10 from the field, and they also had seven rebounds. Kalen Garry had 11 points and shot 4 for 7, including 3 for 6 from beyond the arc.

The Tigers (3-5) were led in scoring by Tyler Tejada, who finished with 13 points and seven rebounds. Tomiwa Sulaiman added 10 points, two steals and two blocks for Towson. Messiah Jones also had nine points.

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

US targets oil and natural gas industry's role in global warming with new rule on methane emissions

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Saturday issued a final rule aimed at reducing methane emissions, targeting the U.S. oil and natural gas industry for its role in global warming as President Joe Biden seeks to advance his climate legacy.

The Environmental Protection Agency said the rule will sharply reduce methane and other harmful air pollutants generated by the oil and gas industry, promote use of cutting-edge methane detection technologies and deliver significant public health benefits in the form of reduced hospital visits, lost school days and even deaths. Air pollution from oil and gas operations can cause cancer, harm the nervous and respiratory systems and contribute to birth defects.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan and White House climate adviser Ali Zaidi announced the final rule at the U.N. climate conference in the United Arab Emirates. Separately, the president of the climate summit announced Saturday that 50 oil companies representing nearly half of global production have pledged to reach near-zero methane emissions and end routine flaring in their operations by 2030.

Vice President Kamala Harris, the top American representative at the summit, said the U.S. and other nations must act boldly to confront the fallout from climate change.

"The urgency of this moment is clear," Harris said. "The clock is no longer just ticking. It is banging. And we must make up for lost time."

The U.S. rule on methane emissions is part of a broader effort by the Biden administration that includes

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financial incentives to buy electric vehicles and upgrade infrastructure — spending that Harris said will total roughly \$1 trillion over 10 years.

Oil and gas operations are the largest industrial source of methane, the main component in natural gas and far more potent than carbon dioxide in the short term. It is responsible for about one-third of planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions. Sharp cuts in methane emissions are a global priority to slow the rate of climate change and are a major topic at the conference, known as COP28.

Presidents, prime ministers and royals from nations rich and poor have vowed to reduce how much their countries spew heat-trapping gases and asked their colleagues to do better.

“On Day One, President Biden restored America’s critical role as the global leader in confronting climate change,” Regan said, referring to Biden’s actions returning the U.S. to the Paris climate agreement and ordering an immediate review of environmental regulations rolled back by the previous administration.

The methane rule finalizes a proposal Biden made at a UN climate conference in Scotland in 2021 and expanded a year later at a climate conference in Egypt. It targets emissions from existing oil and gas wells nationwide, rather than focusing only on new wells, as previous EPA regulations have done. It also regulates smaller wells that will be required to find and plug methane leaks. Such wells currently are subject to an initial inspection but are rarely checked again for leaks.

Studies have found that smaller wells produce just 6% of the nation’s oil and gas but account for up to half the methane emissions from well sites.

The plan also will phase in a requirement for energy companies to eliminate routine flaring of natural gas that is produced by new oil wells.

The new methane rule will help ensure that the United States meets a goal set by more than 100 nations to cut methane emissions by 30% by 2030 from 2020 levels, Regan said.

The EPA rule is just one of more than 100 actions the Biden administration has taken to reduce methane emissions, Zaidi added.

“From mobilizing billions in investment to plug orphaned wells, patch leaky pipes and reclaim abandoned mines, to setting strong standards that will cut pollution from the oil and gas sector, the Biden-Harris Administration is putting the full throw-weight of the federal government into slashing harmful methane pollution,” he said.

The new rule will be coordinated with a methane fee approved in the 2022 climate law. The fee, set to take effect next year, will charge energy producers that exceed a certain level of methane emissions as much as \$1,500 per metric ton of methane. The plan marks the first time the U.S. government has directly imposed a fee, or tax, on greenhouse gas emissions.

The law allows exemptions for companies that comply with the EPA’s standards or fall below a certain emissions threshold. It also includes \$1.5 billion in grants and other spending to help companies and local communities improve monitoring and data collection, and find and repair natural gas leaks.

Harold Wimmer, president and CEO of the American Lung Association, called the new rule a victory for public health.

“EPA heeded the urgent guidance of health experts across the country and finalized a strong methane rule that, when fully implemented, will significantly reduce hazardous air pollutants and climate-warming methane pollution from the oil and gas industry,” he said in a statement.

Methane has been shown to leak into the atmosphere during every stage of oil and gas production, Wimmer said, and “people who live near oil and gas wells are especially vulnerable to these exposure risks. This rule (is) vital to advancing environmental justice commitments.”

David Doniger, a climate expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, called methane a “super-polluter.” He said in an interview that the Biden plan “takes a very solid whack at climate pollution. I wish this had happened 10 years ago (under the Obama administration), but I’m really happy it’s happening now.”

Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund, said the new rule ensures that “the U.S. now has the most protective methane pollution limits on the books. With other countries also zeroing in on methane as a key climate risk, it’s a signal to operators worldwide that clean-up time is here,” he said.

The oil industry has generally welcomed direct federal regulation of methane emissions, preferring a

single national standard to a hodgepodge of state rules. Even so, energy companies have asked EPA to exempt hundreds of thousands of the nation's smallest wells from the pending methane rules.

Israeli offensive shifts to crowded southern Gaza, driving up death toll despite evacuation orders

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMY MAGDY and DAVID RISING Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel pounded targets in the crowded southern half of the Gaza Strip on Saturday and ordered more neighborhoods designated for attack to evacuate, driving up the death toll even as the United States and others urged it to do more to protect Gaza civilians a day after a truce collapsed.

At least 200 Palestinians have been killed since the fighting resumed Friday morning following the week-long truce with the territory's ruling militant group Hamas, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza. Several homes were hit across Gaza on Saturday, with multiple casualties reported in a strike that flattened a house on the outskirts of Gaza City.

Separately, the ministry announced that the overall death toll in Gaza since the Oct. 7 start of the Israel-Hamas war surpassed 15,200, a sharp jump from the previous count of more than 13,300 on Nov. 20. The ministry stopped issuing daily updates of the overall toll on Nov. 11, following war-related disruptions of connectivity and hospital operations.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it said Saturday that 70% of the dead were women and children. It also said more than 40,000 people had been wounded since the start of the war.

With the end of the truce, Israel has been urged by the United States, its closest ally, to do more to protect Palestinian civilians.

The appeal came after a blistering air and ground offensive in the first weeks of the war devastated large areas of northern Gaza, killing thousands of Palestinians and displacing hundreds of thousands. Some 2 million Palestinians, almost the entire population of Gaza, are now crammed into the territory's southern half.

It was not clear if Israel's military would heed appeals to spare civilians. The military said Saturday that it hit more than 400 Hamas targets across Gaza over the past day, using airstrikes and shelling from tanks and navy gunships. It included more than 50 strikes in the city of Khan Younis and surrounding areas in the southern half of Gaza.

At least nine people, including three children, were killed in a strike on a house in Deir al-Balah city in the south, according to the hospital where the bodies were taken. The hospital also received seven bodies of others killed in overnight airstrikes, including two children.

In northern Gaza, an airstrike flattened a residential building hosting displaced families in the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya on the outskirts of Gaza City. The strike on the multi-story building left dozens dead or wounded, said residents Hamza Obeid and Amal Radwan.

"There was a loud bang, then the building turned into a pile of rubble," Obeid said.

Meanwhile, Palestinian militant groups in Gaza said they fired a barrage of rockets on southern Israel. Sirens were heard in communities near the Gaza Strip but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

In the clearest sign yet that a return to negotiations for further truces was unlikely, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu directed negotiators to return to Israel.

With the resumption of fighting, the Israeli military published an online map carving up the Gaza Strip into hundreds of numbered parcels and asked residents to familiarize themselves with the number of their location ahead of evacuation warnings.

On Saturday, the military used the map for the first time, listing more than two dozen parcel numbers in areas around Gaza City in the north and east of Khan Younis. Separately, the military dropped leaflets with evacuation orders over towns east of Khan Younis.

One Khan Younis resident said a neighbor received a call from the Israeli army warning that houses in

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the area would be hit and everyone should leave. "We told them, 'We have nothing here, why do you want to strike it?'" said the resident, Hikmat al-Qidra. They eventually left, and al-Qidra said the house was destroyed.

The maps and leaflets generated panic and confusion, especially in the crowded south. Unable to go to northern Gaza or neighboring Egypt, their only escape is to move around within the 220-square-kilometer (85-square-mile) area.

"There is no place to go," said Emad Hajar, who fled with his wife and three children from the north a month ago to Khan Younis. "They expelled us from the north, and now they are pushing us to leave the south."

Amal Radwan, who sheltered in the Jabaliya refugee camp, said she wasn't aware of such a map, adding that she and many others were not able to leave because of the relentless bombardment. "Here is death and there is death," she said.

Israel says it is targeting Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the militants, accusing them of operating in residential neighborhoods. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence. Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive in northern Gaza.

Also Saturday, the Palestinian Red Crescent said it had received aid trucks through the Rafah crossing, the first convoy since fighting resumed. Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority, said 50 trucks were scheduled to enter Gaza but that there were no fuel trucks among them.

"Current conditions do not allow for a meaningful humanitarian response, and I fear will spell disaster for the civilian population," Pascal Hundt, in charge of operations in Gaza for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, who was in Dubai on Saturday for the COP28 climate conference, said in a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi that "under no circumstances" would the United States permit the forced relocation of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank, the besiegement of Gaza or the redrawing of its borders, according to a U.S. summary of the meeting.

Harris was expected to outline proposals with regional leaders to "put Palestinian voices at the center" of planning the next steps for the Gaza Strip after the conflict, according to the White House. President Joe Biden's administration has emphasized the need for an eventual two-state solution, with Israel and a Palestinian state coexisting.

The Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in southern Israel, and around 240 people were taken captive.

The renewed hostilities have heightened concerns for 136 hostages who, according to the Israeli military, are still held by Hamas and other militants after 105 were freed during the truce.

For families of remaining hostages, the truce's collapse was a blow to hopes that their loved ones could be the next out. A 70-year-old woman held by Hamas was declared dead on Saturday, according to her kibbutz, bringing the total number of known dead hostages to eight.

During the truce, Israel freed 240 Palestinians from its prisons. Most of those released by both sides were women and children.

Developing nations press rich world to better fight climate change at U.N. climate summit

By JAMEY KEATEN and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Countries once colonized by empires are striking back on global warming — and they have the pope's blessing.

Leaders of developing nations jumped into Saturday's second-day of high-level speeches at the U.N. climate summit to press rich industrial countries to share their knowhow to fight global warming and ease the financial burdens they face — while trumpeting their own natural resources that swallow heat-trapping carbon in the air.

The 28th annual U.N. Conference of the Parties, or COP28, in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates featured

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about 150 presidents, prime ministers, royals and other leaders who are presenting their plans to cut heat-trapping emissions and mostly seek unity with other nations to avert climate catastrophe that seemed to draw closer than ever in 2023.

Injecting moral authority into the talks, Pope Francis said "the destruction of the environment is an offense against God" in a letter read on his behalf because he had to cancel plans to attend because of a lung inflammation.

In the letter read by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Francis noted that almost all of the world that's "needy" is "responsible for scarcely 10% of toxic emissions, while the gap between the opulent few and the masses of the poor has never been so abysmal."

"The poor are the real victims of what is happening: we need think only of the plight of Indigenous peoples, deforestation, the tragedies of hunger, water and food insecurity, and forced migration," the pope's letter said.

Several African leaders noted their continent's rainforests help gobble up excess carbon dioxide in the air and emphasized how their countries belch out only a tiny fraction of heat-trapping emissions compared to richer countries.

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea — one of sub-Saharan Africa's biggest oil producers — faulted developed nations for failing to deliver on their pledges to meet their commitments on financing for climate action and meet their own targets to curb their industries' emissions.

President Jose Ramos Horta of Timor-Leste, next to Indonesia and north of Australia, blasted "shark loans" from multilateral lending institutions, saying developing nations cannot recover from heavy debt burdens that squelch their ability to put money into fighting climate change and grow economically.

Later Saturday, 50 oil companies — representing nearly half of global production — pledged to reach near-zero methane emissions and end routine flaring in their operations by 2030, Sultan al-Jaber, the president of this year's United Nations climate talks, said. The companies also signed up to reach "net zero" for their operational emissions by 2050.

The pledge includes national oil companies like Saudi Arabia's Aramco, Brazil's Petrobras, and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., of which al-Jaber is head, as well as multi-nationals like Shell, BP and TotalEnergies.

But a letter signed by over 300 civil society groups criticized the announcement as a "smokescreen to hide the reality that we need to phase out oil, gas and coal."

With U.S. President Joe Biden staying home, Kamala Harris became the first vice president to lead America's delegation since Al Gore — now a major climate activist — at COP3 in 1997.

She said the United States is pledging \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund, which helps developing countries access capital to invest in clean energy and "nature-based solutions," cautioned that the world was facing a "pivotal moment" in the fight against global warming. In a statement, the U.S. Treasury said the pledge is subject to funding availability.

Harris also said the U.S. was joining 115 nations in a commitment to double energy efficiency and triple renewable energy capacity by 2030, saying her country was on track to meet those goals because of investments like building 30 gigawatts of solar energy and laying thousands of miles of more efficient high voltage transmission lines.

"We understand the whole world will benefit from our work," she said. "When the United States increases renewable energy production and innovation, it lowers the costs and boosts the efficiency of renewable energy technology around the globe."

Earlier on Saturday, as Harris made her way toward the Dubai venue, U.S. climate envoy John Kerry joined French President Emmanuel Macron to push for development of nuclear energy, which doesn't produce greenhouse gas emissions, even if it also presents security and waste challenges.

Overall, a group of more than 20 nations called for a tripling of nuclear energy generated in the world by 2050.

"I want here to reiterate the fact that nuclear energy is a clean energy and it should be repeated," said Macron, whose country gets around two-thirds of its electricity from nuclear power, the most of any in-

dustrialized country, and exports some of it to France's neighbors.

A declaration issued at the event did not specify how much money should be set aside, but urged the World Bank and others to "encourage" expanding lending for nuclear projects.

Kerry later announced that the U.S. was joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which means the administration commits to building no new coal plants and phasing out existing plants. It's in line with other Biden regulatory actions and international commitments already in the works had meant no coal by 2035.

Whatever their perspective or national interest, leaders almost universally voiced their shared views that Earth is in crisis — with the United Nations and other environmental groups warning that the planet has recorded the nine hottest years on record over the last decade.

Bolivian Vice President David Choquehuanca called for "saving Mother Earth and staving off the multiple crises which have been caused by neocolonial, capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal, Western culture."

"The climate crisis is but the latest chapter in a long history of hypocrisy and lies: The 'Global North' is responsible for the global imbalance that we're seeing," he said, using a catchall term for industrialized countries. "They seek permanent growth to the detriment of the global South."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said science shows that the world needs to "step up the pace" to battle climate change, but took a more upbeat tone, saying: "We have what it takes to meet these challenges. We have the technologies: wind power, photovoltaics, e-mobility, green hydrogen."

He said demand for fossil fuels has slowed and the peak is "in sight."

With 'shuttle diplomacy,' step by step, Kissinger chased the possible in the Mideast

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press Writer

LONDON (AP) — When it came to the Middle East, Henry Kissinger wasn't pushing for peace — only for what was possible.

By the time Kissinger died Wednesday at 100, the agreements he negotiated as United States secretary of state between Israel, Egypt and Syria stabilized borders for nearly half a century after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. His work and the pacts it produced sidelined the Soviet Union and set the U.S. as the region's chief negotiator.

But Kissinger did not resolve the fate of the Palestinians — indeed, no one has — and his legacy in the Mideast remains debated.

He saw decades of Israeli occupation and growing rage among Palestinians and lived long enough to see Hamas fighters storm out of the Gaza Strip Oct. 7 and kill about 1,200 people in Israel on the bloodiest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

Kissinger, a Jew who fled Nazi Germany with his family when he was 15, posed a query two weeks before his death about whether Israel can now deal with not just threats from states like Iran, but also the fury of militants that was evident in the Oct. 7 rampage.

"In the Middle East, a barbaric attack by terrorists has redefined the problem for Israel and its allies," Kissinger said in remarks prepared for an Oct. 19 speech at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation dinner in New York. In the remarks, posted on his website but not delivered in full, he said the United States must continue to support Israel and revitalize its role as a direct negotiator in the region, something he worked to establish after the 1973 war.

"The immediate question is whether the Jewish state can fulfill its aspirations for freedom in the face of these accumulated arms, both to the north and to the south," Kissinger added, "and the seemingly implacable hostility to Israel of some Palestinians that produced this latest disaster."

AN APPROACH OF SMALL STEPS

As he spoke, Israel was pounding the Gaza Strip with airstrikes in its hunt for Hamas militants even as they held scores of hostages. Israel's campaign to wipe out Hamas has killed at least 15,200 people in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip and displaced more than three-quarters of the enclave's 2.3 million people.

Kissinger likely would have approached the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the same way that he steered

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the aftermath of the 1973 war, according to his biographer: "Incrementally," Martin Indyk, former U.S. ambassador to Israel, wrote in a column Thursday.

Leaders throughout history, Kissinger recognized, have leaned toward putting their names on the conclusion of conflicts and peace accords.

"That instinct needed to be resisted, Kissinger believed, because giving in to it was more likely to lead to more war," Indyk wrote. "He called this 'the paradox of peace.'"

When Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 6, 1973, then-U.S. President Richard Nixon was distracted by the Watergate scandal that would lead to his resignation. Kissinger, his secretary of state, convened a group of trusted policy advisers. What followed was a Cold War-era drama that would serve American interests — a key component of Kissinger's practice of realpolitik.

"The decision was to take advantage of the Egyptian attack to promote a political process," Kissinger told The Jerusalem Post in September, describing the war that began on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. "We were determined from the beginning to prevent an Arab victory, which we looked at as a Soviet victory."

Then as now, the fight raged over who controlled which pieces of land. Egypt and Syria fought to take back the Golan Heights and the Sinai peninsula, territory that Israel had claimed with east Jerusalem in the 1967 war.

Sixteen days after the surprise attack on Israel, Kissinger negotiated a cease-fire. He then embarked on a campaign that did not establish comprehensive peace but instead set a process that made the warring states feel protected. Kissinger communicated the process with a diplomatic shorthand that has since entered the lexicon of broader conflict resolution.

Via "shuttle diplomacy," the gravelly-voiced diplomat traveled a relentless circuit between the countries in conflict to haggle in person with their leaders. He carried out the agenda step by step, rather than a lunge toward peace.

Such a process, Kissinger reasoned, "would ameliorate conflict and buy time for the warring parties to come to terms with one another, learn to live together and eventually, end their conflict," Indyk wrote in a column Friday in The Washington Post.

"The greatest art of the activities in which we were engaged diplomatically was to induce (the Arab states) to accept a partial withdrawal in return for precise political conditions that for Israel represented an augmentation of its security," Kissinger told The Jerusalem Post.

A FRAGILE WAY FORWARD

Over the next two years, Kissinger negotiated two disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel and a third between Israel and Syria, which paved the way for some other Arab states to strike peace treaties with Israel — such as Egypt's in 1979 under President Jimmy Carter — and sign normalization agreements known as the Abraham Accords.

"He laid the cornerstone of the peace agreement, which was later signed with Egypt, and so many other processes around the world I admire," said Israeli President Isaac Herzog, appearing this week with Kissinger's modern-day counterpart, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Kissinger's legacy, like the Mideast itself, remains a raw point of debate. Salim Yaqub, a professor at the University of California Santa Barbara who specializes in history and U.S. foreign relations, said Kissinger's work to subtract Egypt from the conflict was destructive to the prospects for other Arab states and Palestinians to gain traction in conflicts with Israel.

"You can't blame everything on Henry Kissinger," Yaqub said. Kissinger's diplomacy "did reduce the likelihood of another full-scale Arab-Israeli war. It also made it really difficult, and some would argue impossible, to address the underlying issue between Israel and its Arab neighbors," he said.

"It's not just weakening the remaining Arab countries, but also ensuring that the Palestinians would be sidelined from Arab-Israeli diplomacy," he added.

Kissinger focused on established, formal entities — settling conflicts between states. Non-state actors, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization at the time, and Hamas today, were to be neutralized, Indyk wrote.

Were he here to counsel on the Israel-Hamas war, Indyk said, Kissinger would look to Israel's neighboring states to reestablish order. Kissinger's incremental process would give Palestinians the "attributes of statehood" as a path to a two-state solution — someday.

Brian Katulis, vice president of policy for the Middle East Institute in Washington, said Kissinger's key misstep in the region was one that did not go away when his tenure as secretary of state ended in 1977.

"Kissinger not seeing the Palestinian people as part of the equation," Katulis said, "is an error that almost every single one of his successors made."

Teen girls are being victimized by deepfake nudes. One family is pushing for more protections

By HALELUYA HADERO The Associated Press

A mother and her 14-year-old daughter are advocating for better protections for victims after AI-generated nude images of the teen and other female classmates were circulated at a high school in New Jersey.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, officials are investigating an incident involving a teenage boy who allegedly used artificial intelligence to create and distribute similar images of other students — also teen girls — that attend a high school in suburban Seattle, Washington.

The disturbing cases have put a spotlight yet again on explicit AI-generated material that overwhelmingly harms women and children and is booming online at an unprecedented rate. According to an analysis by independent researcher Genevieve Oh that was shared with the Associated Press, more than 143,000 new deepfake videos were posted online this year, which surpasses every other year combined.

Desperate for solutions, affected families are pushing lawmakers to implement robust safeguards for victims whose images are manipulated using new AI models, or the plethora of apps and websites that openly advertise their services. Advocates and some legal experts are also calling for federal regulation that can provide uniform protections across the country and send a strong message to current and would-be perpetrators.

"We're fighting for our children," said Dorota Mani, whose daughter was one of the victims in Westfield, a New Jersey suburb outside of New York City. "They are not Republicans, and they are not Democrats. They don't care. They just want to be loved, and they want to be safe."

The problem with deepfakes isn't new, but experts say it's getting worse as the technology to produce it becomes more available and easier to use. Researchers have been sounding the alarm this year on the explosion of AI-generated child sexual abuse material using depictions of real victims or virtual characters. In June, the FBI warned it was continuing to receive reports from victims, both minors and adults, whose photos or videos were used to create explicit content that was shared online.

Several states have passed their own laws over the years to try to combat the problem, but they vary in scope. Texas, Minnesota and New York passed legislation this year criminalizing nonconsensual deepfake porn, joining Virginia, Georgia and Hawaii who already had laws on the books. Some states, like California and Illinois, have only given victims the ability to sue perpetrators for damages in civil court, which New York and Minnesota also allow.

A few other states are considering their own legislation, including New Jersey, where a bill is currently in the works to ban deepfake porn and impose penalties — either jail time, a fine or both — on those who spread it.

State Sen. Kristin Corrado, a Republican who introduced the legislation earlier this year, said she decided to get involved after reading an article about people trying to evade revenge porn laws by using their former partner's image to generate deepfake porn.

"We just had a feeling that an incident was going to happen," Corrado said.

The bill has languished for a few months, but there's a good chance it might pass, she said, especially with the spotlight that's been put on the issue because of Westfield.

The Westfield event took place this summer and was brought to the attention of the high school on Oct. 20, Westfield High School spokesperson Mary Ann McGann said in a statement. McGann did not provide

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details on how the AI-generated images were spread, but Mani, the mother of one of the girls, said she received a call from the school informing her nude pictures were created using the faces of some female students and then circulated among a group of friends on the social media app Snapchat.

The school hasn't confirmed any disciplinary actions, citing confidentiality on matters involving students. Westfield police and the Union County Prosecutor's office, who were both notified, did not reply to requests for comment.

Details haven't emerged about the incident in Washington state, which happened in October and is under investigation by police. Paula Schwan, the chief of the Issaquah Police Department, said they have obtained multiple search warrants and noted the information they have might be "subject to change" as the probe continues. When reached for comment, the Issaquah School District said it could not discuss the specifics because of the investigation, but said any form of bullying, harassment, or mistreatment among students is "entirely unacceptable."

If officials move to prosecute the incident in New Jersey, current state law prohibiting the sexual exploitation of minors might already apply, said Mary Anne Franks, a law professor at George Washington University who leads Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, an organization aiming to combat online abuses. But those protections don't extend to adults who might find themselves in a similar scenario, she said.

The best fix, Franks said, would come from a federal law that can provide consistent protections nationwide and penalize dubious organizations profiting from products and apps that easily allow anyone to make deepfakes. She said that might also send a strong signal to minors who might create images of other kids impulsively.

President Joe Biden signed an executive order in October that, among other things, called for barring the use of generative AI to produce child sexual abuse material or non-consensual "intimate imagery of real individuals." The order also directs the federal government to issue guidance to label and watermark AI-generated content to help differentiate between authentic and material made by software.

Citing the Westfield incident, U.S. Rep. Tom Kean, Jr., a Republican who represents the town, introduced a bill on Monday that would require developers to put disclosures on AI-generated content. Among other efforts, another federal bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Joe Morelle, a New York Democrat, would make it illegal to share deepfake porn images online. But it hasn't advanced for months due to congressional gridlock.

Some argue for caution — including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Electronic Frontier Foundation and The Media Coalition, an organization that works for trade groups representing publishers, movie studios and others — saying that careful consideration is needed to avoid proposals that may run afoul of the First Amendment.

"Some concerns about abusive deepfakes can be addressed under existing cyber harassment" laws, said Joe Johnson, an attorney for ACLU of New Jersey. "Whether federal or state, there must be substantial conversation and stakeholder input to ensure any bill is not overbroad and addresses the stated problem."

Mani said her daughter has created a website and set up a charity aiming to help AI victims. The two have also been in talks with state lawmakers pushing the New Jersey bill and are planning a trip to Washington to advocate for more protections.

"Not every child, boy or girl, will have the support system to deal with this issue," Mani said. "And they might not see the light at the end of the tunnel."

At UN Climate talks, oil companies pledge to combat methane; Environmentalists call it "smokescreen"

By JON GAMBRELL, PETER PRENGAMAN and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Fifty oil companies representing nearly half of global production have pledged to reach near-zero methane emissions and end routine flaring in their operations by 2030, the president of this year's United Nations climate talks said Saturday, a move that environmental groups called a "smokescreen."

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The announcement by Sultan al-Jaber, president of the climate summit known as COP28 and head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., comes as he and others have insisted his background would allow him to bring oil companies to the negotiating table. Al-Jaber has maintained that having the industry's buy-in is crucial to drastically slashing the world's greenhouse emissions by nearly half in seven years to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times.

The pledge included major national oil companies such as Saudi Aramco, Brazil's Petrobras and Sonangol, from Angola, and multi-nationals like Shell, TotalEnergies and BP.

"The world does not work without energy," said al-Jaber, speaking during a session on energy. "Yet the world will break down if we do not fix energies we use today, mitigate their emissions at a gigaton scale, and rapidly transition to zero carbon alternatives."

As if anticipating critiques, al-Jaber added: "Is it enough? Hear me out, please. No. It's not enough. I say with full passion and conviction, I know that much more can be done."

Methane can be released at several points along the operation of an oil and gas company, from fracking to when natural gas is produced, transported or stored. Over a shorter period, it's 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas most responsible for climate change.

For months leading up to COP28, there was speculation of action on methane. Not only do methane leaks, along with flaring, which is burning of excess methane, and venting of the gas all contribute to climate change, but these problems can largely be solved with current technologies and changes to operations. Indeed, oil and gas companies could have taken such measures years ago but largely have not, instead focusing more on expanding production than focusing on the byproduct of it.

In that way, the methane deal represented a potentially significant contribution to combatting climate change that largely maintained the status quo for the oil and gas industry. Environmental groups were quick to criticize it.

The pledge is a "smokescreen to hide the reality that we need to phase out oil, gas and coal," said a letter signed by more than 300 civil society groups.

Marcelo Mena, CEO of Global Methane Hub, an alliance of philanthropies and organizations focused on reducing methane emissions, rejected the notion that having near-zero methane emission commitments was a way to delay a phase out of fossil fuels.

"We wouldn't let oil companies leak into the ocean until phase out, so why would we let them leak out methane to super charge climate change?" said Mena, a former environment minister in Chile.

Still, Mena said that self-reporting didn't go far enough to push oil and gas companies to make changes. Instead, he said putting a price on pollution, or companies finding themselves shut out of markets that require high standards with leaks, would force change.

Stricter regulations are beginning to take hold. On Saturday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a final rule aimed at reducing methane emissions and other harmful air pollutants generated by the oil and gas industry. It targets emissions from existing oil and gas wells nationwide. Previous EPA regulations only focused on new wells. It also regulates smaller wells that will be required to find and plug methane leaks.

Earlier this year, European Union negotiators reached a deal to reduce methane emissions from the energy industry across the 27-member bloc. The agreement bans routine venting and flaring, and mandates strict reporting. By 2027, it will expand those norms to oil and gas exporters outside the bloc.

Saturday's announcement did not address the oil and natural gas being burned off by the end users, so-called Scope 3 emissions, which can be motorists in their cars or by plants powering cities. In his speech, Al-Jaber said oil and gas companies needed to do more to research solutions to Scope 3 emissions.

The Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter is backed by both the United Arab Emirates and neighboring Saudi Arabia, two OPEC heavyweights. Saudi Arabia's vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, makes it one of the world's least expensive places to produce crude. Both Abu Dhabi's ADNOC and Saudi Aramco, the world's third-most-valuable company, have signed onto the pledge.

Separately, organizers said 110 countries have signed onto a pledge to triple the world's installed renewable energy capacity by 2030, something pledged in September by leaders of the so-called Group of 20.

Their countries emit 80% of all planet-warming gases.

Protester critically injured after setting self on fire outside Israeli consulate in Atlanta

ATLANTA (AP) — A protester was in critical condition Friday after setting themselves on fire outside the Israeli consulate in Atlanta, authorities said. A security guard who tried to intervene was also injured.

A Palestinian flag found at the scene was part of the protest, Atlanta Police Chief Darin Schierbaum said at a news conference.

He added that investigators did not believe there was any connection to terrorism and none of the consular staff was ever in danger.

"We do not see any threat here," he said. "We believe it was an act of extreme political protest that occurred."

Authorities did not release the protester's name, age or gender. The person set up outside the building in the city's midtown neighborhood on Friday afternoon and used gasoline as an accelerant, Atlanta Fire Chief Roderick Smith said.

The protester was in critical condition, with burn injuries to the body. A security guard that tried to stop the person was burned on his wrist and leg, Smith said.

Schierbaum said police are aware of heightened tensions in the Jewish and Muslim community and have stepped up patrols at certain locations, including the consulate.

Demonstrations have been widespread and tensions in the U.S. have escalated as the death toll rises in the Israel-Hamas war.

The conflict began after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants, who killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in southern Israel and took around 240 people captive. More than 15,200 people have been killed by Israel's assault on Hamas-controlled Gaza, according to the Health Ministry there.

A weeklong cease-fire that brought the exchanges of dozens of hostages held by Hamas for scores of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel gave way Friday morning to resumed fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Police raid Moscow gay bars after a Supreme Court ruling labeled LGBTQ+ movement 'extremist'

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian security forces raided gay clubs and bars across Moscow Friday night, less than 48 hours after the country's top court banned what it called the "global LGBTQ+ movement" as an extremist organization.

Police searched venues across the Russian capital, including a nightclub, a male sauna, and a bar that hosted LGBTQ+ parties, under the pretext of a drug raid, local media reported.

Eyewitnesses told journalists that clubgoers' documents were checked and photographed by the security services. They also said that managers had been able to warn patrons before police arrived.

The raids follow a decision by Russia's Supreme Court to label the country's LGBTQ+ "movement" as an extremist organization.

The ruling, which was made in response to a lawsuit filed by the Justice Ministry, is the latest step in a decadelong crackdown on LGBTQ+ rights under President Vladimir Putin, who has emphasized "traditional family values" during his 24 years in power.

Activists have noted the lawsuit was lodged against a movement that is not an official entity, and that under its broad and vague definition authorities could crack down on any individuals or groups deemed to be part of it.

Several LGBTQ+ venues have already closed following the decision, including St. Petersburg's gay club Central Station. It wrote on social media Friday that the owner would no longer allow the bar to operate with the law in effect.

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Max Olenichev, a human rights lawyer who works with the Russian LGBTQ+ community, told The Associated Press before the ruling that it effectively bans organized activity to defend the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

"In practice, it could happen that the Russian authorities, with this court ruling in hand, will enforce (the ruling) against LGBTQ+ initiatives that work in Russia, considering them a part of this civic movement," Olenichev said.

Before the ruling, leading Russian human rights groups had filed a document with the Supreme Court that called the Justice Ministry lawsuit discriminatory and a violation of Russia's constitution. Some LGBTQ+ activists tried to become a party in the case but were rebuffed by the court.

In 2013, the Kremlin adopted the first legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights, known as the "gay propaganda" law, banning any public endorsement of "nontraditional sexual relations" among minors. In 2020, constitutional reforms pushed through by Putin to extend his rule by two more terms also included a provision to outlaw same-sex marriage.

After sending troops into Ukraine in 2022, the Kremlin ramped up a campaign against what it called the West's "degrading" influence. Rights advocates saw it as an attempt to legitimize the war. That same year, a law was passed banning propaganda of "nontraditional sexual relations" among adults, also, effectively outlawing any public endorsement of LGBTQ+ people.

Another law passed this year prohibited gender transitioning procedures and gender-affirming care for transgender people. The legislation prohibited any "medical interventions aimed at changing the sex of a person," as well as changing one's gender in official documents and public records.

Russian authorities reject accusations of LGBTQ+ discrimination. Earlier this month, Russian media quoted Deputy Justice Minister Andrei Loginov as saying that "the rights of LGBT people in Russia are protected" legally. He was presenting a report on human rights in Russia to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, arguing that "restraining public demonstration of nontraditional sexual relationships or preferences is not a form of censure for them."

The Supreme Court case is classified and it remains unclear how LGBTQ+ activists and symbols will be restricted.

Many people will consider leaving Russia before they become targeted, said Olga Baranova, director of the Moscow Community Center for LGBTQ+ Initiatives.

"It is clear for us that they're once again making us out as a domestic enemy to shift the focus from all the other problems that are in abundance in Russia," Baranova told the AP.

The surfing venue for the Paris Olympics is on the other side of the world but could steal the show

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The giant waves form in the storm belts of the Southern Ocean, off Antarctica, where whales roam. Supercharged by intense winds, the swells then roll on an ocean journey of thousands of kilometers (miles) to crash into Tahiti in the South Pacific.

There, in the waters of the volcanic island that will host next year's Olympic surfing events, surfer Kauli Vaast waits.

If the Tahitian-born 21-year-old catches one of the waves just right, he'll harness its awesome power as it rears up to become a furious, frothing wall of water. If he stays upright, he'll zip through the crystal-blue tunnel that forms around him as the wave breaks, emerging unscathed and whooping, with a grin on his face.

"Just the most perfect wave in the world," says Vaast, who hopes the island's legendary surfing conditions are his ticket to a gold medal.

The decision to hold Olympic surfing in French Polynesia next July will require competitors to brave some of the world's biggest waves. The location promises more dramatic television images than when the sport made its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games in 2021. Then, the waves on Tsurigasaki Beach were

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sometimes modest, and COVID-19 dented the atmosphere.

But the faraway venue has also raised pointed logistical and environmental questions because the rest of the Summer Games are focused in the host city, Paris, nearly 16,000 kilometers (10,000 miles) and 10 time zones away.

The need to fly 48 surfers, judges, journalists and others that far looks awkward against Paris organizers' stated ambition of reducing the Olympics' carbon footprint by half. Four other surf spots that also bid were dotted along France's Atlantic coast and could easily have been reached by train and bus from the French capital.

But for big-wave enthusiasts like Vaast, Tahiti makes sense because it has Teahupo'o, a village on the southern shore with lagoons that get the full force of the swells, generating dream surf for the courageous.

"If the conditions are really good, it's going to be a great contest to watch," Vaast says. The Olympics "are going to be like crazy."

Teahupo'o translates from Tahitian as "wall of heads." The name refers to a tribal battle where heads were severed, but it's also appropriate for such fearsome waves. The deep ocean bed rises steeply on final approach to Teahupo'o's offshore reefs, forcing the water into towering walls and huge, rolling tubes.

They are perilous. Surfers who fall risk being body-slammed onto the sharp and shallow corals, which tore chunks off the face of Hawaiian surfer Keala Kennelly when she tumbled in 2011.

Because Teahupo'o's surf breaks offshore, the Olympic judges have to be out in the lagoon, too. Organizers intend to install them and television cameras on an aluminum tower that will be attached to the reef. That plan has sparked protests in Tahiti. Its critics fear for coral and other marine life.

Tahitian surfer Matahi Drollet is one of the most vocal opponents. His protest videos on Instagram have racked up hundreds of thousands of views.

Vaast acknowledges widespread concern about the Olympics' footprint in the Teahupo'o lagoon, saying: "We (are) all scared if they're doing something big."

But he also expects the Olympic spotlight to boost the tourism industry that underpins the Tahitian economy.

"It's going to be great to see a lot of people getting interested in French Polynesia," he says. "And with the construction for the Olympics and stuff, it creates a lot of work for the local people."

Vaast is one of only two French Polynesian surfers qualified so far. The other is Vahine Fierro in the women's competition. Growing up surrounded by the vast Pacific, Vaast swam, fished and surfed as a kid and was just 8 when he first tackled Teahupo'o waves.

He remembers being terrified of their reputation, but he was hooked by their beauty and power. Tahitians say the waves have "Mana," life-affirming spiritual energy. Vaast believes that his intimate knowledge of Teahupo'o gives him home-field advantage and the "chance of a lifetime" in July.

"I feel this energy nowhere (else) in the world, only in Tahiti, at Teahupo'o," says Vaast, who often travels on the surfing circuit. "When you go there, you need to be respectful because if you respect (it), like the ocean is going to respect you."

For France, the Tahitian venue will allow the host country to highlight its long historical ties to the Pacific and involve its far-off overseas territories in the Summer Games.

Teahupo'o, Tahiti's jewel, is primed to wow.

"When you're in the barrel, you see the mountains" and colors that are "super clear," Vaast says. "You can see the corals underneath. ... Beautiful. The most beautiful place in the world."

Nikola Jokic has 21 points, 16 assists, Nuggets hold off Suns 119-111

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Nikola Jokic looked content to spend most of his Friday night facilitating, setting up baskets with passes left and right as the Denver Nuggets built a big first-half lead.

By late in the fourth quarter, that advantage had nearly vanished. That's when the two-time MVP went back to scoring.

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Jokic had 21 points and 16 assists, including a difficult layup in traffic with 24.1 seconds left, and the Nuggets held off the Phoenix Suns 119-111 for a hard-fought victory.

"That's another night of just incredible, unselfish basketball," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "Everyone playing for the man next to them, making the right play."

Down 17 in the first half, the Suns — on a night Kevin Durant moved into 10th place on the NBA's career scoring list — cut Denver's lead to 94-91 entering the fourth.

Phoenix tied it three times early in the fourth and the game stayed within one possession for much of the period, but Jokic and Michael Porter Jr. were among multiple players who made clutch buckets to keep the Nuggets ahead.

Denver has won four straight. All five starters — including Jokic, Jackson, Porter, Justin Holiday and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope — scored at least 15 points. Jackson finished with 20. The Nuggets had 38 assists and just nine turnovers.

"That's our play style," Jokic said. "When we make shots like that, it's much easier for us to have a good game. I think we create open looks — it's just a matter of if we're going to make it or not."

Jusuf Nurkic led the Suns — playing without Devin Booker — with a season-high 31 points but fouled out after being called for a charge with 45 seconds remaining, which was upgraded to a Flagrant 1, meaning Jokic got to shoot two free throws. He made one of two for a 115-111 lead and Denver retained possession.

Jokic followed with his tough layup, finishing over three Suns defenders, to put the game away.

"They're a good team," Nurkic said. "Give them credit, they got the win."

Durant added 30 points but shot just 8 of 25 from the field, including 0 for 10 in the second half. Nurkic made 13 of 22.

Durant moved in 10th place on scoring list late in the second quarter, driving the baseline for a layup to pass Moses Malone. Durant finished the game with 27,423 career points. Malone had 27,409 in the NBA after starting his professional career with two seasons in the ABA.

Denver jumped out to a 41-30 lead going into the second quarter after shooting 79.2% (19 of 24) from the field. The Nuggets settled for a 70-63 advantage at halftime.

"We didn't play with nearly enough toughness and attention to detail in the first half," Vogel said. "It was one of our worst defensive halves. But you've got to credit the Nuggets and Nikola Jokic — that's why he's one of the best in the world. He can take any four teammates and create great looks for those guys. He's really special."

Both teams were missing key pieces. The Suns were playing without Booker (ankle) and Bradley Beal (back) while the Nuggets were without Jamal Murray (ankle) and Aaron Gordon (heel).

UP NEXT

Nuggets: At Sacramento on Saturday night.

Suns: Host Memphis on Saturday night.

Philippine troops kill 11 Islamic militants in one of bloodiest anti-insurgency offensives this year

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine troops, backed by airstrikes and artillery fire, killed 11 suspected Islamic militants near a hinterland village in the country's south, authorities said Saturday, in one of the military's bloodiest anti-insurgency offensives this year.

The military launched the offensive Friday after receiving intelligence about the whereabouts of suspected leaders and armed followers of the Dawla Islamiyah and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, or the BIFF, groups near the village of Tuwayan in southern Datu Hofer town in Maguindanao province, military officials said.

Army Maj. Saber Balogan, a regional military official, said government forces recovered 11 bodies of suspected militants after more than three hours of fighting.

Troops also recovered Seven M16 and M14 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and five homemade bombs from the scene, he said, adding that there were no military casualties.

The Associated Press saw a confidential initial government report about the military operation, which stated that two Philippine air force fighter planes dropped eight 500-pound bombs in the hinterland areas where the militants were spotted. Two military helicopters further targeted the militants.

Army troops were deployed after to the battle scene, military officials said.

This came after 13 armed militants belonging to the Dawla Islamiyah surrendered with their firearms to the military in the south, Maj. Gen. Alex Rillera, a regional military commander said.

It was not immediately clear if the militants provided information that helped the military decide to launch Friday's assault.

"This is the good side of coming out and laying down your guns; You can now live peacefully with your loved ones," Rillera told the militants, who surrendered in a ceremony on Thursday in South Cotabato province adjacent to Maguindanao province, where the military offensive was carried out the following day.

After decades of debilitating armed hostilities, the Philippine government signed a 2014 peace pact with the largest Muslim separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in the south of the largely Catholic nation. That considerably eased armed insurgency-related clashes and violence in the south.

However, smaller Muslim separatist groups have continued to wage attacks, including sporadic bombings in public areas, and at times targeting businesses in return for "protection money" from the owners, the military previously said.

The BIFF, which the military operation targeted Friday, consists of militants who defected from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front following the peace talks with the government. It further split into a few factions, from which some aligned themselves with the Islamic State group.

Trump and DeSantis will hold dueling campaign events in Iowa with the caucuses just six weeks away

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Ron DeSantis plans on Saturday to complete his campaign promise to visit each of Iowa's 99 counties, a timeworn tactic for presidential candidates hoping to make their mark in the leadoff state over months mingling with voters at the state's diners, cookouts and Pizza Ranches.

But the Florida governor's moment, like much of his campaign, will take place under the towering shadow of former President Donald Trump.

Around the same time DeSantis is set to take the stage Saturday afternoon in Newton, Iowa, Trump will be addressing cheering supporters about 100 miles away in Cedar Rapids.

Just six weeks are left before the Jan. 15 Iowa caucuses, which DeSantis has said he "absolutely" expects to win. He's bet his campaign on the state, winning key endorsements from Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and high-profile evangelical leader Bob Vander Plaats.

"He's showing up," Reynolds said in an interview. "He's not just landing, doing an event and heading out. He has put the time into the state."

But Trump is dominant in both national and early-state polls and has held large rallies and events to organize caucusgoers throughout the fall. And DeSantis is facing new internal problems within his political operation — with two key officials leaving the major super PAC supporting him — and a stronger challenge from former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who has been rising in early-state polls and picked up the support of Americans for Prosperity, the political arm of the powerful Koch network.

Trump plans to speak at two events Saturday to encourage supporters to commit to caucus for him, first in the Des Moines area and then in the eastern part of the state in Cedar Rapids.

Trump's campaign said the timing of the Cedar Rapids event compared to DeSantis' 99th county celebration was coincidental. The campaign has dismissed DeSantis' undertaking and compared him to a little-known GOP presidential candidate, businessman and pastor Ryan Binkley, who said he already visited all 99 counties.

"If Ron DeSantis can't even keep up with Ryan Binkley in Iowa, how can he expect to be competitive with Nikki 'Birdbrain' Haley for distant second place?" Trump's campaign said in a statement earlier this week.

Reynolds, who will appear with DeSantis on Saturday in Jasper County, suggested he still has time to cut into Trump's lead.

"He's a staunch conservative and brings that to the table without the drama," she said. "Iowans tend to break late. We're seeing it. I think he's really starting to hit his stride."

DeSantis advisers argue that making stops in each county on Iowa's sprawling checkerboard can squeeze critical support out of small rural counties while also demonstrating a commitment to courting all parts of the state.

Police charge director of Miss Nicaragua pageant with running 'beauty queen coup' plot

By GABRIELA SELSER Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Nicaraguan police said Friday they want to arrest the director of the Miss Nicaragua pageant, accusing her of intentionally rigging contests so that anti-government beauty queens would win the pageants as part of a plot to overthrow the government.

The charges against pageant director Karen Celebertti would not be out of place in a vintage James Bond movie with a repressive, closed off government, coup-plotting claims, foreign agents and beauty queens.

It all started Nov. 18, when Miss Nicaragua, Nicaragua's Sheynnis Palacios won the Miss Universe competition. The government of President Daniel Ortega briefly thought it had scored a rare public relations victory, calling her win a moment of "legitimate joy and pride."

But the tone quickly soured the day after the win when it emerged that Palacios had posted photos of herself on Facebook participating in one of the mass anti-government protests in 2018.

The protests were violently repressed, and human rights officials say 355 people were killed by government forces. Ortega claimed the protests were an attempted coup with foreign backing, aiming for his overthrow. His opponents said Nicaraguans were protesting his increasingly repressive rule and seemingly endless urge to hold on to power.

A statement by the National Police claimed Celebertti "participated actively, on the internet and in the streets in the terrorist actions of a failed coup," an apparent reference to the 2018 protests.

Celebertti apparently slipped through the hands of police after she was reportedly denied permission to enter the country a few days ago. But some local media reported that her son and husband had been taken into custody.

Celebertti, her husband and son face charges of "treason to the motherland." They have not spoken publicly about the charges against them.

Celebertti "remained in contact with the traitors, and offered to employ the franchises, platforms and spaces supposedly used to promote 'innocent' beauty pageants, in a conspiracy orchestrated to convert the contests into traps and political ambushes financed by foreign agents," according to the statement.

It didn't help that many ordinary Nicaraguans — who are largely forbidden to protest or carry the national flag in marches — took advantage of the Miss Universe win as a rare opportunity to celebrate in the streets.

Their use of the blue-and-white national flag, as opposed to Ortega's red-and-black Sandinista banner, further angered the government, who claimed the plotters "would take to the streets again in December, in a repeat of history's worst chapter of vileness."

Just five days after Palacio's win, Vice President and First Lady Rosario Murillo was lashing out at opposition social media sites (many run from exile) that celebrated Palacios' win as a victory for the opposition.

"In these days of a new victory, we are seeing the evil, terrorist commentators making a clumsy and insulting attempt to turn what should be a beautiful and well-deserved moment of pride into destructive coup-mongering," Murillo said.

Ortega's government seized and closed the Jesuit University of Central America in Nicaragua, which was a hub for 2018 protests against the Ortega regime, along with at least 26 other Nicaraguan universities.

The government has also outlawed or closed more than 3,000 civic groups and non-governmental organizations, arrested and expelled opponents, stripped them of their citizenship and confiscated their assets. Thousands have fled into exile.

Palacios, who became the first Nicaraguan to win Miss Universe, has not commented on the situation.

During the contest, Palacios, 23, said she wants to work to promote mental health after suffering debilitating bouts of anxiety herself. She also said she wants to work to close the salary gap between the genders.

But on a since-deleted Facebook account under her name, Palacios posted photos of herself at a protest, writing she had initially been afraid of participating. "I didn't know whether to go, I was afraid of what might happen."

Some who attended the march that day recall seeing the tall, striking Palacios there.

Bolivia's Indigenous women climbers fear for their future as the Andean glaciers melt

By PAOLA FLORES Associated Press

EL ALTO, Bolivia (AP) — When they first started climbing the Andes peaks, they could hear the ice crunching under their crampons. These days, it's the sound of melted water running beneath their feet that they mostly listen to as they make their ascents.

Dressed in colorful, multilayered skirts, a group of 20 Indigenous Bolivian women — known as the Cholita climbers — have been climbing the mountain range for the past eight years, working as tourist guides. But as the glaciers in the South American country retreat as a result of climate change, they worry about the future of their jobs.

The Aymara women remember a time when practically every spot on the glaciers was covered in snow, but now there are parts with nothing but rocks.

"There used to be a white blanket and now there is only rock," said Lidia Huayllas, one of the climbers. "The thaw is very noticeable."

Huayllas said she has seen the snow-capped Huayna Potosí mountain, a 6,000-meter (19,600-foot) peak near the Bolivian city of El Alto, shrink little by little in the past two decades.

"We used to walk normally; now, there are rocks and water overflowing," said the 57-year-old woman as she jumped from stone to stone to avoid getting her skirt and feet wet.

Edson Ramírez, a glaciologist from the Pierre and Marie Curie University in France, estimates that in the last 30 years, Bolivian glaciers have lost 40% of their thickness due to climate change. In the lower parts of the mountain, he says, the ice has basically vanished.

"We already lost Chacaltaya," said Ramírez, referring to a 5,400-meter (17,700-foot) mountain that used to be a popular ski resort and now has no ice left.

With no ice left in the lower parts of the mountain range, the Cholita climbers need to go further up to find it. This has reduced the number of tourists seeking their services as guides.

Huayllas would not say how much she makes as a tour guide, but she said a Cholita climber currently makes about \$30 per tour. That is less than the \$50 per tour they used to make.

In 2022, during the September-December climbing season, the Cholitas did 30 tours, Huayllas said. This year, through early November, they had barely done 16.

The situation has gotten so critical, the 20 women have looked for other jobs to make ends meet. Some of the Cholitas have started making and selling blankets and coats with alpaca wool from the Andes, Huayllas said.

"If this continues, we're going to have to work in commerce or do something else for a living," said Huayllas, although she quickly dismissed her own pessimistic thought, somehow hoping for a change: "No. This is our source of work."

House expels New York Rep. George Santos. It's just the sixth expulsion in the chamber's history

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted on Friday to expel Republican Rep. George Santos of New York after a blistering ethics report on his conduct heightened lawmakers' concerns about the scandal-plagued freshman. Santos became just the sixth member in the chamber's history to be ousted by colleagues, and the third since the Civil War.

The vote to expel was 311-114, easily clearing the two-thirds majority required. House Republican leaders opposed removing Santos, whose departure leaves them with a razor-thin majority, but in the end 105 GOP lawmakers sided with nearly all Democrats to expel him.

The expulsion marked the final congressional chapter in a spectacular fall from grace for Santos. Celebrated as an up-and-comer after he flipped a district from Democrats last year, Santos' life story began to unravel before he was even sworn into office. Reports emerged that he had lied about having Jewish ancestry, a career at top Wall Street firms and a college degree, among other things.

Then, in May, Santos was indicted by federal prosecutors on multiple charges, turning his presence in the House into a growing distraction and embarrassment to the party.

Santos joins a short list of lawmakers expelled from the House, and for reasons uniquely his own. Of the previous expulsions in the House, three were for siding with the Confederacy during the Civil War. The remaining two occurred after the lawmakers were convicted of crimes in federal court, the most recent in 2002.

Seeking to remain in office, Santos had appealed to colleagues to let the court process play out. He warned of the precedent they would set by expelling a member not yet convicted of a crime.

"This will haunt them in the future," Santos told lawmakers on Thursday evening as they debated his removal.

As it became clear Friday that he would be expelled, Santos appeared resigned to his fate. He placed his overcoat over his shoulders and shook hands with conservative members who voted against his expulsion. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who voted against expelling Santos, was solemn as he announced the result of the vote and declared the New York seat vacant.

Outside the Capitol, trailed by a crush of reporters and cameras, he quickly ducked inside a vehicle and left.

Santos' fellow Republicans from New York were front and center in the effort to boot him. Among them were fellow freshmen who serve in key swing districts and had helped the GOP take the House majority. They sought to generate as much political distance as they could from Santos, whose lies about his past made him a pariah in the House before he even took the oath of office.

Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, whose district is next to Santos', led the debate for expulsion and argued that voters would welcome lawmakers holding themselves to a high standard. Another New York Republican, Rep. Nick Langworthy, said Santos had only himself to blame.

"Every precedent under the sun has been broken by George Santos," Langworthy said. "Has there ever been anyone here that's made up a whole life?"

Santos had survived two previous expulsion attempts, but a scathing House Ethics Committee report released the week before the Thanksgiving holiday appeared to turn colleagues decisively against him.

After eight months of work, Ethics Committee investigators said they had found "overwhelming evidence" that Santos had broken the law and exploited his public position for his own profit.

"It's a solemn day," said the chairman of the ethics panel, Rep. Michael Guest, R-Miss. "I mean no one wants to have to remove a member from Congress. But the allegations against him, the evidence was overwhelming."

Rep. Susan Wild, the top Democrat on the Ethics Committee, reminded members that the decision approving the investigators' findings was unanimous.

"Mr. Santos is not a victim," Wild said. "He is a perpetrator of a massive fraud on his constituents and

the American people.”

Santos’ troubles are far from over, as he faces trial next year in New York. Federal prosecutors in a 23-count indictment have accused him of duping donors, stealing from his campaign and lying to Congress.

The indictment alleges specifically that Santos stole the identities of campaign donors and then used their credit cards to make tens of thousands of dollars in unauthorized charges. He then wired some of the money to his personal bank account and used the rest to pad his campaign coffers, prosecutors say. Santos has pleaded not guilty,

Santos’ expulsion narrows the GOP’s majority to 221-213 and Democrats will have a good opportunity to fill the vacancy. Shortly after the vote, Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, said she’s prepared to call a special election for the seat, likely in mid-to-late February under a timeframe set by state law.

“When you look at his lack of ethics and the fact that, you know, he has not served the people of our state, particularly New York 3 where he resides, it’s been an abysmal run for him,” Hochul said Friday.

The special election will kick off a hotly contested year of congressional races in New York as Democrats look to flip a handful of seats in the state and retake control of the House. The field of candidates for Santos’ seat is already crowded and includes former U.S. Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Democrat who represented the district before an unsuccessful run for governor last year.

Now that he has been removed from office, Santos’ congressional office will remain operational under the management of the Clerk of the House. No additional staff can be hired, but the current staff can stay on and perform constituent casework. They will be unable to undertake any legislative activity, such as the drafting of bills.

Santos, for his part, hasn’t lost all the privileges afforded to former members. He will still be permitted to walk onto the House floor and fraternize with members.

According to House rules, any former lawmaker can maintain their floor privileges unless they are a lobbyist, foreign agent, have a direct interest in the bill being considered at the time, or have been convicted of a crime in relation to their election or service.

A world away from the West Bank, Vermont shooting victims and their families face new grief and fear

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — Nearly a week after three college students of Palestinian descent were shot and seriously wounded while taking an evening walk, relatives of two of the victims have arrived in Vermont from the war-torn West Bank, grappling with a new reality that has shattered their lives and a place they thought was a safe haven.

Elizabeth Price and her husband Ali Awartani flew in Wednesday just as their son, Hisham Awartani, underwent surgery. After the Israel-Hamas war erupted in early October, they decided it would be safer for Hisham to stay in the United States instead of coming home for the holidays.

Now they don’t know if he will ever walk again.

“When my nephew came to this country to pursue his studies and when he came to stay with me for Thanksgiving in Burlington, Vermont, it never occurred to me that he may be victim to this type of violence,” Awartani’s uncle Rich Price said in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday. “And so I feel a sense of shame, I feel a sense of outrage, and it’s been a really difficult awakening to the fact that even here — even in this country, even in this town — that many of the risks that exist for my nephew and his friends in Palestine exist for them here.”

Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid and Tahseen Ali Ahmad, all age 20 and attending colleges in the eastern U.S., were visiting Price and his family for the holiday break. The three have been friends since first grade at Ramallah Friends School, a private school in the West Bank. While they were out for a walk Saturday evening after a family birthday party, a man approached them and shot them without saying a word, they told police.

The young men were speaking in a mix of English and Arabic and two of them were also wearing the

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black-and-white Palestinian keffiyeh scarves when they were shot, Burlington Police Chief Jon Murad said.

Abdalhamid ran when the man started shooting and jumped over a fence. He hid in a backyard for a minute shaking, fearing the man was after him and that his friends were dead, before going to a house that had lights on and urging them to call 911, he told the AP on Friday. He learned at the University of Vermont Medical Center that his friends were alive but more seriously injured and asked to be placed in the intensive care room with them, he said.

"Palestinians in general and in the U.S. are suffering from hate. I don't think any race or ethnicity should be targeted like that," Abdalhamid said in the hotel where he's staying with his mother, Tamara Tamimi, after being released from the hospital earlier in the week.

Tamimi arrived in Vermont Wednesday from Jerusalem. After she and her husband got the 3 a.m. phone call that her son and his two friends were shot, she said she was relieved to talk to Kinnan from the emergency room — that he was alive. But she later fell apart, she said.

"I remember the overwhelming feeling was enough. It's just enough. It's enough pain for Palestinians. We're already grieving. We're already carrying so much grief," she said.

She said her son has been upset about what's happening in Gaza. "We've all been in so much pain and to have this happen, I really just fell apart and started throwing things around with so much anger saying, 'There's nowhere safe for us. There's no where safe for Palestinians. Where are we supposed to go?'"

Ahmad's parents are expected to arrive in Vermont on Saturday.

Carmen Abdelhadi, the middle school librarian at the Ramallah Friends School, remembers meeting the three as fourth graders. When she heard about the shooting, she and others in their community were shocked and "outraged" because "we know them."

"Whenever I read something about them, I cry. It could have happened to any of our sons. My son is wearing the same scarf," she said. "It's devastating. It's devastating on top of everything that we are going through."

Awartani, she recalled, could always be found with a book while Abdalhamid "didn't have a bad bone" in his body and was loved by everyone, she said. And Ahmad, she said, was the sensible one who found a love of poetry early on and went on to show an aptitude in science and tech.

"I see my son in every one of them," Abdelhadi said.

Awartani suffered a spinal injury in the shooting. A bullet that is still lodged in his spine is unlikely to be removed and he is currently paralyzed from the chest down, Rich Price said. "We don't know what the long-term prognosis is," he said.

Still, Awartani's uncle said he has the will and resilience for the recovery.

"He was concerned for his friends, who were with him, their well-being and recovery. And he was also deeply concerned that so much attention was being brought to him and he's thinking about the thousands of people that are dead, the now 80 percent of Gazans who have been displaced from their homes," Price said, wearing a keffiyeh in solidarity with the three young men. "There are dozens of Hishams that are in the list of the dead in Gaza, and he's saying, 'I'm the Hisham that you know. What about the Hishams you don't know?'"

The shooting last weekend came as threats against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities have increased across the U.S. in the weeks since the war began.

The suspected gunman, Jason J. Eaton, 48, was arrested Sunday at his apartment, where he answered the door with his hands raised and told federal agents he had been waiting for them. Eaton has pleaded not guilty to three counts of attempted murder and is currently being held without bail.

Authorities are investigating the shooting as a possible a hate crime.

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Israel's war with Hamas resumes with airstrikes in Gaza after a weeklong truce ends

By NAJIB JOBAIN, JACK JEFFERY and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's war with Hamas erupted again Friday, as airstrikes hit houses and buildings in the Gaza Strip minutes after a weeklong truce expired. Health authorities in the besieged territory reported dozens of Palestinians killed and Israel dropped leaflets over Gaza City and southern parts of the enclave, urging civilians to flee to avoid the fighting.

Militants in Gaza resumed firing rockets into Israel, and fighting broke out between Israel and Hezbollah militants operating along its northern border with Lebanon.

The resumption of the war threatens to compound the suffering in Gaza. Some 2 million people -- almost its entire population -- are crammed into the territory's south, where Israel urged people to relocate at the war's start and has since vowed to extend its ground assault. Unable to go into north Gaza or neighboring Egypt, their only escape is to move around within the 85-square-mile area (220 square kilometers).

Renewed hostilities also heighten concerns for about 140 hostages still held captive by Hamas and other militants, after more than 100 were freed during the truce. For families of remaining hostages, the truce's collapse was a blow to hopes their loved ones could be the next out after days of seeing others freed. The Israeli army said Friday it had confirmed the deaths of four more hostages, bringing the total known dead to seven.

Qatar, which has served as a mediator along with Egypt, said negotiators were still trying for a deal to restore the cease-fire. Israel and Hamas traded blame for ending the truce.

A day earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Israeli officials to do more to protect Palestinian civilians as they seek to destroy Hamas. Blinken met Friday with Arab foreign ministers at global climate talks in Dubai.

It was not clear to what extent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will heed the appeals of the United States, Israel's most important ally.

Netanyahu's office said Friday that Israel "is committed to achieving the goals of the war," including releasing the hostages and eliminating Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007.

In response to the U.S. calls, the Israeli military released an online map dividing the Gaza Strip into hundreds of numbered, haphazardly drawn parcels. It asked residents to learn the number of their location in case of an eventual evacuation. The map did not designate safe areas to evacuate to, and it was not clear how easily Palestinians could access it.

Hours into the renewed bombardment, Gaza's Health Ministry said 178 people were killed and dozens wounded. Israel said it struck more than 200 Hamas targets.

Up until the truce began, more than 13,300 Palestinians were killed in Israel's assault, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The toll is likely much higher, as officials have only sporadically updated the count since Nov. 11. The ministry says thousands more people are feared dead under the rubble.

The war began after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants, who killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in southern Israel and took around 240 people captive. The New York Times reported Israel's military was aware of Hamas' plan to attack Israeli soil over a year before the devastating operation.

RETURN TO BATTLE

About an hour before the cease-fire was to expire early Friday, Israel said it intercepted a volley of rockets fired from Gaza. Minutes after it expired, the military announced a resumption of combat operations, and strikes soon began.

In leaflets dropped in southern Gaza, Israel urged people to leave homes east of Khan Younis, warning that the southern town was now a "dangerous battle zone." Other leaflets warned residents of several neighborhoods in Gaza City in the north to move south.

Hundreds of thousands of people fled northern Gaza to Khan Younis and other parts of the south earlier

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in the war, part of an extraordinary mass exodus that has left three-quarters of the population displaced and facing widespread shortages of food, water and other supplies.

No trucks carrying aid entered Gaza from Egypt on Friday, Palestinians authorities at the Rafah crossing said, after an increased flow of supplies during the truce.

The International Rescue Committee, an aid group operating in Gaza, warned the return of fighting will "wipe out even the minimal relief" provided by the truce and "prove catastrophic for Palestinian civilians."

In Washington, U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that Israel blocked trucks from crossing into Gaza Friday but that at the request of the U.S. government, it would allow some aid to enter. Kirby said the U.S. would continue to push to increase the assistance of aid into Gaza at least up to the level of goods that entered during the pause.

In Khan Younis, residents frantically searched for survivors in the rubble of a building hit by a strike. "We are women and children here. We have nothing," said Fatima Nshasi, a relative of a family in the building, as women sobbed nearby. "We were going with life as usual, hoping the truce would be extended."

Strikes also hit near Gaza City and in the central Gaza refugee camp of Maghazi, where rescuers clawed through the rubble of a large building. A foot stuck out of the tangle of concrete and wiring.

Israel says it is targeting Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the militants, accusing them of operating in residential neighborhoods. Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive in northern Gaza. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

Hamas said it fired volleys of rockets from Gaza toward Israeli cities. White smoke trails could be seen over the Israeli town of Sderot on the border with northern Gaza after Israel's missile protection systems activated.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah said Friday its fighters fired on a group of Israeli soldiers along the border, its first attack since the truce went into effect.

Israel said a number of launches from Lebanon targeted military posts near the border, and others were directed toward the town of Kiryat Shmona but were intercepted. The military responded with artillery. One Hezbollah fighter and his mother were killed when their home was hit, security officials said.

HOSTAGES' FAMILIES GRIEVE END OF TRUCE

The end of the truce hit families of remaining hostages especially hard.

Meirav Svirsky told Israel's Channel 12 that a released hostage relayed a message to her from her 38-year-old brother, Itai, who is still held hostage, confirming he is alive. "His body is healthy but his mental state isn't great," she said. Meirav and Itai's parents were killed on Oct. 7.

"They haven't spoken about releasing the men, and they returned to fighting without exhausting the possibilities," said Meirav, adding that she thinks "the state is responsible" for the fate of her brother. "From my perspective, every day when there is fighting in Gaza is putting him at risk."

Netanyahu has been under intense pressure from hostages' families to bring them home. But his far-right governing partners have also pushed him to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed.

Netanyahu said Hamas had violated the terms of the truce. "It has not met its obligation to release all of the women hostages today and has launched rockets at Israeli citizens," he said in a statement.

Hamas blamed Israel, saying it had rejected all offers Hamas made to release more hostages and bodies of the dead. Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told The Associated Press in Beirut that Hamas rejected an Israeli list of 10 female hostages to release because they were soldiers seized at military posts.

Hamas was expected to set a higher price for releasing Israeli soldiers and male hostages, and negotiations for an extension grew tougher with few women and children hostages remaining in Gaza.

During the truce, which began Nov. 24, Hamas and other militants in Gaza released more than 100 hostages — 81 Israelis and 24 from other nationalities, mainly Thais. Israel freed 240 Palestinians from its prisons. Virtually all from both sides were women and children.

Retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman on the Supreme Court, has died at age 93

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, an unwavering voice of moderate conservatism and the first woman to serve on the nation's highest court, died Friday. She was 93.

O'Connor died in Phoenix, of complications related to advanced dementia and a respiratory illness, the Supreme Court said in a news release.

Chief Justice John Roberts mourned her death. "A daughter of the American Southwest, Sandra Day O'Connor blazed an historic trail as our Nation's first female Justice," Roberts said in statement issued by the court. "She met that challenge with undaunted determination, indisputable ability, and engaging candor."

In 2018, she announced that she had been diagnosed with "the beginning stages of dementia, probably Alzheimer's disease." Her husband, John O'Connor, died of complications of Alzheimer's in 2009.

O'Connor's nomination in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan and subsequent confirmation by the Senate ended 191 years of male exclusivity on the high court. A native of Arizona who grew up on her family's sprawling ranch, O'Connor wasted little time building a reputation as a hard worker who wielded considerable political clout on the nine-member court.

The granddaughter of a pioneer who traveled west from Vermont and founded the family ranch some three decades before Arizona became a state, O'Connor had a tenacious, independent spirit that came naturally. As a child growing up in the remote outback, she learned early to ride horses, round up cattle and drive trucks and tractors.

"I didn't do all the things the boys did," she said in a 1981 Time magazine interview, "but I fixed windmills and repaired fences."

On the bench, her influence could best be seen, and her legal thinking most closely scrutinized, in the court's rulings on abortion, perhaps the most contentious and divisive issue the justices faced. O'Connor balked at letting states outlaw most abortions, refusing in 1989 to join four other justices who were ready to reverse the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that said women have a constitutional right to abortion.

Then, in 1992, she helped forge and lead a five-justice majority that reaffirmed the core holding of the 1973 ruling. "Some of us as individuals find abortion offensive to our most basic principles of morality, but that can't control our decision," O'Connor said in court, reading a summary of the decision in Planned Parenthood v. Casey. "Our obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate our own moral code."

Thirty years after that decision, a more conservative court did overturn Roe and Casey, and the opinion was written by the man who took her high court seat, Justice Samuel Alito. He joined the court upon O'Connor's retirement in 2006, chosen by President George W. Bush.

In 2000, O'Connor was part of the 5-4 majority that effectively resolved the disputed 2000 presidential election in favor of Bush, over Democrat Al Gore.

Bush was among many prominent Americans offering condolences Friday. "It was fitting that Sandra became the first female appointed to our highest court, because she was a pioneer who lived by the code of the west," Bush said in a statement. "She was determined and honest, modest and considerate, dependable and self-reliant. She was also fun and funny, with a wonderful sense of humor."

Former President Barack Obama, who awarded O'Connor the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009, praised her for "forging a new path and building a bridge behind her for all young women to follow."

O'Connor was regarded with great fondness by many of her colleagues. When she retired, Justice Clarence Thomas, a consistent conservative, called her "an outstanding colleague, civil in dissent and gracious when in the majority."

Thomas and Roberts are the only two members of the current court to have served with O'Connor. But all the justices weighed in Friday with remembrances of her.

"Justice O'Connor's appointment was a pivotal moment in the history of the Supreme Court and the nation," Justice Samuel Alito said at a public appearance in Washington Friday night. "She will always be remembered as one of the most important justices in the history of the Supreme Court."

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The newest justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson, said O'Connor "helped pave the road on which other jurists, including me, now walk." Justice Elena Kagan said O'Connor judged with wisdom and "a will to promote balance and mutual respect in this too-often divided country."

O'Connor could, nonetheless, express her views tartly. In one of her final actions as a justice, a dissent to a 5-4 ruling to allow local governments to condemn and seize personal property to allow private developers to build shopping plazas, office buildings and other facilities, she warned that the majority had unwisely ceded yet more power to the powerful. "The specter of condemnation hangs over all property," O'Connor wrote. "Nothing is to prevent the state from replacing ... any home with a shopping mall, or any farm with a factory."

O'Connor, whom commentators had once called the nation's most powerful woman, remained the court's only woman until 1993, when, much to O'Connor's delight and relief, President Bill Clinton nominated Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The current court includes a record four women.

The enormity of the reaction to O'Connor's appointment had surprised her. She received more than 60,000 letters in her first year, more than any one member in the court's history. "I had no idea when I was appointed how much it would mean to many people around the country," she once said. "It affected them in a very personal way. People saw it as a signal that there are virtually unlimited opportunities for women. It's important to parents for their daughters, and to daughters for themselves."

At times, the constant publicity was almost unbearable. "I had never expected or aspired to be a Supreme Court justice," she said. "My first year on the court made me long at times for obscurity."

Following her retirement, O'Connor expressed regret that a woman had not been chosen to replace her. O'Connor remained active in the government even after she retired from the court. She sat as a judge on several federal appeals courts, advocated for judicial independence and served on the Iraq Study Group. She also was appointed to the honorary post of chancellor at the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

O'Connor cited her husband's struggle with Alzheimer's disease as her primary reason for leaving the court. After moving into an assisted living center, John O'Connor struck up a romance with a fellow Alzheimer's patient, a relationship experts say is not uncommon among people with dementia. The retired justice was relieved that he was comfortable and happy at the center, according to her son, Scott.

On the bench, O'Connor generally favored states in disputes with the federal government. She often sided with police when they faced claims of violating people's rights. In 1985, she wrote for the court as it ruled that the confession of a criminal suspect first warned about his rights may be used as trial evidence, even if police violated the suspect's rights in obtaining an earlier confession.

A 1991 decision written by O'Connor said police do not violate the Constitution's ban against unreasonable searches and seizures when they board buses and randomly ask passengers to consent to being searched. In a 1994 decision, O'Connor said police officers need not stop questioning and seek clarification when a criminal suspect makes what might have been an ambiguous request for legal help.

O'Connor wrote for the court in 1992, when it said prison guards violate inmates' rights by using unnecessary physical force even if no serious injuries result, and in 1993, when it ruled that employers may be guilty of illegal sexual harassment even in the absence of any psychological harm.

In 2004, O'Connor wrote the majority opinion that went against the Bush administration in ruling that an American citizen seized on the Afghanistan battlefield can challenge his detention in U.S. courts. "We have long since made clear that a state of war is not a blank check for the President when it comes to the rights of the Nation's citizens," O'Connor wrote.

O'Connor once described herself and her eight fellow justices as nine firefighters: "When (someone) lights a fire, we invariably are asked to attend to the blaze. We may arrive at the scene a few years later."

O'Connor announced her retirement in a one-sentence written statement. She cited her age, then 75, and said she "needs to spend time" with her family. Her official resignation letter to Bush was similarly succinct. "It has been a great privilege indeed to have served as a member of the court for 24 terms," the justice wrote. "I will leave it with enormous respect for the integrity of the court and its role under our constitutional structure."

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"For an old ranching girl, you turned out pretty good," Bush told her in a private call not long after receiving her letter, an aide said. Then, in the Rose Garden outside the Oval Office, he praised her as "a discerning and conscientious judge and a public servant of complete integrity."

O'Connor was 51 when she joined the court to replace the retired Potter Stewart. A virtual unknown on the national scene until her appointment, she had served as an Arizona state judge and before that as a member of her state's Legislature.

The woman who climbed higher in the legal profession than had any other woman did not begin her career auspiciously. As a top-ranked graduate of Stanford's prestigious law school, class of 1952, O'Connor discovered that most large law firms did not hire women.

One Los Angeles firm offered her a job as a secretary. Perhaps it was that early experience that shaped O'Connor's professional tenacity. While workweeks typically stretched to 60 hours or more, she found time to play tennis and golf. Before her husband developed Alzheimer's, they danced expertly and made frequent appearances on the Washington party circuit.

O'Connor's survivors include her three sons, Scott, Brian and Jay, six grandchildren and a brother.

In late 1988, O'Connor was diagnosed as having breast cancer, and she underwent a mastectomy. She missed just two weeks of work. That same year, she had her appendix removed.

O'Connor was embarrassed in 1989 after conservative Republicans in Arizona used a letter she had sent to support their claim that the United States is a "Christian nation." The 1988 letter, which prompted some harsh criticism of O'Connor by legal scholars, cited three Supreme Court rulings in which the nation's Christian heritage was discussed.

O'Connor said she regretted the letter's use in a political debate. "It was not my intention to express a personal view on the subject of the inquiry," she said.

Funeral plans were not immediately available.

Lawsuits against Trump over Jan. 6 riot can move forward, appeals court rules

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawsuits against Donald Trump over the U.S. Capitol riot can move forward, a federal appeals court ruled on Friday, rejecting the former president's bid to dismiss the cases accusing him of inciting the violent mob on Jan. 6, 2021.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit court knocked down Trump's sweeping claims that presidential immunity shields him from liability in the lawsuits brought by Democratic lawmakers and police officers. But the three-judge panel said the 2024 Republican presidential primary frontrunner can continue to fight, as the cases proceed, to try to prove that his actions were taken in his official capacity as president.

Trump has said he can't be sued over the riot that left dozens of police officers injured, arguing that his words during a rally before the storming of the Capitol addressed "matters of public concern" and fall within the scope of absolute presidential immunity.

The decision comes as Trump's lawyers are arguing he is also immune from prosecution in the separate criminal case brought by special counsel Jack Smith that accuses Trump of illegally plotting to overturn his election loss to President Joe Biden. Smith's team has signaled that it will make the case at trial that Trump is responsible for the violence at the Capitol and point to Trump's continued embrace of the Jan. 6 rioters on the campaign trail to argue that he intended for the chaos that day.

Friday's ruling underscores the challenges facing Trump as he tries to persuade courts, and potentially juries, that the actions he took in the run-up to the riot were part of his official duties as president. The judge presiding over his election subversion criminal trial, Tanya Chutkan, also rejected that claim in an order released Friday night.

While courts have afforded presidents broad immunity for their official acts, the judges made clear that that protection does not cover just any act or speech undertaken by a president. A president running for a second term, for example, is not carrying out the official duties of the presidency when he is speaking

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at a rally funded by his reelection campaign or attends a private fundraiser, the appeals court said.

"He is acting as office-seeker, not office-holder — no less than are the persons running against him when they take precisely the same actions in their competing campaigns to attain precisely the same office," Judge Sri Srinivasan wrote for the court.

But the court said its decision is not necessarily the final word on the issue of presidential immunity, leaving the door open for Trump to keep fighting the issue. And it took pains to note that it was not being asked to evaluate whether Trump was responsible for the riot or should be held to account in court. It also said Trump could still seek to argue that his actions were protected by the First Amendment — a claim he's also made in his pending criminal case — or covered by other privileges.

"When these cases move forward in the district court, he must be afforded the opportunity to develop his own facts on the immunity question if he desires to show that he took the actions alleged in the complaints in his official capacity as president rather than in his unofficial capacity as a candidate," the court said.

Trump could ask the full appeals court to take up the matter or go to the U.S. Supreme Court. A lawyer for Trump, Jesse Binnall, did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment on the ruling. A Trump campaign spokesperson called the decision "limited, narrow and procedural."

"The facts fully show that on January 6 President Trump was acting on behalf of the American people, carrying out his duties as president of the United States. Moreover, his admonition that his supporters 'peacefully and patriotically make (their) voices heard,' along with a myriad other statements prove that these Democrat Hoaxes are completely meritless," spokesperson Steven Cheung said in a statement.

The lawsuits seek civil damages for harms they say they endured when rioters descended on the Capitol as Congress met to certify Biden's election victory, smashing windows, engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police officers and sending lawmakers running into hiding. One of the lawsuits, filed by Rep. Eric Swalwell, a Democrat from California, alleges that Trump directly incited the violence at the Capitol "and then watched approvingly as the building was overrun."

Two other lawsuits were also filed, one by other House Democrats and another by officers James Blassingame and Sidney Hemby, who were both injured in the riot. Blassingame said Friday that he "couldn't be more committed to pursuing accountability" in the case.

"More than two years later, it is unnerving to hear the same fabrications and dangerous rhetoric that put my life as well as the lives of my fellow officers in danger on January 6, 2021," he said in a statement. He added: "I hope our case will assist with helping put our democracy back on the right track; making it crystal clear that no person, regardless of title or position of stature, is above the rule of law."

Lawyers in the Justice Department's civil division urged the court earlier this year to let the cases proceed, arguing that a president wouldn't be protected by absolute immunity if his words were found to have been an "incitement of imminent private violence."

The current appeal was decided by a unanimous three-court panel that included Judge Gregory Katsas, a Trump appointee to the bench who authored his own concurring opinion.

Inmate who stabbed Derek Chauvin 22 times is charged with attempted murder, prosecutors say

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

Derek Chauvin was stabbed in prison 22 times by a former gang leader and one-time FBI informant who told investigators he targeted the ex-Minneapolis police officer because of his notoriety for killing George Floyd, federal prosecutors said Friday.

John Turscak was charged with attempted murder a week after the Nov. 24 attack at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tucson, Arizona. He told correctional officers he would have killed Chauvin had they not responded so quickly, prosecutors said.

Turscak, who is serving a 30-year sentence for crimes committed while a member of the Mexican Mafia prison gang, told investigators he thought about attacking Chauvin for a month because he is a high-profile inmate but denied wanting to kill him, prosecutors said.

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Turscak is accused of attacking Chauvin with an improvised knife in the prison law library around 12:30 p.m. on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. Correctional officers used pepper spray to subdue Turscak, prosecutors said. The Bureau of Prisons said employees performed "life-saving measures." Chauvin was taken to a hospital for treatment.

Turscak told FBI agents interviewing him after the assault that he attacked Chauvin on Black Friday as a symbolic connection to the Black Lives Matter movement, which garnered widespread support in the wake of Floyd's murder in 2020, and the "Black Hand" symbol associated with the Mexican Mafia, prosecutors said.

In addition to attempted murder, Turscak, 52, is charged with assault with intent to commit murder, assault with a dangerous weapon and assault resulting in serious bodily injury. The attempted murder and assault with intent to commit murder charges are each punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Turscak is scheduled to complete his current sentence in 2026.

A lawyer for Turscak was not listed in court records. Turscak has represented himself from prison in numerous court matters. After the stabbing, he was moved to an adjacent federal penitentiary in Tucson, where he remained in custody Friday, inmate records show.

Messages seeking comment were left with Chauvin's lawyers. His mother, Carolyn Runge Pawlenty, did not immediately respond to a Facebook message.

In a post earlier Friday, Pawlenty said prison officials had told her that Chauvin was in stable condition but were otherwise not forthcoming with details about the assault or his injuries. The Bureau of Prisons said it gave updates to everyone Chauvin asked be notified.

Chauvin, 47, was sent to FCI Tucson from a maximum-security Minnesota state prison in August 2022 to simultaneously serve a 21-year federal sentence for violating Floyd's civil rights and a 22½-year state sentence for second-degree murder.

Chauvin's lawyer at the time, Eric Nelson, had advocated for keeping him out of general population and away from other inmates, anticipating he would be a target. In Minnesota, Chauvin was mainly kept in solitary confinement "largely for his own protection," Nelson wrote in court papers last year.

Last month, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected Chauvin's appeal of his murder conviction. Separately, Chauvin is making a longshot bid to overturn his federal guilty plea, claiming new evidence shows he didn't cause Floyd's death.

Floyd, who was Black, died on May 25, 2020, after Chauvin, who is white, pressed a knee on his neck for 9½ minutes on the street outside a convenience store where Floyd was suspected of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Bystander video captured Floyd's fading cries of "I can't breathe." His death touched off protests world-wide, some of which turned violent, and forced a national reckoning with police brutality and racism.

Three other former officers who were at the scene received lesser state and federal sentences for their roles in Floyd's death.

Chauvin's stabbing comes as the federal Bureau of Prisons has faced increased scrutiny in recent years following the beating death of James "Whitey" Bulger in 2018 and wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein's jail suicide in 2019.

The attack on Chauvin was the third incident involving a high-profile federal prison inmate in the last six months. Disgraced former sports doctor Larry Nassar was stabbed in July at a federal penitentiary in Florida and "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski killed himself at a federal medical center in June.

An ongoing Associated Press investigation has uncovered deep, previously unreported flaws within the Bureau of Prisons, the Justice Department's largest law enforcement agency with more than 30,000 employees, 158,000 inmates and an annual budget of about \$8 billion.

AP reporting has revealed rampant sexual abuse and other criminal conduct by staff, dozens of escapes, chronic violence, deaths and severe staffing shortages that have hampered responses to emergencies, including inmate assaults and suicides.

Turscak led a faction of the Mexican Mafia in the Los Angeles area in the late 1990s and went by the nickname "Stranger," according to court records. He became an FBI informant in 1997, providing information

about the gang and recordings of conversations he had with its members and associates. The Mexican Mafia, a prevalent U.S. prison gang, was involved in a fatal 2022 altercation at a federal penitentiary in Texas.

The investigation Turscak was aiding led to more than 40 indictments. But about midway through, the FBI dropped Turscak as an informant because he was still dealing drugs, extorting money and authorizing assaults. According to court papers, Turscak plotted attacks on rival gang members and was accused of attempting to kill a leader of a rival Mexican Mafia faction while also being targeted himself.

Turscak pleaded guilty in 2001 to racketeering and conspiring to kill a gang rival. He said he thought his cooperation with the FBI would have earned a lighter sentence.

"I didn't commit those crimes for kicks," Turscak said, according to news reports about his sentencing. "I did them because I had to if I wanted to stay alive. I told that to the FBI agents and they just said, 'Do what you have to do.'"

Judge rejects Trump's claim of immunity in his federal 2020 election prosecution

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump is not immune from prosecution in his election interference case in Washington, a federal judge ruled Friday, knocking down the Republican's bid to derail the case charging him with plotting to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan's decision amounts to a sharp rejection to challenges the Trump defense team had raised to the four-count indictment in advance of a trial expected to center on the Republican's multi-pronged efforts to undo the election won by Democrat Joe Biden.

Though the judge turned aside Trump's expansive view of presidential power, the order might not be the final say in the legal fight. Lawyers for Trump, who has denied any wrongdoing, are expected to quickly appeal to fight what they say an unsettled legal question.

In her ruling, Chutkan said the office of the president "does not confer a lifelong 'get-out-of-jail-free' pass." "Former Presidents enjoy no special conditions on their federal criminal liability," Chutkan wrote. "Defendant may be subject to federal investigation, indictment, prosecution, conviction, and punishment for any criminal acts undertaken while in office."

Chutkan also rejected Trump's claims that the indictment violates the former president's free speech rights. Lawyers for Trump had argued that he was within his First Amendment rights to challenge the outcome of the election and to allege that it had been tainted by fraud, and they accused prosecutors of attempting to criminalize political speech and political advocacy.

But Chutkan said "it is well established that the First Amendment does not protect speech that is used as an instrument of a crime."

"Defendant is not being prosecuted simply for making false statements ... but rather for knowingly making false statements in furtherance of a criminal conspiracy and obstructing the electoral process," she wrote.

An attorney for Trump declined to comment Friday evening.

Her ruling comes the same day the federal appeals court in Washington ruled that lawsuits brought by Democratic lawmakers and police officers who have accused Trump of inciting the U.S. Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, can move forward.

The appeals court in that case rejected Trump's sweeping claims that presidential immunity shields him from liability, but left the door open for him to continue to fight, as the cases proceed, to try to prove that his actions were taken in his official capacity as president.

Trump's legal team had argued the criminal case, which is scheduled to go to trial in March, should be dismissed because the 2024 Republican presidential primary front-runner is shielded from prosecution for actions he took while fulfilling his duties as president. They assert that the actions detailed in the indictment — including pressuring state officials on the administration of elections — cut to the core of Trump's responsibilities as commander in chief.

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The Supreme Court has held that presidents are immune from civil liability for actions related to their official duties, but the justices have never grappled with the question of whether that immunity extends to criminal prosecution.

The Justice Department has also held that sitting presidents cannot be prosecuted. Trump's lawyers are trying to ensure that same protection to a former president for actions taken while in office, asserting that no prosecutor since the beginning of American democracy has had the authority to bring such charges.

"Against the weight of that history, Defendant argues in essence that because no other former Presidents have been criminally prosecuted, it would be unconstitutional to start now," Chutkan wrote. "But while a former President's prosecution is unprecedented, so too are the allegations that a President committed the crimes with which Defendant is charged."

Special counsel Jack Smith's team has said there is nothing in the Constitution, or in court precedent, to support the idea that a former president cannot be prosecuted for criminal conduct committed while in the White House.

"The defendant is not above the law. He is subject to the federal criminal laws like more than 330 million other Americans, including Members of Congress, federal judges, and everyday citizens," prosecutors wrote in court papers.

It's one of four criminal cases Trump is facing while he seeks to reclaim the White House in 2024.

Smith has separately charged Trump in Florida with illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after he left the White House. Trump is also charged in Georgia with conspiring to overturn his election loss to Biden. And he faces charges in New York related to hush-money payments made during the 2016 campaign.

Flu is on the rise while RSV infections may be peaking, US health officials say

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Flu is picking up steam while RSV lung infections that can hit kids and older people hard may be peaking, U.S. health officials said Friday.

COVID-19, though, continues to cause the most hospitalizations and deaths among respiratory illnesses — about 15,000 hospitalizations and about 1,000 deaths every week, said Dr. Mandy Cohen, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The agency is also looking into reports of pneumonia outbreaks in children in two states, but Cohen said "there is no evidence" that they are due to anything unusual.

As for the flu season, seven states were reporting high levels of flu-like illnesses in early November. In a new CDC report on Friday, the agency said the tally was up to 11 states — mostly in the South and Southwest.

In the last month, RSV infections rose sharply in some parts of the country, nearly filling hospital emergency departments in Georgia, Texas and some other states. But "we think we're near the peak of RSV season or will be in the next week or so," Cohen said.

RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus is a common cause of mild coldlike symptoms but it can be dangerous for infants and older people.

Cohen was asked about pneumonia cases in children reported in Massachusetts and in Warren County, Ohio, near Cincinnati. There are a number of possible causes of the lung infection, and it can be a complication of COVID-19, flu, or RSV.

In Ohio, health officials have reported 145 cases since August and most of the children recovered at home. The illnesses were caused by a variety of common viruses and bacteria, officials said.

Massachusetts health officials said there's been a modest increase in pneumonia in kids but that it is appropriate for the season.

China recently had a surge in respiratory illnesses which health officials there attributed to the flu and other customary causes.

Trump attorney says trial during campaign would be 'election interference' if he is GOP nominee

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — An attorney for former President Donald Trump said Friday it would amount to "election interference" if his client is the Republican nominee for president while on trial in Georgia in the months running up to the general election.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee opened the door for discussion on trial timing while considering requests by two of the former president's co-defendants to delay certain pretrial deadlines. But he said he didn't plan to make any immediate decisions on a trial date.

District Attorney Fani Willis last month asked that all defendants remaining in the case — currently Trump and 14 others — be tried together beginning Aug. 5. Prosecutors have previously estimated it would take them four months to present their case, not including jury selection. That would mean the trial would be underway during the final months of the election campaign.

"Can you imagine the notion of the Republican nominee for president not being able to to campaign for the presidency because he is, in some form or fashion, in a courtroom defending himself?" Sadow said during the Friday hearing, later adding, "That would be the most effective election interference in the history of the United States."

Prosecutor Nathan Wade rejected that idea.

"This trial does not constitute election interference," he said, later adding, "This is moving forward with the business of Fulton County. I don't think that it in any way impedes defendant Trump's ability to campaign or whatever he needs to do in order to seek office."

A Fulton County grand jury in August indicted Trump and 18 others, accusing them of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally try to overturn the result of the 2020 election and to keep Trump in power even though he had lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Four defendants have already pleaded guilty after reaching deals with prosecutors. The remaining 15, including Trump, have pleaded not guilty.

Trump is the early front-runner for the Republican nomination for president. Sadow also noted that his client has three other criminal trials set for next year — federal cases in Washington and Florida and a state case in New York — and said that could also preclude an August trial date. Sadow suggested that a trial date not be set right now to allow time to see how things play out.

Asked by the judge whether Trump could be tried in 2025 if he were to be elected president next November, Sadow said he believes that the U.S. Constitution's supremacy clause and the presidential duties would mean that he could not be tried until he was out of office.

Willis had also asked the judge to set a final plea date of June 21, writing that prosecutors would consider plea deals up until that date and intend to recommend the maximum penalties at any sentencing hearings after that. McAfee said Friday he wasn't sure that was necessary, that the district attorney could independently set a date after which she wouldn't consider plea deals.

Attorney Buddy Parker, who represents lawyer John Eastman, told the judge his client is concerned about the possibility of a trial date being set in 2025, saying that would mean it was more than a year that his case would be pending.

"There are a number of defendants, as noted, who are not running for the presidency of the United States," Parker said, adding that his client would like to be tried separately from Trump because of the complications involved and would even be in favor of going to trial before August.

Prosecutors have consistently said they want to have one trial in the case, citing efficiency and fairness. McAfee has previously expressed skepticism at bringing more than a dozen defendants to trial at once and he reiterated that doubt on Friday.

He said it's more likely that the defendants would be split into two groups and prosecutors would have the right to determine who's in the first group to be tried. If someone in the first group were to reach a plea before trial, then someone from the second group would be substituted in, he said.

The discussion of timing came up while McAfee was hearing arguments on requests by Trump White

House chief of staff Mark Meadows and former U.S. Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark's requests to delay the deadline for each of them to file pretrial motions. They are both trying to have their cases moved to federal court. A federal judge has rejected those requests, but they have both appealed.

The motions deadline for all defendants is Jan. 8. McAfee agreed to postpone that deadline to Feb. 1 for Meadows and Clark.

During the hours-long Friday hearing, McAfee also heard arguments on a slew of other defense motions, many challenging all or part of the indictment on various grounds. Defense attorneys argued that a group of Republicans who met at the state Capitol in December 2020 and signed certificates saying they were the state's presidential electors acted properly. And they argued that the actions alleged in the indictment amount to political speech that the First Amendment protects.

Sadow also said he plans to file a motion asserting presidential immunity for Trump, who was in office when most of the actions alleged in the indictment took place. And Sadow told the judge he wants to seek subpoenas for lists of evidence produced in the case brought against Trump by Department of Justice special counsel Jack Smith to see if any of it is relevant to the Georgia case.

The AP Interview: Ukraine's Zelenskyy says the war with Russia is in a new phase as winter looms

By JAMES JORDAN, SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the war with Russia is in a new stage, with winter expected to complicate fighting after a summer counteroffensive that failed to produce desired results due to enduring shortages of weapons and ground forces.

Despite setbacks, however, he said Ukraine won't give up.

"We have a new phase of war, and that is a fact," Zelenskyy said in an exclusive interview Thursday with The Associated Press in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine after a morale-boosting tour of the region. "Winter as a whole is a new phase of war."

Asked if he was satisfied by the results of the counteroffensive, he gave a complex answer.

"Look, we are not backing down, I am satisfied. We are fighting with the second (best) army in the world, I am satisfied," he said, referring to the Russian military. But he added: "We are losing people, I'm not satisfied. We didn't get all the weapons we wanted, I can't be satisfied, but I also can't complain too much."

Zelenskyy also said he fears the Israel-Hamas war threatens to overshadow the conflict in Ukraine, as competing political agendas and limited resources put the flow of Western military aid to Kyiv at risk.

And those concerns are amplified by the tumult that inevitably arises during a U.S. election year and its potential implications for his country, which has seen the international community largely rally around it following Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion.

The highly anticipated counteroffensive, powered by tens of billions of dollars in Western military aid, including heavy weaponry, did not forge the expected breakthroughs. Now, some Ukrainian officials worry whether further assistance will be as generous.

At the same time, ammunition stockpiles are running low, threatening to bring Ukrainian battlefield operations to a standstill.

With winter set to cloak a wartime Ukraine once again, military leaders must contend with new but familiar challenges as the conflict grinds toward the end of its second full year: There are freezing temperatures and barren fields that leave soldiers exposed. And there's the renewed threat of widespread Russian aerial assaults in cities that target energy infrastructure and civilians.

On Nov. 25, Moscow launched its most extensive drone attack of the war, with most of the 75 Iranian-made Shahed drones targeting Kyiv in a troubling precedent for the months ahead.

"That is why a winter war is difficult," Zelenskyy said.

He gave a frank appraisal of the last summer's counteroffensive.

"We wanted faster results. From that perspective, unfortunately, we did not achieve the desired results.

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And this is a fact," he said.

Ukraine did not get all the weapons it needed from allies, he said, and limits in the size of his military force precluded a quick advance, he said.

"There is not enough power to achieve the desired results faster. But this does not mean that we should give up, that we have to surrender," Zelenskyy said. "We are confident in our actions. We fight for what is ours."

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, responding to Zelenskyy's comments about military aid, said the U.S. provided "unprecedented" support.

"I certainly can't dispute President Zelenskyy's estimation that they haven't achieved the success that they had hoped to achieve," Kirby said. "But I can assure you that the United States has done everything we can."

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration wants to give more but faces resistance from Republican representatives in Congress, Kirby said.

"And if we don't get that support from Congress, the message it is going to send around the world about how much Ukraine matters and how much the United States and our leadership can deliver to our partners around the world is going to be loud and clear and deeply unfortunate," Kirby said.

Zelenskyy said there were some positive takeaways from the last few months.

Ukraine managed to make incremental territorial gains against a better-armed and fortified enemy, Zelenskyy said.

In addition, the might of Moscow's Black Sea Fleet has been diminished, following Ukrainian attacks that penetrated air defenses and struck its headquarters in occupied Crimea, Zelenskyy added.

And a temporary grain corridor established by Kyiv following Russia's withdrawal from a wartime agreement to ensure the safe exports is still working.

Zelenskyy, though, isn't dwelling on the past but is focused on the next stage — boosting domestic arms production.

A sizeable chunk of Ukraine's budget is allocated for that, but current output is far from enough to turn the tide of war. Now, Zelenskyy is looking to Western allies, including the U.S., to offer favorable loans and contracts to meet that goal.

"This is the way out," Zelenskyy said, adding that nothing terrifies Russia more than a militarily self-sufficient Ukraine.

When he last met with Biden, members of Congress and other top officials, he made one urgent appeal: Give Ukraine cheap loans and licenses to manufacture U.S. weaponry.

"Give us these opportunities, and we will build," he said he told them. "Whatever effort and time it will take, we will do it, and we will do it very quickly."

Zelenskyy remains concerned that upheaval in the Middle East, the most violent in decades, threatens to take global attention and resources away from Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

"We already can see the consequences of the international community shifting (attention) because of the tragedy in the Middle East," he said. "Only the blind don't recognize this."

Ukrainians understand "that we also need to fight for attention for the full-scale war," he said. "We must not allow people to forget about the war here."

That change in focus could lead to less economic and military assistance for his country, he said. In an apparent attempt to assuage those fears, U.S. and European officials have continued to visit Kyiv since the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel.

The shift still concerns him, Zelenskyy said.

"You see, attention equals help. No attention will mean no help. We fight for every bit of attention," he said. "Without attention, there may be weakness in (the U.S.) Congress."

Turning to the upcoming U.S. presidential and congressional campaigns, where Biden faces skepticism over his staunch support for Kyiv, Zelenskyy acknowledged that "elections are always a shock, and it is completely understandable."

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A recent AP poll in the U.S. showed nearly half of Americans think too much is being spent on Ukraine. An increasing number of Republicans are not in favor of sending more aid, and it is not clear if or when a request from the White House for additional aid will be approved by Congress.

When asked about this, Zelenskyy replied bluntly that "the choice of Americans is the choice of Americans." But he argued that by helping Ukraine, Americans are also helping themselves.

"In the case of Ukraine, if resilience fails today due to lack of aid and shortages of weapons and funding, it will mean that Russia will most likely invade NATO countries," he said. "And then the American children will fight."

Zelenskyy has sought recently to ensure Ukraine's war machine was running as it should by making a recent shakeup of top-level government officials, touching on another of his goals to fight graft in a post-Soviet institution rife with corruption as a prelude to joining the European Union.

He said he has to know how weapons, supplies, food and even clothing are being delivered to the front — and what fails to get there.

"On one hand, this is not the job of the president, but on the other hand, I can trust those who did not just pass on the information to me, but told me in person," he said.

The static battle lines have not brought pressure from Ukraine's allies to negotiate a peace deal with Russia.

"I don't feel it yet," he said, although he added: "Some voices are always heard."

Ukraine wants to "push the formula for peace and involve as many countries of the world as possible, so that they politically isolate Russia," he noted.

The war has also made it impossible to hold a presidential election in Ukraine, originally slated for March under the constitution, he said.

Although Zelenskyy said he was ready to hold an election, most Ukrainians are not, believing such a vote to be "dangerous and meaningless" as war rages around them.

With a budget anticipating spending 22% of the country's GDP for defense and national security, Ukraine's economy is being restructured around a war with no end in sight, much like the day-to-day lives of its citizens.

That raised another question: How long can Zelenskyy himself cope with being the leader of a country at war?

There are no words to describe how difficult the job is, he said, but he also can't imagine leaving the post. "You honestly can't do that," he said. "This would be very unfair, wrong and definitely demotivating."

5 takeaways from AP's Black attorneys general interviews about race, justice and politics

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — At a moment of record visibility and influence for Black attorneys in the United States, debates over race, criminal justice and democracy are increasingly at the center of the public conversation. Many of these Black litigators and law enforcement officials have made history, from the White House and the Supreme Court to the halls of Congress, but their perspectives and approaches to role aren't monolithic.

In wide-ranging interviews with The Associated Press, six sitting Black attorneys general discussed the challenges and opportunities of serving as the top law enforcement officer in their respective states. The interviews shed light on the interplay between public safety, criminal justice reform, the rule of law and other foundational questions facing a justice system under unprecedented strain and doubt from the American public.

Here are some of the biggest takeaways from the conversations:

Black attorneys general are at the forefront of criminal justice reform efforts

Black attorneys general have emerged as some of the most prominent advocates of reform to the criminal justice system. Many said their efforts are informed by personal and familial experiences with the system's

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well-documented tendency to over-police and under-service communities of color.

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell said the public expects that Black attorneys general "will take out bias that exists in criminal or civil prosecutions, that we will focus on communities of color and do it in such a way that recognizes those communities are often overpoliced and under-protected."

Campbell is the third Black woman elected as a state attorney general.

The attorneys general each noted that they use their prosecutorial discretion to advance reforms within the system, but there are limits to what such efforts can bring.

Keith Ellison, Minnesota's attorney general, successfully prosecuted former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd but says he has seen mixed progress on criminal justice reform since Chauvin's conviction.

Ellison said he believes attorney general involvement is "probably" needed to advance reform at the state and local level.

"One of my big worries after the (George Floyd) case is that now people get to say, 'Well, you know, we convicted that guy. Move on,'" Ellison said. "If we've made a change, it's been incremental."

Black prosecutors have emerged as prominent figures on democracy issues

In the aftermath of the 2020 election, prosecution seeking accountability for alleged election subversion by Donald Trump and his allies has moved to the center of U.S. political discourse.

Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford, who litigated multiple cases over the integrity of his state's elections, said he was shocked that "folks would be pushing back on the legitimacy of our elections and undermining our democracy."

Trump has faced other legal woes, including a case brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James, whose civil fraud case against The Trump Organization alleges that the firm misrepresented the valuations of his properties in official documents.

James said Trump uses attacks on the judicial system "as a microphone" for a political message that "plays upon individuals' fears and lack of hope and their dissolution in how the system has failed them."

Two Black prosecutors, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis in Georgia and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg in New York, are prosecuting Trump on election interference issues raised in both of his presidential runs. Trump has lashed out at James, Bragg and Willis with language often evoking racist and stereotypical tropes, such as using terms like "animal" and "rabid."

Black Democratic attorneys general learn from and collaborate with one another

The interviewed attorneys general confirmed that they frequently call, text and communicate with one another. While the group of six, who are all Democrats, say they are regularly in contact with all their peers across the country, as barrier breakers in many cases they also lean on each other for support. They also borrow tactics and policies from each other, several of the attorneys general said.

"We have a little group and we're in regular communication. We boost each other up. We stick with each other and celebrate each other a lot," Ellison said.

Ellison, for instance, knew Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown from their time together in Congress. He advised Brown, who was elected in 2022, on the merits of transitioning into the top law enforcement job and cited his achievements in the role since his 2018 election as an example.

Black attorneys general see greater public trust as essential to greater public safety

Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown's top priority is to decrease racial disparities in the incarcerated population of his state through a multifaceted partnership with state and local police, as well as civic organizations, to reduce crime and disparate sentencing.

The key to more effective police and safety communities, each attorney general insisted, was greater trust and more accountability for bad actors both criminal and in law enforcement.

"You don't solve crimes unless you have communities that trust that they can go to law enforcement," said Kwame Raoul, attorney general of Illinois. "And people don't trust that they can go to law enforcement if they think that law enforcement is engaging in unconstitutional policing."

Black attorneys general see greater representation as secondary to racial justice goals

While greater representation has often been seen as integral to advancing racial justice, the attorneys

general were mixed on its importance over the substance of their work. The spectrum underscores the balance between representation and policy impact on a system that has long resisted both.

"Being a Black man in a position of power during that particular time gave me a voice where I was able to get unanimity," Ford said of his ability to advance criminal justice reform legislation in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd.

James described her many barrier-breaking accolades as "nothing more than historical footnote" and said she was only motivated by "sweet, sweet justice" for marginalized communities. Campbell, who began her career providing legal aid in her community, said that attorneys general "significant authority" and "divisiveness" at the federal level gave them an opportunity for greater impact while other politicians focus their energies elsewhere.

Blinken sees goals largely unfulfilled in Mideast trip, even as Israel pledges to protect civilians

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned to the Mideast this week pressing for agreements to extend the Gaza cease-fire, step up the release of hostages held by Hamas and limit Palestinian civilian casualties if fighting with Israel resumed. He left Friday with his goals largely unfulfilled.

Blinken wrapped up his third Middle East tour since the Israel-Hamas war started in October with decidedly mixed results. He watched as the seven-day cease-fire agreement collapsed under new Hamas attacks and Israeli airstrikes.

And, it remained uncertain if Israel would follow through on commitments to protect Palestinian civilians from military operations in the southern Gaza Strip, as he warned they should, or whether Hamas would engage in future hostage negotiations.

Blinken arrived in Israel on Thursday with hopes to see a further extension of the cease-fire agreement under which Israel had halted most military operations in exchange for the release of hostages held by Hamas.

Blinken said Friday that Hamas bore the blame for the failure while the U.S. would continue to push for extensions to release hostages and boost the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Yet, he also warned Israel that it must adhere to international laws of war as it prosecutes its campaign to eradicate Hamas.

"It came to an end because of Hamas," Blinken said of the cease-fire. "Hamas reneged on commitments it made. In fact, even before the pause came to an end, it committed an atrocious terrorist attack in Jerusalem, killing three people, wounding others, including Americans."

"It began firing rockets before the pause had ended and, as I said, it reneged on commitments it made in terms of releasing certain hostages. We remain intensely focused on getting everyone home, getting hostages back," Blinken told reporters in the United Arab Emirates. "We're still at this."

His comments came after he met with Arab foreign ministers in Dubai on Friday to discuss the Gaza situation on the sidelines of the COP28 climate change conference. Blinken saw his counterparts from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian Authority, according to the State Department.

He said they discussed the need to increase humanitarian aid to Gaza, to secure the release of hostages, protect innocent life and begin to plan for a post-conflict Gaza, an issue that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and many Arab leaders have been loath to discuss while the hostilities are continuing.

A day earlier, he had said in Tel Aviv that "the way Israel defends itself matters. It's imperative that Israel act in accordance with international humanitarian law and the laws of war, even when confronting a terrorist group that respects neither."

But as he left the region it appeared uncertain that Israel would follow through on commitments it made to him to protect Palestinian civilians from military operations in the southern Gaza Strip or that Hamas

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would engage in future negotiations over hostage releases.

"We saw Israel take steps immediately today to start to get information to people about where safe areas are, how they can get out of harm's way," he said, referring to leaflets dropped by Israel informing Palestinians in Gaza that their neighborhoods would be targeted and they should leave.

"I haven't had a chance to see exactly what happened today," he said when asked about reports that the Hamas-controlled Palestinian health ministry in Gaza said more than 100 people were killed in Israeli strikes on Friday.

"I saw the plans that Israel has in a multiplicity of ways to do everything possible to protect civilians, including making sure that they have the information they need and there are ways to accommodate them," Blinken said. "This is going to be very important going forward. It's something we're going to be looking at very closely."

During his visit, Blinken lauded accomplishments he said the Biden administration had achieved in intensive diplomacy conducted by himself, the White House and the CIA: an increase in aid to Gaza, the release of some 100 hostages and the exit from Gaza of some foreign nationals.

Still, as he left the region, the major question remained unanswered. What happens if and when Israel wins?

"It is important for us to be talking about and thinking about every aspect of this challenge – not only today but also what happens the day after the conflict in Gaza is over," Blinken said. "How are we thinking about what happens in Gaza itself? How is it governed? Where does the security come from? How do we begin to rebuild? And critically, how we get on a path to invest in lasting peace. And for us, of course, that has to result in a state for the Palestinians."

Chicago and other northern US cities scramble to house migrants with coldest weather just ahead

By CLAIRE SAVAGE and MELISSA PEREZ WINDER Associated Press/Report for America

CHICAGO (AP) — Chicago is scrambling to house hundreds of asylum-seekers who are still sheltering on sidewalks, at police stations and at the city's busiest airport as the cold weather sets in and with winter just around the corner.

The country's third-largest city announced a partnership with religious leaders this week to house 400 of the migrants in churches. But with nighttime temperatures dropping below freezing and chillier conditions still ahead, more than 1,000 were still living at police stations or at O'Hare International Airport as of Friday, according to the city dashboard.

"As winter fast approaches, our need for greater collaboration and coordination grows. And that is why we are mobilizing Chicago's faith community and our partners in the philanthropic community to meet this moment," Mayor Brandon Johnson said at a news conference announcing the partnership.

More than 23,000 asylum-seekers have been bused to Chicago from Texas since the start of the year, according to the city. Other Democratic-led cities are grappling with similar influxes, including Denver, Houston, Los Angeles and New York, which has received more than 120,000 asylum-seekers.

Illinois announced this month that it would funnel an additional \$160 million to help resettle migrants who arrive in Chicago, including \$65 million to help the city build and operate two temporary shelters to avoid people sleeping out in the cold. On Friday, the state announced it would give an additional \$4 million that will go toward feeding asylum-seekers in partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository

Construction began this week on a structure meant to house 2,000 migrants in what had been a vacant lot in the Brighton Park neighborhood, but it's unclear how quickly it might be ready, as local residents have been protesting the project, saying it doesn't meet zoning requirements and that the soil at the site, which has a long history of industrial use, is toxic.

Alderwoman Julia Ramirez, who represents the ward on the City Council, said she opposes the project due to safety concerns for her constituents and the migrants.

"I will gladly shelter and welcome asylum-seekers. But I think that we haven't done it in a very dignified

and humane way," Ramirez told The Associated Press.

The state said it wouldn't move people into the shelter until it has been deemed safe. Johnson said Tuesday that an environmental report addressing concerns would be available by Friday.

Yimara Pajaro, a Venezuelan seamstress, said she and her partner had been camping outside a South Side police station for two months until they were moved Wednesday to a church near Washington Park as part of the faith community's resettlement initiative.

Sleeping outside in Chicago, which has had several snowfalls and subfreezing nights this fall, left them in bad shape, said Pajaro, who suffered three asthma attacks worsened by the cold.

Blankets did little to keep out the chill. "It affected me a lot," she said in Spanish.

Although Pajaro said she had no choice in whether to leave the police station, she feels grateful to be staying at the church. "At first we didn't want to leave because we didn't know where they would take us," she said.

The faith-led housing initiative will prioritize pregnant women, children, and those who have been sleeping outside, according to Johnson. The churches plan to host people for 60 days with the goal of transitioning them to independent living or another shelter afterward, according to Pastor Torrey Barrett of Life Center Church, which welcomed 40 migrants, including Pajaro, on Wednesday.

Pajaro said she wouldn't want to move to a shelter designed to hold thousands of people, like the one planned for Brighton Park. And if the site is polluted, "they should not bring anyone there," she said. "We will get sick. It seems like our health doesn't matter to them."

The city had hoped to move the migrants out of police stations by Dec. 1, but it wasn't able to do so, Ramirez said. But if the Brighton Park shelter is built, the city might be able to clear them out in the next few weeks, she said.

The mayors of Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles and New York have been pressing for more federal aid to deal with the surge. Migrants have been arriving in the Democrat-led cities on buses funded by the Republican governors of Texas and Florida. Critics initially waved off the effort as a political stunt, but more than a year later, the cities are struggling to cope with the influx and their resources are dwindling.

The situation is even more pressing in New York than in Chicago. New York has received more than 120,000 asylum seekers over the past year, and about half of them are staying in shelters run by the city, which is legally required to provide emergency housing to homeless people.

New York is intensifying efforts to transport migrants out of the city as its shelter system reaches capacity, setting up a dedicated office to provide asylum-seekers with free, one-way tickets to anywhere in the world.

New York Mayor Eric Adams has called the city's migrant influx a crisis and has begun to warn that shelters are so full that migrants will soon be forced onto the street despite the cold weather.

AP Exclusive: America's Black attorneys general discuss race, politics and the justice system

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The American legal system is facing a crisis of trust in communities around the country, with people of all races and across the political spectrum.

For many, recent protests against police brutality called attention to longstanding discrepancies in the administration of justice. For others, criticism of perceived conflicts of interest in the judiciary, as well as aspersions cast by former President Donald Trump and others on the independence of judges and law enforcement, have further damaged faith in the rule of law among broad swaths of the public.

Yet many Black attorneys understood the disparate impact the legal system can have on different communities long before the 2020 protests following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police. Many pursued legal careers and entered that same system to improve it, with some rising to one of its most influential roles, the top enforcement official: attorney general.

There is a record number of Black attorneys general, seven in total, serving today. Two Black attorneys,

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Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch, have served as U.S. attorney general. And the vice president, Kamala Harris, was the first Black woman elected attorney general.

In that same moment of increased representation, the U.S. is gripped by intense debates regarding justice, race and democracy. Black prosecutors have emerged as central figures litigating those issues, highlighting the achievements and limits of Black communal efforts to reform the justice system.

The Associated Press spoke with six sitting Black attorneys general about their views on racial equity, public safety, police accountability and protecting democratic institutions. While their worldviews and strategies sometimes clash, the group felt united in a mission to better a system they all agreed too often failed the people it's meant to serve.

A spokesperson for Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron, a Republican, did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

All interviewed attorneys general are Democrats. Each attorney general discussed how their backgrounds informed their approach to the law.

"I loved math, and I thought I was going to become an accountant. Clearly, that went a different direction as life happened," said Andrea Campbell, the attorney general of Massachusetts. She soon began a career providing legal aid in her community because "most of my childhood was entangled with the criminal legal system."

Anthony Brown and Kwame Raoul learned from their fathers, who were both physicians and Caribbean immigrants. Raoul, now the attorney general of Illinois, said he learned "to never forget where you came from and never forget the struggles that others go through."

Brown's father drew satisfaction from knowing that he made a difference in people's lives and taught him the importance of public service. "I saw that every day as a kid growing up," said Brown, a retired army colonel now serving as attorney general of Maryland.

Letitia James, the New York attorney general, said she came from "humble beginnings" and was "shaped by those who know struggle, pain, loss, but also perseverance." Aaron Ford, the attorney general of Nevada, attributed his achievements "because the government helped in a time of need to get to my next level."

And Keith Ellison, the attorney general of Minnesota, was raised on stories of his grandparents organizing Black voters in Louisiana at the height of Jim Crow, when they endured bomb threats and a burned cross at their home.

"That's who raised me. Because of that, I have a sensitivity to people who are being punished for trying to do the right thing. And that's what we dedicate our work to. And there's a lot more to it," Ellison said.

On reducing disparities in the criminal justice system

The American criminal justice system is plagued with well-documented inequality and racial disparities at every level. And while an outsized portion of defendants are people of color, prosecutors are mostly white. Many Black prosecutors entered the legal profession to bring the perspective of communities most impacted by the system into its decision-making processes.

"If we are in these roles, I think people expect, and rightfully so, that we will take on criminal legal reform, that we will take out bias that exists in criminal or civil prosecutions, that we will focus on communities of color and do it in such a way that recognizes those communities are often overpoliced and under-protected," Campbell said.

Efforts at reforming the justice system have been mixed. The disparity between Black and white rates of incarceration dropped by 40% between 2000 and 2020, according to a September 2022 report by the Council on Criminal Justice. But while the number of people incarcerated overall across that period slightly fell, policing and sentencing policies vary by state, leading to divergent realities across regions.

Brown has made reducing Maryland's high rate of Black male incarceration his "number one strategy priority." Maryland has the highest percentage of Black people incarcerated of any state, though Southeastern states like Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi have higher total populations of incarcerated Black people.

He created a civil rights division in his office and obtained greater powers from Maryland's general assembly to prosecute police-involved killings and bring such cases under civil rights law.

Both Brown and Campbell said that such reform efforts were in pursuit of both improving equity and

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law enforcement.

Better prison conditions and fairer justice systems, Campbell argued, reduce issues like recidivism and promote trust in the justice system overall.

"You can have accountability while also improving the conditions of confinement," Campbell said.

On addressing police misconduct

For Ellison, improving outcomes in the legal system can't happen without ensuring fair and equitable policing across communities.

"We want the system of justice to work for defendants and for victims both. And there's no reason it shouldn't," Ellison said. He believes involvement from attorneys general is "probably" needed "in order for it to happen."

Ellison, who successfully prosecuted former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for Floyd's murder, doesn't believe such a high-profile case of accountability for police misconduct, by itself, signaled a meaningful shift in police relations with underserved communities.

"One of my big worries after the Floyd case is that now people get to say, 'Well, you know, we convicted that guy. Move on,'" Ellison said.

Ellison reflected on how his experience as a Black man informed Chauvin's prosecution. "I knew right off that, based on my life experience, they're probably going to smear (Floyd)," Ellison said, referencing the various tropes he had expected the defense to use. "If I hadn't walked the life that I walk, I'm not sure I would have been able to see that coming."

He also noted that no federal policing legislation had been passed since the national protests in the wake of Floyd's murder. That didn't mean progress had not been made in Ellison's eyes, who pointed to various states and local reforms, including in Minnesota, which have enacted higher standards on police training, reforms on practices like no-knock warrants and instituted chokehold bans.

Such changes were often facilitated by Black lawmakers and law enforcement officials. Raoul recalled working on police reform measures with Republican legislators, several of whom were former law enforcement officers.

"Being a Black man in a position of power during that particular time gave me a voice where I was able to get unanimity," Ford said.

Campbell doesn't see public safety and racial justice as mutually exclusive.

"You can absolutely make sure that we are giving law enforcement every tool they need, every resource they need to do their jobs effectively, while at the same time taking on the misappropriation of funds, police misconduct, police brutality. All of that can happen at once," she said.

On protecting democracy and the rule of law

On issues such as voting rights and election interference, Black prosecutors have also drawn national attention for litigating cases examining potential election fraud and voter disenfranchisement.

"I took an oath of office when I got elected to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and of the state of Nevada," Ford said. "And I didn't know that literally meant we'd be protecting democracy in the sense that folks would be pushing back on the legitimacy of our elections and undermining our democracy."

In the aftermath of the 2020 election, his office litigated six lawsuits against Donald Trump's presidential campaign and allied groups, which argued without evidence that widespread voter fraud had corrupted Nevada's elections.

In November, Ford's office opened an investigation into the slate of electors Nevada Republicans drafted that falsely certified Trump had won the state's votes in the Electoral College. The lawsuit is the latest in a string of efforts by prosecutors at all levels of government to pursue potential criminal wrongdoing by Trump and his allies in efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

Two Black prosecutors, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis in Georgia and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg in New York, are prosecuting cases on related issues, as is a special counsel in the U.S. Department of Justice. The efforts have not come without criticism. Trump has lambasted James, Bragg and Willis with language often evoking racist and stereotypical tropes, such as using terms like "animal"

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and "rabid" to describe Black district attorneys.

James, who has sued Trump in a civil fraud case in which she argues the real estate mogul misrepresented the values of his assets around the world in financial statements to banks and insurance companies, said Trump tends to use his multiple legal entanglements "as a microphone" to sow more distrust for governmental institutions.

"He unfortunately plays upon individuals' fears and lack of hope and their dissolution in how the system has failed them. That's why he's garnered so much support," James said of Trump.

"He claims he wants to make America great again, but the reality is that America is already exceptional," James said. "It's unfortunate that we are so polarized because of the insecurities of one man."

On public safety and community needs

Public safety, the cost of living and other material needs are top of mind for most Americans since the coronavirus pandemic caused a spike in crime and economic anxiety. Attorneys general have broad mandates in administering resources, meaning they often can be nimbler in responding to pressing challenges than legislators.

"You don't solve crimes unless you have communities that trust that they can go to law enforcement," said Raoul, the Illinois attorney general. "And people don't trust that they can go to law enforcement if they think that law enforcement is engaging in unconstitutional policing."

Ellison and James both said a top priority was housing. "We've sued a lot of bad landlords," Ellison said. James said she was focused on real estate investors buying large amounts of working- and middle-class housing across her state, as well as cracking down on deed theft and rental discrimination in New York City.

Ellison has also established a wage theft unit in his office, which he says was informed by the experience of Black Americans.

The prosecutors learn from each other's crime-fighting techniques but aren't uniform in their strategies. Ford said he "can't just do a cut and paste job" for constituencies as diverse as his. But Raoul, for instance, has spearheaded a crackdown on retail store theft in Illinois that Brown has begun to emulate in Maryland.

"We do have significant authority to do a lot at once," Campbell said. "Divisiveness" at the federal level has prompted many people to turn to local and state officials for action, she said.

On increasing Black representation among prosecutors

Even as the number of high-profile black attorneys in the legal system has risen, many Black lawmakers, district attorneys, attorneys general, and judges are often still a barrier breaker in their communities and, in some cases, the country. While the interviewed officials say they stay in touch with all their peers, they also lean on their fellow Black attorneys general in unique ways.

"Keith Ellison and I served together in Congress. He was an inspiration to me when I was making the decision to move from Congress to the attorney general," Brown said. The group is in frequent communication through texts, calls and even joint travel domestically and abroad as they build working and personal relationships with each other.

"We have a little group and we're in regular communication. We boost each other up. We stick with each other and celebrate each other a lot," Ellison said.

The group views that collaboration as increasingly necessary due to a rising amount of litigation specifically aimed at issues of great interest to Black communities, several attorneys general said.

"There's an assault going on, an intentional assault against opportunities for the Black community at large and on diversity and inclusion," Raoul said.

Raoul cited lawsuits against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in areas ranging from higher education, contracting and employment opportunities as evidence of a "coordinated, well-funded assault on opportunity," he said.

"We cannot be found asleep at the wheel."

The group also uses their growing size and shared perspective as Black Americans to influence other attorneys general across the country.

"We know that we collectively force a conversation in the (attorney general) community at large simply by us being there," Raoul said. "That's not to say we don't debate with each other, and that's healthy as

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well. But we force a conversation that needs to be had."

James dismissed her barrier-breaking accolades as "nothing more than historical footnote."

"All that history means nothing to me nor to anyone else. People only look for results," James said. "Every day I wake up and make sure that I still have this fire in my belly for justice. Sweet, sweet justice."

Being the first, James said, "doesn't do anything to feed my soul."

For most Black attorneys general, the work is ongoing.

"If we've made a change, it's been incremental. I think it would be a little presumptuous of us to think we've changed the system," Ellison said. "We might be changing the system. Hopefully, we are."

Bombs are falling on Gaza again. Who are the hostages still remaining in the besieged strip?

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A weeklong cease-fire that brought the exchanges of dozens of hostages held by Hamas for scores of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel gave way Friday morning to resumed fighting between Israel and Hamas. As mediators scuttle between the warring sides in a last-ditch effort to broker another swap, questions emerge on who remains in captivity in the besieged enclave.

Hamas and other militants seized around 247 hostages in their deadly Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, in which more than 1,200 people were killed. Israel has pummeled the Gaza Strip in return, killing at least 13,300 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to health authorities in the Hamas-ruled territory.

Here's a closer look at the fate of the hostages.

HOSTAGES STILL IN CAPTIVITY

Israel said on Friday that 136 hostages remain in Gaza. They include 119 men and 17 women and children, according to military spokesperson Daniel Hagari. Roughly 10 of the hostages are 75 and older, the Prime Minister's Office said Friday.

The vast majority are Israeli while 11 are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand, one from Nepal and Tanzania each, and one French-Mexican.

Earlier, government spokesperson Eylon Levy listed the youngest hostage, 10-month-old Kfir Bibas, his 4-year-old brother Ariel and their mother Shiri as still being among the hostages. The military has said it's investigating a Hamas claim that the boys and their mother were killed in an Israeli airstrike.

Hagari provided no information about the three.

Families of hostages who have not been released are still waiting in desperation, calling on the government to bring their loved ones home.

They hear reports from the families of recently freed hostages that conditions are difficult and worry their loved ones do not have sufficient food and water. They plead with the Red Cross to bring their relatives badly needed medicine. They agonize as mere crumbs of information about their relatives surface.

Sharone Lifschitz, whose mother was freed in October, heard this week that a returned hostage had seen her father, 83-year-old Oded Lifshitz, in captivity. Her father, who spells the family name differently, was last seen shot while militants carted him off to Gaza.

She says the news was a "ray of light" but that she wonders if it's still true.

"My father is ill, is frail. He needs medicine," she said. "I don't know how long he can survive in such harsh conditions."

She said the return of women and children hostages has been bittersweet as their husbands and fathers remain in captivity. The idea that children would be able to recover from captivity while their fathers remain hostages was "unthinkable," she added.

LITTLE INFO ON HOSTAGES WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY

As the cease-fire waned, the military said Friday that four hostages were reported to have died in captivity, including the oldest person held hostage.

All the four, 56-year old Maya Goren, 86-year old Arye Zalmanovich, 54-year-old Ronan Engel, and

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75-year-old Eliyahu Margalit, were from Kibbutz Nir Oz. The kibbutz was devastated in the attack, with roughly a quarter of its people killed or kidnapped.

On Thursday, the military announced the death of Ofir Tzarfati, another Israeli believed to have been held hostage. Two other hostages have died in Hamas captivity since Oct. 7, according to the military.

Officials have said little about how the deaths were determined but the army has said it has collected valuable information from the returned hostages.

Zalmanovich, a father of two and grandfather of five, was a founder of Kibbutz Nir Oz, a statement from the missing families group said. Goren was a mother of four and a kindergarten teacher for the kibbutz. Her husband was killed by Hamas militants on Oct. 7.

Engel, a father of three, was a photographer and volunteer paramedic whose wife and two daughters were released from Gaza this week, the group said.

The group did not immediately release information on Margalit.

GLIMPSES OF HOSTAGES RELEASED

During the cease-fire, some 110 hostages held by Hamas militants in Gaza were returned to their families, Israel's government said Friday. They include 86 Israeli citizens and 24 foreign nationals, most of them Thais.

The returnees have mostly appeared in stable health condition, able to walk and speak normally though many lost weight in captivity. One 84-year-old hostage returned in critical condition after not receiving proper medical care, doctors said. Another came back on crutches.

Families have greeted the return of their loved ones with joy and excitement, but doctors have warned of the psychological toll of captivity and say they face a long road to recovery.

There have been no in-depth stories of the hostages' ordeal or captivity as the government has urged those released, their families and the media not to make public details of their time as prisoners to help ensure the safety of those still being held.

Japan expresses concern about Ospreys continuing to fly as some crash details emerge

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's top government spokesperson expressed concern Friday that the U.S. military is continuing to fly Osprey aircraft in the country without providing adequate information about Wednesday's fatal crash.

One crew member was killed and seven others are missing following the crash off southern Japan, the Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement Friday. One set of remains has been recovered, the Air Force said.

The search for the aircraft and missing crew members continues, the command said.

"Search and rescue operations consist of a combination of air, surface, and subsurface search of water and coastline in the vicinity of Yakushima, Japan, in order to locate the crewmembers," the command said.

The cause of Wednesday's crash, which occurred during a training mission, is still under investigation. Search operations widened Friday with additional U.S. military personnel joining the effort, while Japanese coast guard and military ships focused on an undersea search using sonar.

The Pentagon said Thursday that U.S. Ospreys continue to operate in Japan, and Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said she was not aware of an official request from Japan to ground them.

"We are concerned about the continuing Osprey flights despite our repeated requests and the absence of a sufficient explanation about their safety" from the U.S. military, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said Friday.

In a statement Friday, Singh clarified that while U.S. Osprey operations continue in Japan, the remaining five Ospreys from the squadron involved in Wednesday's crash are not flying at present. Air Force Special Operations Command makes up just a small number of the Ospreys assigned to Japan, most are operated by the U.S. Marine Corps.

Singh said the Pentagon has been communicating with the Japanese government on the crash.

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"We have already started sharing information about the accident with our Japanese partners and have pledged to continue to do so in a timely and transparent manner," Singh said.

While the search for the seven crew members continues, tributes have begun to pour out for Staff Sgt. Jacob Galliher of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, who was named as an individual killed in the crash by several sources. Member publication The Berkshire Eagle spoke with his father, Jon Galliher, who said his son's body has been recovered. The Associated Press has not been able to confirm this information independently. The United States Air Force has not publicly identified any members of the Osprey crew.

"Staff Sgt. Galliher represented our nation's best, enlisting in the Air Force right out of high school and committing himself to serving his country. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, especially his mother, father, wife, and two sons. The Pittsfield community and a grateful nation mourns the loss of Jacob Galliher," Massachusetts Democrat Rep. Richard Neal said in a statement.

The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight.

Ospreys have had a number of crashes, including in Japan, where they are used at U.S. and Japanese military bases, and the latest crash rekindled safety concerns.

Japanese officials say they asked the U.S. military to halt Osprey flights in Japan except for those involved in the search operations.

Defense Minister Minoru Kihara said he met with the commander of U.S. Forces Japan, Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp, on Thursday afternoon and repeated his request that flights be allowed only after the aircraft's safety is confirmed. He acknowledged that he did not specifically use the words "grounding" or "suspension."

Kihara said he asked Rupp to explain what measures are being taken for Osprey flights in Japan in response to the crash.

He said the U.S. told his ministry that while the five CV-22 Ospreys deployed with the one that crashed are currently not in use, others deployed on Okinawa are being operated after thorough safety checks, and that it will provide as much information and transparency as possible.

On Thursday, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa met with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel and asked the United States "to promptly provide information to the Japanese side."

The CV-22B Osprey that crashed was one of six deployed at Yokota Air Base, home to U.S. Forces Japan and the Fifth Air Force, and was assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Wing.

The aircraft had departed from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, Japanese officials said.

A total of 44 Ospreys have been deployed at U.S. and Japanese military bases in Japan. In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops in Japan are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki called on Japan's defense and foreign ministries to request the U.S. military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan, including in search operations.

"It is extremely regrettable that Ospreys are still flying in Okinawa," Tamaki said in a statement Thursday. "I have serious doubts about Osprey safety even for their search and rescue operations."

Harris heads to Dubai to tackle delicate tasks of talking climate and Israel-Hamas war

By WILL WEISSERT and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris will tackle two delicate tasks this weekend in Dubai: She'll try to demonstrate U.S. environmental leadership despite President Joe Biden's notable absence from an annual summit on climate change and she'll work to nudge forward fragile efforts to shape the next phase of the war between Israel and Hamas.

A White House official, who insisted on anonymity to preview Harris' meetings, said she would sit down with regional leaders and outline proposals to "put Palestinian voices at the center" of planning next steps for the Gaza Strip after the conflict.

The goal, the official said, is to have "a clear political horizon for the Palestinian people" that will ultimately

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bring together Gaza and the West Bank under unified leadership. Hamas runs the Gaza Strip while the Palestinian Authority administers semi-autonomous areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Biden and other administration officials have increasingly emphasized the need for an eventual two-state solution, with Israel and a Palestinian nation coexisting, as the war continues. The White House has faced criticism at home and abroad for its steadfast support for Israel despite the rising death toll among civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Administration officials have defended Biden's approach, saying that he's relied on his closeness with Israeli leadership to successfully advocate for more humanitarian aid for Palestinians and a truce that lasted several days, enabling the release of some hostages held by Hamas. The pause in fighting ended on Friday.

Harris has a narrow opportunity to accomplish her goals while she's in the United Arab Emirates. She left Washington on Friday and is scheduled to appear only briefly at the United Nations conference known as COP28. The White House official said she would deliver remarks and participate in a meeting on renewable energy with other leaders on Saturday.

Like most vice presidents, Harris is expected to hew tightly to administration talking points on controversial issues where any divergence could ricochet around the globe. Her public remarks, however limited, will be closely scrutinized.

Activists are eager for any boost in the fight against climate change, which experts warn is lagging behind what's needed to prevent damaging global warming. And Harris will be the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit an Arab nation since the outbreak of war in the Middle East, where anti-American sentiment has been inflamed by Washington's support for Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

Details on Harris' schedule remain scarce and the trip appears to have been hastily arranged. As recently as last week, the vice president's staff said she had no plans to attend the climate conference. White House officials have not explained the change in plans.

Biden attended the last two U.N. summits, which were held in Scotland and Egypt, but he disappointed some environmental activists by his decision to skip this one.

Manish Bapna, head of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said it's "so important" for Harris to be there on behalf of the president and his administration.

"She's representing concrete U.S. progress — from significant investments in clean cars and clean energy to a crackdown on dirty power plants," Bapna said. "There's much work ahead to lock that progress in and build on it — but it's a complete turnaround from where we stood even a year ago."

The Dubai gathering will include a first-ever assessment of how well the world is doing in its battle against global warming. Known as the "stocktake," countries will examine their progress since the Paris agreement in 2015, seeing how much they've fallen short and how best to make up lost ground.

"We don't expect to see big political breakthroughs to kind of fashion new agreements," said Joseph Majkut, director of the Energy Security and Climate Change Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

However, he said determining the best way to measure progress — a contentious issue in the world of global climate politics — and to collectively grapple with adapting to climate change are still "relatively important."

Although Biden has faced some criticism for missing COP28, Robert Stavins, a Harvard University professor who regularly attends climate conferences, said his absence won't have a substantive impact.

"The meat of the negotiations" have already taken place, he said, and all that's left for leaders is "essentially to participate in a photo opportunity."

He added that the most important goal should be for the U.S. and China to rebuild their partnership on climate change, which was key to the Paris agreement but has lapsed in recent years. Stavins said that "any lack of cooperation on climate change is collateral damage of our legitimate disagreements" on issues like trade, intellectual property and the South China Sea.

U.S. officials said they're confident in the progress that has been made under Biden, particularly last year's signing of the Inflation Reduction Act, which included hundreds of millions of dollars in financial incentives for clean energy.

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"The urgency of this challenge is clear, but so is our ambition," said John Podesta, a senior adviser to Biden on climate issues. He added that "we're going to Dubai with confidence that the United States is on a path to achieve our climate goals and do our part to build a clean, secure, and equitable future for the entire world."

The vice president is set to announce several initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as support multi-nation adaptation of plans and efforts to boost climate resilience, senior administration officials said. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, special envoy John Kerry and climate adviser Ali Zaidi are attending as well.

The administration still faces some criticism. A report by the activist Center for Biological Diversity said that while new initiatives in the Inflation Reduction Act would reduce nearly 1 billion metric tons of carbon emissions by 2030, 17 different oil and gas projects the administration has approved would add 1.6 billion metric tons of emissions.

Administration officials said they've been required by law to approve the fossil fuel projects, which are tied to leases held by energy companies.

Harris's trip comes at a key moment as fighting resumed, ending a fragile truce that had held for a week while Hamas released hostages it was holding in Gaza since its Oct. 7 attack on Israel. U.S. diplomats had been engaged in efforts to extend the pause in fighting to extract additional hostages, including Americans.

Harris' involvement could have political reverberations back home as well. She's been focused on reaching out to younger voters who are skeptical of awarding Biden another term in office, and they're also more likely to be critical of U.S. support for Israel.

Although Biden has worked the phones to speak with Arab leaders, he was unable to sit down with some of them in October during a trip to the region. The president had originally planned to visit Jordan as well as Israel in October, but the stop in Jordan was scrapped amid controversy over an explosion at a hospital in the Gaza Strip.

Although the blast was initially blamed on Israel by Hamas authorities, further analysis — including by The Associated Press — indicated that a misfired Palestinian rocket was the cause.

Nearly 2 months into the war, many Israelis have no idea if their relatives are dead or alive

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — There was no trace of Hanan Yablonka — not on the 42-year-old Israeli's social media accounts nor on his phone, found in the bullet-riddled car he and four friends tried to flee in after Hamas militants attacked the music festival they were attending in southern Israel.

The friends were killed in the Oct. 7 attack. But nearly two months later, Yablonka's family still has no news about what happened to him. He is one of dozens of people still unaccounted for after Hamas infiltrated Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking about 240 hostages.

Some of the bodies of those who died were so badly burned in fires or explosions during the attacks that there's little left to identify. Others who might still be alive haven't been traced, forcing families to live in limbo.

"It's a big nightmare," Yablonka's niece, Emanuel Abady, told The Associated Press. "Is he alive, is he dead, or where is the body? Maybe he's in Gaza. ... Maybe he got hurt, maybe he got shot, but he's in Gaza."

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, police, the military and investigators grappled with a mass casualty crime scene, trying to identify the dead and the abducted. Getting clear answers for people's whereabouts and the number of dead was, and remains, challenging.

In November, the military adjusted the number of people killed from more than 1,400 to approximately 1,200, but didn't specify why. It's also repeatedly updated the number of hostages believed to have been taken into Gaza. Israeli officials told the AP that dozens of people's fates were still unknown, but wouldn't respond to multiple requests for comment about why it's taken so long to identify them and why the

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number of dead was adjusted.

The fates of thousands of people are also unaccounted for in Gaza, where families are agonizingly searching for relatives after weeks of endless airstrikes. Many are believed to be trapped under the rubble of demolished buildings, which hundreds of people claw through daily with shovels, iron bars and their bare hands, looking for the bodies of loved ones.

In Israel, the military said it has enlisted the help of archaeologists to apply excavation techniques used in burned and damaged ancient sites to help identify victims. The experts have helped identify at least 10 people.

Some people initially thought to have been taken hostage were proclaimed dead, including Vivian Silver, a Canadian-born Israeli peace activist whose family was recently notified she'd been killed. Others thought to have been killed were found to have been abducted, like 9-year-old Emily Tony Korenberg Hand, who was released Saturday.

Bodies and other human remains have been taken to the Shura military base in central Israel, now converted into a morgue for the identification of victims.

At the start, it was easier to identify bodies that were more intact, according to forensic specialists. But the final stretch has become painstaking with the need to sift through charred bones making it harder to extract and match DNA. Other means of identification, such as fingerprints or dental records, cannot be used.

"It is a long process, sometimes we don't have the right bone or the right sample in order to give the answer. ... When you have difficult samples it takes time," said Gila Kahila Bar-Gal, a professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University who is an expert in wildlife forensics and ancient DNA research and has been volunteering at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine to help identify victims. It can take up to twice as long to identify burned bones, she said.

It's also been challenging to determine how many people were abducted in the chaos that ensued when Hamas penetrated from Gaza into Israel.

"Many people ended up storming through the barrier that day: civilians, militants and Hamas, and it's still pretty unclear the scale of who was taken and who's holding everyone," said Mairav Zonszein, senior analyst on Israel for the International Crisis Group.

Yablonka's niece believes her uncle is still alive and was likely abducted. Through video, text messages and phone calls the family has pieced together the last few hours before he disappeared.

Yablonka was among the thousands who attended the Tribe of Nova Trance music festival near the border with Gaza. A father of two, he loved music, Abady said. But his family didn't know he'd gone to the festival, and it was only when they hadn't heard from him late on Oct. 7 that they started making calls, combing through social media and contacting the police.

When the sirens warning of Hamas rockets went off that morning, surveillance video received by the family and seen by the AP shows a man the family says is Yablonka in a packed festival parking lot, at one point crouching behind a car. Just before 7 a.m., one of his friends, a man, called Israel's emergency service from the car, saying someone had been shot. Text messages sent by two women with them to their families said Yablonka was driving and they were trying to escape.

Another video shown to the family revealed the damaged car with its back window blown out and shattered glass, a backpack and clothes strewn on the seat. The car was found near Mefalsim Kibbutz, a few kilometers (miles) from the festival site, with the bodies of Yablonka's friends, two men and two women, nearby, Abady said.

There was no trace of Yablonka, including any blood splatter. His keys, phone and identification document were inside. The family has provided DNA samples, along with Yablonka's dental records and medical information in hopes he will be found and identified.

The stress and anxiety of not knowing what happened to a loved one takes a huge psychological and emotional toll, said Sarah Davies, a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"They are living with a gaping hole in their lives. Countless scenarios run through the mind of family

members ... imagining the worst and being unable to do anything about it," she said.

For some families, it was too painful to wait for answers.

In early November, Liel Hetzroni's family put some of the 12-year-old's clothes, personal belongings and ashes from where they thought she'd died inside a coffin and buried it alongside her twin brother and aunt.

The three were trapped in a house with dozens of others in Kibbutz Be'eri during an hourslong standoff between Hamas and Israeli soldiers that ended in an explosion, killing nearly everyone inside, said Liel's cousin, Sagi Shifroni.

While the remains of Liel's brother and aunt were quickly identified, there was no trace of Liel for weeks, he said.

"The waiting (wasn't) healthy for the soul or for our family," Shifroni said. Shortly after they buried the coffin, the army informed them that one of Liel's bones had been found.

"It feels good to get an approval for what we knew already," he said. "It's closure."

5 reasons why COP 28, the UN climate talks, are worth your attention

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Ask most people what the annual U.N. climate talks are and the likely answer will be: "Huh?" Ask those who do know and the answer may be: "Why should I care?"

The negotiations, called Conference of Parties, are nearly two weeks long and in their 28th iteration in Dubai. Delegates use wonky terms like "NDCs" "1.5 degrees" and "loss and damage," not exactly conversation starters at parties. Any final decision is non-binding, meaning countries can agree to something and then not follow through. And when tens of thousands of people travel to the event, a lot of greenhouse gas emissions are produced, which is contrary to the entire point of the conference.

So why bother?

Even many climate watchers sometimes ask that question, and there is a growing debate about whether the current process needs major reforms. But viewed with a long lens — and with the proviso that progress is often more of a slow trickle than a dramatic event and impact — there are many reasons that the talks can prove worthwhile.

THEY EXERT PEER PRESSURE

The push for compliance (in a public forum) is a key part of COP — in the form of the development of "Nationally Determined Contributions," referred to as NDCs.

These are plans by individual countries to reduce their use of oil, gas and coal, which produce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, and lay out how they plan to adapt to impacts of extreme weather events.

The plans are required by all nations that signed on to the 2015 Paris Agreement, arguably the most significant Conference of Parties to date. The plans are public, setting broad targets that industries and individuals in respective countries can see while also providing a chance for other countries, and news organizations, to scrutinize them. Countries are encouraged and expected to update and "raise ambition" in their plans, creating a level of peer pressure for nations to keep promises.

THEY PRODUCE CLEAR GOALS

That's something that individual entities sometimes have trouble doing.

The Paris agreement established a defining goal that has guided climate discussions ever since: Cut emissions from the burning of fossil fuels to make sure average global temperatures don't go beyond 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times, and ideally not over 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Currently, temperatures have increased about 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit).

As extreme weather events driven by climate change have increased and intensified, climate scientists have pushed to limit warming to 1.5. These days, just about every discussion about climate change has

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1.5 in mind.

For example, that 1.5 guide is at the heart of the Biden administration's climate goals, which include the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States, the largest climate legislation in U.S. history that is pumping billions of dollars into green energy transition.

It's also used as the lens by which many decisions are seen. When oil companies announce plans to launch new drilling projects that will lock in oil and gas production for decades, policy makers can and do criticize the plans as not keeping within the 1.5 goal. That doesn't necessarily stop oil companies, or anybody, from making decisions that go against the goal. Still, it provides a frame of reference, which is powerful.

THEY FRAME DEBATES

Deciding how to talk about something can be an important part of getting things done.

Last year's climate talks, COP27 in Egypt, produced a landmark agreement for rich countries to contribute to a fund to help developing nations adapt to climate change. For decades, environmental activists had argued that a "loss and damage" fund was necessary because rich nations, which industrialized with fossil fuels, were largely responsible for climate change while developing countries were being hit the hardest, as they didn't have the resources to withstand floods, heat waves, prolonged drought and other manifestations of a warming world.

Early discussions of loss and damage at COPs were always on the fringes, not even on the official agenda. That changed last year, as the topic, and thus the decision, ended up being the centerpiece of the summit.

In a larger sense, today many discussions of climate, from reducing emissions to paying for a transition to green energies like wind and solar, are framed around the idea that rich countries are historically responsible for the current situation and thus have a moral imperative to pay more to confront it.

THEY FOSTER SLOW BUT SOLID PROGRESS

The glacial pace of discussions, with no binding decisions or ways to enforce agreements, may seem like a formula for failure in a world accustomed to visible, sometimes splashy resolutions.

However, seen over the course of nearly 30 years of summits, the outcomes could be called cautiously optimistic successes. For example, 10 years ago the level of greenhouse gas emissions had the world on track to warm 4 degrees Celsius (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100, which scientists say would create devastating extremes.

Today, models have the world warming by 2 to 2.5 degrees Celsius. That is still significantly beyond the 1.5 target and poses threats to humans; tenths of a degree matter a lot when it comes to extremes.

But overall, humanity is on a much better path. While many factors have gone into lowering the curve on emissions—technological advances, environmental laws in many countries, a move toward electric vehicles, among others—U.N. climate negotiations have undoubtedly been a central factor.

THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION

Ultimately, COP is the only game in town.

Even if none of the above is convincing, the reality is there is currently no other way for the world to collectively address climate change. Consider how difficult it can be for two people to agree on anything. How about 200 countries?

The Conference of Parties process gives every nation in the world, whether rich or poor, large or small, a seat at the table to discuss how climate change is impacting them and how they believe the world should confront it. They also give a forum to people of all walks of life to exchange ideas, from young environmentalists and Indigenous activists to bankers and leaders of many industries.

The wonky speeches, lots of discussion and disagreements will continue, all with the hope of combatting climate change. That is worth a conversation starter at parties.

Peter Prengaman is director of climate news for The Associated Press. AP 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.

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

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Elon Musk and others spread meme reviving unfounded 'pizzagate' conspiracy theory

CLAIM: An expert who debunked the "pizzagate" conspiracy theory has been jailed for possessing child sexual abuse images.

THE FACTS: A former ABC reporter referenced in a meme circulating online was recently sentenced to federal prison for such crimes, but he never investigated "pizzagate." The long-dormant conspiracy theory – which posited that Democratic Party insiders harbored child sex slaves in a Washington, D.C. pizza parlor — has been revived online in recent days, boosted by prominent social media users including Elon Musk. The unfounded rumor was popular among supporters of Republican Donald Trump during his winning 2016 campaign for president and even led a North Carolina man to travel to Washington and fire a rifle in a local pizza parlor where he believed children were being enslaved. Musk and others shared a meme referencing the television series "The Office," claiming the conspiracy theory is "real," involved "trafficked children" and that an expert who had debunked the theory "just went to jail for child porn." In a follow up post on his social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, the tech billionaire linked to a story about the September sentencing of former ABC journalist James Gordon Meek for possessing and transporting child sexual abuse images, implying the Virginia resident is the expert referenced in the meme. Musk's posts have since been deleted. But the false connection stems from an image of a fabricated New York Post headline that spread online in recent months. "Award winning ABC journalist who 'debunked' pizzagate, pleads guilty in horrific child porn case," the headline reads over an image of Meek. The newspaper didn't comment, but a search of its website archive showed no such story, and the headline image does not match the outlet's style. Spokespersons for ABC News didn't respond to messages seeking comment, but a review of the network's online archives shows Meek never published an investigation on "pizzagate" while employed there. A 2017 story he co-wrote about Russian propaganda during the war in Syria only briefly mentions the conspiracy theory. Instead, numerous news outlets at the time, including CNN and The New York Times, debunked the rumor. Meek, who covered national security issues until his resignation last year, was sentenced to six years in federal prison after pleading guilty to possessing child sexual abuse images.

— Associated Press writer Philip Marcelo in New York contributed this report.

Trump misleadingly cites 'duplicate' ballots in disputed Georgia county as proof of election fraud

CLAIM: A recent court filing revealed that 3,600 "duplicate" ballots were cast for Biden and illegally counted in Fulton County, Georgia, during the 2020 election.

THE FACTS: A state review of the county's audit of the 2020 presidential race found errors and inconsistencies in the vote count, including some double counting of ballots, but the errors weren't deemed criminal and they weren't enough to alter the election results. Nevertheless, former President Donald Trump is continuing to cast doubt on the legal filing in Georgia's Fulton County as he seeks a return to the White House amid myriad legal cases, including election interference charges in the Peach State. "Fulton County, Georgia, acknowledges, in a major Consent Decree, that 3,600 individual ballots were DUPLICATED," the Republican wrote in a post on his social media platform Truth Social. "THAT'S A LOT OF CRIME. When are the rest of the facts coming out? We are all waiting. This is just the beginning. UNBELIEVABLE!" In a video that spread widely on other platforms, Trump made similar remarks and called it "massive voter corruption." Trump's posts refer to a June consent order that found Fulton County election workers "misidentified and duplicated" voting results during the state-mandated audit of the 2020 election, which was a hand recount of the presidential race results. "There was, in fact, no crime," Jessica Corbitt, a spokesperson

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for the Fulton County Board of Elections, responded in an email this week. "The consent order addresses procedural issues but there were no accusations or admissions of criminal activity." The order identified 36 inconsistencies in batch tally sheets for the audit, but found they were due to "human error" and not "intentional misconduct." It also found they did not affect the final election results as they represented a "fractional number" of the votes cast. The purpose of the risk-limiting audit was to confirm whether the results of the original tabulation were accurate, which the audit confirmed," reads the order. The county agreed to take remedial steps to prevent repeat issues, according to the order. Those policies and procedures were put in place in time for the 2022 election. The court filing additionally states that it represents a "civil settlement" with "no criminal ramifications" and is not an admission of guilt or liability by Fulton County officials. Charles Bullock, a political science professor at the University of Georgia, noted Georgia's election results were tallied three times in 2020: the initial Election Day count, the hand-counted audit and a final recount by voting machine requested by Trump's campaign. All three times, Biden prevailed. "It's misleading to claim this is fraud," Bullock said by phone. "Were there errors? Yes. But they were not malicious." Corbitt, the Fulton County spokesperson, declined to address Trump's claims directly, but stressed elections in the county have undergone numerous reviews besides the audit investigation and no fraud has been identified. Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung maintained that the audit errors suggest more than 4,000 "false votes for Joe Biden" were counted. "These errors from one county, in one category of votes (absentee ballots), could certainly have impacted the results, given that no other counties or vote categories were checked," he wrote in an email. Cheung didn't respond to requests to elaborate on the figures he cited. Trump and 18 other people are facing charges in Georgia that include participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally try to keep Trump in power after his 2020 loss. Four people have pleaded guilty after reaching deals with Georgia prosecutors. The remaining 15 have pleaded not guilty, and no trial date has been set.

— Philip Marcelo. ____

Video of West Bank fighting does not show a Doctors Without Borders medic giving a man a rifle

CLAIM: A video shows a Doctors Without Borders medic in the West Bank city of Jenin take an assault rifle from a man lying on the ground and hand it to a man nearby who begins shooting.

THE FACTS: The man identified as a medic in the video does not belong to Doctors Without Borders, which works only in hospitals in that area, a spokesperson for the organization told The Associated Press. He is wearing an orange vest with the letters "PMRS" below a yellow circle that matches those worn by members of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society. In the video, the man runs to a person lying facedown on a city street as people shout and gunfire is heard around them. He takes a rifle from the person, runs a few feet and hands it to another man who begins firing as the man in the orange vest takes cover. "In this video taken today in Jenin, a medic from 'Doctors without borders' went to a terrorist who was shot by the IDF, lifted him up and took his weapon then brought it to another terrorist," reads one Instagram post. But Doctors Without Borders, known in French as Médecins Sans Frontières, confirmed that's not the case. "The person depicted in the video is clearly not wearing an MSF logo or any other identification related to MSF," Brienne Prusak, a spokesperson for the organization, told the AP in an email. "MSF staff do not wear orange vests seen in the video. Our staff around the world are required to wear MSF identification (T-shirt, gear) because it is one of the main protections that we have: our medical identity and credibility." Indeed, the man's vest matches those worn by members of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, which works in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. A photo on the group's Facebook page shows a worker wearing the same type of vest, which is clearly marked with PMRS' logo. In contrast, a photo on the Doctors Without Borders website shows members of its staff wearing white vests with the organization's red and white logo on the back. It is not clear whether the man in the video actually works for PMRS or if he is simply wearing one of the group's vests. PMRS did not respond to a request for comment. Doctors Without Borders does not work in areas of Jenin where the video spreading online was filmed, according to Prusak. The fighting occurred on a street outside a Western Union office and a bakery with a white awning. The same shops can be seen in a video tour of Jenin posted to YouTube in 2020.

They appear on the left side of the video around the 5:08 mark. "In Jenin, MSF supports the emergency room of the Ministry of Health Hospital and supports the pre-hospital emergency," Prusak wrote. "Our MSF staff in Jenin do not carry out ambulatory services. We do not treat people outside in the streets." She added that the misrepresented video "incites violence and poses a severe threat not only against MSF staff but all humanitarian workers in the region." Violence in the West Bank, including Jenin, has surged amid fighting in the latest Israel-Hamas war.

Ukrainian spy agency stages train explosions on a Russian railroad in Siberia, Ukrainian media say

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's spy agency staged two successive explosions on a railroad line in Siberia that serves as a key conduit for trade between Russia and China, Ukrainian media reported Friday. The attacks underscored Moscow's vulnerability amid the war in Ukraine.

Ukrainska Pravda and other news outlets claimed the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a special operation to blow up trains loaded with fuel on the Baikal-Amur Mainline, which runs from southeastern Siberia to the Pacific Ocean in the Russian Far East.

The media cited unidentified sources in Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, a regular practice in claims of previous attacks in Russia. The security service, which is known in Ukrainian as SBU for short, has not confirmed the reports.

The first explosion hit a tanker train in the Severonomuisky tunnel in Buryatia early Thursday, causing a fire that took hours to extinguish, Russian news outlets said. The 15.3-kilometer (9.5-mile) tunnel in southern Siberia is the longest in Russia.

A second explosion hours later hit another train carrying fuel as it crossed a 35-meter (115-foot) high bridge across a deep gorge while traveling on a bypass route, according to the Ukrainian news reports.

Russian railways confirmed the tunnel explosion but didn't say what caused it.

Russian daily business newspaper Kommersant cited investigators saying an explosive device was planted under one of the train's carriages.

There was no comment from Russian authorities on the second explosion.

Ukrainian authorities have emphasized that the country's military and security agencies can strike targets anywhere in Russia to fight Moscow's aggression.

Officials in Kyiv have claimed responsibility for some previous attacks on infrastructure facilities deep inside Russia.

Russia's top counterintelligence agency, the Federal Security Service, or FSB, said Friday that it detained a man accused of attacking a military airbase in western Russia with exploding drones in July and staging an explosion that derailed a cargo train in western Russia last month.

The FSB identified the suspect as a dual Russian-Italian citizen and alleged he was recruited by the Ukrainian military intelligence in Istanbul and underwent training in Latvia before returning to Russia.

There was no immediate comment on the claim from Ukrainian authorities.

As the war continued into its 22nd month, Ukraine's forces shot down 18 of 25 Iranian-made Shahed exploding drones and one of two air-launched missiles that Russia launched early Friday, the Ukrainian air force said.

The office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that Russian strikes across Ukraine killed at least four civilians and wounded 16 others between Thursday and Friday mornings.

Three of them died when Russian warplanes struck the village of Sadove in southern Ukraine's Kherson region; the fourth was killed in Russian shelling of the town of Toretsk in the eastern Donetsk region, the presidential office said.

For a male sexual assault survivor, justice won in court does not equal healing

By JEFF McMILLAN Associated Press

When Sam Schultz was sexually assaulted, it felt like a part of them died.

It took eight years and the burgeoning #MeToo movement to spur them to go public and make a police report, and an additional five years for their attackers to plead guilty.

Now, as much as Schultz hopes there's a reckoning coming in gay and queer communities, too, it feels like they are the one shouldering the blame, not the attackers: for coming forward, for harming the men's reputations.

Instead of being able to focus on recovery, Schultz has been saddled with worries from other gay men that talking about sexual abuse in their community will hurt the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

The pain of the assault and ensuing public attention and court proceedings have taken a huge toll.

"It is an exhausting and horrifying journey that I almost quit because it just takes way too much of a person," Schultz said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And to any person who has pursued justice and quit along the way, I get it. The system is not built for us. The system is built to protect certain people."

As many as 95% of male sexual violations go unreported, according to research cited in a review of scientific literature about male victims of sexual assault, published in April in the journal Behavioral Sciences. Four of five men who reported assaults regretted doing so, saying that police were often unsympathetic and disinterested and that the process just added more trauma.

Men may fail to report sexual assault because of stigma, shame, guilt and embarrassment; fear of not being believed; privacy concerns; and worries that their sexual orientation or masculinity will be questioned, according to research cited in the article.

For gay men and other LGBTQ+ people, "their friends and family may not be aware of how they identify. They're afraid that that this will tip people off, to disclose something they're not ready to disclose," said Scott Berkowitz, president of RAINN, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network. "There's in some places a disbelief that this really happens to LGBTQ people."

Prominent male sexual abuse and assault survivors have come forward in recent years, including actor Anthony Edwards, of "ER" fame, who serves as the board chair and national spokesperson for the non-profit 1in6 — so named because of research indicating that at least 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

A similar group, MaleSurvivor, formed in 1995, says it is committed to helping boys and men who have experienced sexual abuse.

And the National Women's Law Center, administrator of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, which provides legal assistance to survivors of workplace sexual harassment and abuse, also offers help to men. The fund helped pay Schultz's legal fees. Still, just 4% of the people who have sought its support since 2018, or about 200, identify as male.

"We have such strong and well-worn stereotypes and ideas about who is a survivor in this country, stereotypes that don't match reality," said Fatima Goss Graves, president and CEO of the National Women's Law Center. "And men as a category don't meet that stereotype, even though all the research has shown us that at least 9% of sexual assault survivors are male."

This story includes discussion of sexual assault. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673 or go to <https://hotline.rainn.org>.

Schultz, now 37, described a wrenching and maddening journey from assault, when they were 23, to adjudication and beyond.

Schultz was an aspiring opera singer and a graduate student at Houston's Rice University when they met David Daniels, a famous countertenor, and Scott Walters, a conductor, through the city's music circles.

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Schultz remembers admiring Daniels for being a "proud gay man" in a conservative art form.

The two invited Schultz to the closing of the Houston Grand Opera's "Xerxes," in which Daniels was starring, Schultz said. Later that night at a cast party, the couple invited Schultz to their apartment afterward, cautioning the young singer not to tell anyone, lest others get jealous.

Schultz was handed a drink and later woke up in an unfamiliar room, naked and bleeding. Shock and then fear set in.

"Was I supposed to go to the police? Was I supposed to go to the hospital? Was I supposed to go home? The police didn't feel like a safe option. The hospital certainly didn't feel like a safe option. I went home and I stared at a wall," they said.

Schultz discussed the assault with relatives, friends and a therapist but didn't go public until 2018, when the #MeToo movement provided more comfort in making a report.

Daniels and Walters were arrested in 2019 and maintained the encounter with Schultz was consensual until, just as the two were going to trial on charges of first-degree aggravated sexual assault, they accepted a deal to plead guilty to sexual assault of an adult, a second-degree felony. Both were sentenced to eight years' probation and required to register as sex offenders.

The men still tell others in the opera community that they aren't guilty, Schultz said, and that the plea was just to avoid prison. Schultz saw others in the opera community rally around the attackers, and was criticized for besmirching the reputation of prominent gay men.

It hurts to see people place more value on their own friendship with the attackers than the hurt they've caused.

"You're failing to recognize how they've criminally impacted my life," Schultz said.

Ted Gideonse, an associate professor of teaching of health, society and behavior at the University of California, Irvine, public health program, noted that for gay and bisexual men, lines of consent have been historically muddied. That doesn't make it right.

The longtime illicit nature of sexual encounters between men meant that by necessity they had to be coded.

Gay men often gather in bars – spaces they feel safe to be themselves. But bars are a place that are already sexually heightened, said Gideonse, a researcher in medical and psychological anthropology.

"There is virtually no sort of admission that gay men or men who have sex with men have a completely different way of interacting around sex than heterosexuals do," Gideonse said.

Differences in what constitutes consent and predation, particularly for things like unwanted touching, are changing generationally, he said.

"The older men are much more like, 'Are you kidding, this is really typical stuff that no one has been bothered with before,' and the younger people saying, 'They just didn't tell you they were bothered,'" Gideonse said.

Schultz agrees there's a need for a discussion about consent within the gay community. In a recent essay in the Washington Blade, an LGBTQ online news magazine, Schultz spoke about the sexualization of young people, and the problems it creates.

"As young queer people, many of us are objectified and reduced to conquests by often older or more powerful peers," Schultz wrote. "We learn to believe that our primary value to many is sex rather than equal treatment and respect."

Just last month, the BBC published a report after a two-year investigation that uncovered stories alleging that Mike Jeffries, the former CEO of clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch, used a middleman to exploit young adult men for sex at events he hosted at his home in New York and at hotels in Paris, London and elsewhere.

A dozen men described events involving sex acts that were run for Jeffries and his partner, Matthew Smith, from 2009 to 2015. Jeffries stepped down from Abercrombie & Fitch in 2014.

Schultz hopes that it's a sign of things changing, and that allegations of men being abused are taken seriously.

After Schultz first told their own story, a man in his 60s heard it on the radio and realized he had been

sexually assaulted in college, too.

"He wrote to me that he broke down crying at the breakfast table and for the first time started to understand what had happened to him when he was in college," Schultz said. "And I think a lot of men push experiences away so they don't ever have to deal with them."

For a male sexual assault survivor, justice won in court does not equal healing

By JEFF McMILLAN Associated Press

When Sam Schultz was sexually assaulted, it felt like a part of them died.

It took eight years and the burgeoning #MeToo movement to spur them to go public and make a police report, and an additional five years for their attackers to plead guilty.

Now, as much as Schultz hopes there's a reckoning coming in gay and queer communities, too, it feels like they are the one shouldering the blame, not the attackers. Instead of being able to focus on recovery, Schultz has been saddled with worries from other gay men that talking about sexual abuse in their community will hurt the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

The pain of the assault and ensuing public attention and court proceedings have taken a huge toll.

"It is an exhausting and horrifying journey that I almost quit because it just takes way too much of a person," Schultz said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And to any person who has pursued justice and quit along the way, I get it. The system is not built for us. The system is built to protect certain people."

As many as 95% of male sexual violations go unreported, according to research cited in a review of scientific literature about male victims of sexual assault, published in April in the journal Behavioral Sciences. Four of five men who reported assaults regretted doing so, saying that police were often unsympathetic and disinterested and that the process just added more trauma.

Men may fail to report sexual assault because of stigma, shame, guilt and embarrassment; fear of not being believed; privacy concerns; and worries that their sexual orientation or masculinity will be questioned, according to research cited in the article.

Prominent male sexual abuse and assault survivors have come forward in recent years, including actor Anthony Edwards, of "ER" fame, who serves as the board chair and national spokesperson for the non-profit 1in6 — so named because of research indicating that at least 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

This story includes discussion of sexual assault. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673 or go to <https://hotline.rainn.org>.

Schultz, now 37, described a wrenching and maddening journey from assault, when they were just 23, to adjudication and beyond.

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Schultz sees some signs of things changing for men who report abuse.

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Report: Belief death penalty is applied unfairly shows capital punishment's growing isolation in US

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — More Americans now believe the death penalty, which is undergoing a yearslong decline of use and support, is being administered unfairly, a finding that is adding to its growing isolation in the U.S., according to an annual report on capital punishment.

But whether the public's waning support for the death penalty and the declining number of executions and death sentences will ultimately result in the abolition of capital punishment in the U.S. remains uncertain, experts said.

"There are some scholars who are optimistic the death penalty will be totally eradicated pretty soon," said Eric Berger, a law professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "I think what's more likely is it's going to continue to decline. But I think it's less likely that in the foreseeable future it'll totally disappear."

In 2023, there were 24 executions in the U.S., with the final one for the year taking place Thursday in Oklahoma. Additionally, 21 people were sentenced to death in 2023, which was the ninth consecutive year where fewer than 30 people were executed and fewer than 50 people received death sentences, according to a report by the Washington, D.C.-based Death Penalty Information Center.

Only five states — Texas, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Alabama — conducted executions this year. That was the lowest number in 20 years, said Robin M. Maher, executive director of the nonprofit center, which takes no position on capital punishment but has criticized the way states carry out executions.

"That shows the death penalty is again becoming increasingly isolated in its use in the United States," Maher said.

A Gallup poll from October found 50% of Americans believe capital punishment is applied unfairly, compared to 47% who believe it is fairly implemented, Maher said. This was the highest such number since Gallup first began asking about the fairness of the death penalty's application in 2000.

Catherine Grosso, a professor with Michigan State University's College of Law, said the Gallup survey

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result could be tied in part to more young people and others questioning the U.S. criminal justice system following the 2020 killing of George Floyd by a police officer.

Nearly 200 death row exonerations since 1975, including three in 2023, also have helped changed people's minds about the fairness of the death penalty, Maher said.

In recent years, various individuals across the country, including conservative legislators, have raised concerns about the death penalty or debated its future, Grosso said.

But in some states including Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma and Texas, the death penalty remains deeply entrenched, Berger said.

Earlier this year, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed bills enacting two new death penalty laws. One allows the death penalty in child rape convictions, despite a U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning capital punishment in such cases. The other law ends a unanimous jury requirement in death penalty sentencing.

"If you commit a crime that is really, really heinous, you should have the ultimate punishment," DeSantis said in May, commenting on the death penalty for child rape convictions.

Ongoing difficulties by states in securing supplies of execution drugs have prompted some states to explore new and untested methods of execution or revive previously abandoned ones, according to the center's report.

Alabama has set a January execution date for what would be the nation's first attempt to execute an inmate with nitrogen gas. In July, Idaho became the fifth state to authorize executions by firing squad. The last time a U.S. inmate was executed by firing squad was in 2010.

The center's report said a majority of states, 29, have either abolished the death penalty or paused executions.

Corinna Lain, a professor at the University of Richmond School of Law in Virginia, said she thinks the number of states that don't have the death penalty could easily rise to 40. But a nationwide ban would need action from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lain and other experts said that's unlikely to happen as recent actions show the high court is not going to get in the way of states carrying out executions. The center's report said the Supreme Court granted only one stay of execution out of 34 such requests made since its 2022-23 term.

Texas, the nation's busiest capital punishment state, has not been immune to the ongoing debate over the death penalty.

Earlier this year, the GOP-led Texas House passed a bill that would eliminate the death penalty in cases involving someone was diagnosed with schizophrenia. The bill ultimately failed as it was never taken up by the Texas Senate.

GOP state Rep. Jeff Leach said in March the bill was not part of a secret effort to do away with the death penalty in Texas.

"I believe that in Texas we need the death penalty," Leach said. "But I am, as a supporter of the death penalty, against executing people who at the time they commit the offense had a severe mental illness."

Even in Texas, there can be some change with the death penalty, Berger said.

"But you can't see the kind of change where you could expect them to just say, 'Ah, we're done with capital punishment altogether.' At least not yet," Berger said.

Today in History: December 2, Senate condemns McCarthy

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 2, the 336th day of 2023. There are 29 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 2, 1954, the U.S. Senate passed, 67-22, a resolution condemning Republican Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin, saying he had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute."

On this date:

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In 1823, President James Monroe outlined his doctrine opposing European expansion in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1859, militant abolitionist John Brown was hanged for his raid on Harpers Ferry the previous October.

In 1942, an artificially created, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was demonstrated for the first time at the University of Chicago.

In 1957, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania, the first full-scale commercial nuclear facility in the U.S., began operations.

In 1980, four American churchwomen were raped and murdered in El Salvador. (Five national guardsmen were convicted in the killings.)

In 1982, in the first operation of its kind, doctors at the University of Utah Medical Center implanted a permanent artificial heart in the chest of retired dentist Dr. Barney Clark, who lived 112 days with the device.

In 1993, Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar was shot to death by security forces in Medellin (meh-deh-YEEN').

In 2000, Al Gore sought a recount in South Florida, while George W. Bush flatly asserted, "I'm soon to be the president" and met with GOP congressional leaders.

In 2001, in one of the largest corporate bankruptcies in U.S. history, Enron filed for Chapter 11 protection.

In 2015, a couple loyal to the Islamic State group opened fire at a holiday banquet for public employees in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people and wounding 21 others before dying in a shootout with police.

In 2016, a fire that raced through an illegally converted warehouse in Oakland, California, during a dance party killed 36 people.

In 2018, Israeli police recommended indicting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on bribery charges, adding to a growing collection of legal troubles for the longtime leader.

In 2020, in a video released on social media, President Donald Trump stood before a White House lectern and delivered a 46-minute diatribe against the election results that produced a win for Democrat Joe Biden, unspooling one misstatement after another to back his baseless claim that he had actually won.

In 2021, Major League Baseball plunged into its first work stoppage in a quarter-century when the sport's collective bargaining agreement expired and owners immediately locked out players. (An agreement would end the lockout after 99 days; the start of the season was delayed by about a week.)

In 2022, Democrats voted to remove Iowa as the leadoff state on the presidential nominating calendar and replace it with South Carolina starting in 2024.

Today's Birthdays: Former Attorney General Edwin Meese III is 92. Actor Cathy Lee Crosby is 79. Movie director Penelope Spheeris is 78. Actor Ron Raines is 74. Country singer John Wesley Ryles is 75. Actor Keith Szarabajka is 71. Actor Dan Butler is 69. Broadcast journalist Stone Phillips is 69. Actor Dennis Christopher is 68. Actor Steven Bauer is 67. Country singer Joe Henry is 63. Rock musician Rick Savage (Def Leppard) is 63. Actor Brendan Coyle is 60. Rock musician Nate Mendel (Foo Fighters) is 55. Actor Suzy Nakamura is 55. Actor Rena Sofer is 55. Rock singer Jimi HaHa (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 55. Actor Lucy Liu is 55. U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough is 54. Rapper Treach (Naughty By Nature) is 53. Actor Joe Lo Truglio is 53. International Tennis Hall of Famer Monica Seles is 50. Singer Nelly Furtado is 45. Pop singer Britney Spears is 42. Actor-singer Jana Kramer is 40. Actor Yvonne Orji is 40. Actor Daniela Ruah is 40. NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers is 40. Actor Alfred Enoch is 35. Pop singer-songwriter Charlie Puth is 32.