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## Wednesday, Dec. 6

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, mixed vegetables, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Cereal  
School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.  
Groton Chamber meeting, noon, at City Hall  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

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



*To give without any reward, or any notice, has a special quality of its own.*  
— Anne Morrow Lindbergh

United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; UMYF Angel Tree Shopping and games, 6:30 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

## Thursday, Dec. 7

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend vegetables, baked apples, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: breakfast pizza.  
School Lunch: Chicken strips, baked beans.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.  
Middle School/High School Christmas program, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

## **CLOSED:** 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

**Israel's war on Hamas:** Israeli forces are closing in on the location of Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar, Israel's military has suggested, as it moves into the "third phase" of ground operations in the devastated Gaza Strip.

**Possible new Trump Co-Conspirator:** A Donald Trump campaign worker tried to encourage a riot to stop the 2020 vote counting in Michigan, prosecutors have alleged. The campaign worker appears to be new to the case and not listed as one of the six co-conspirators.

**Beef and Poultry recall:** Federal officials have announced that Pelleh Poultry Corp. is recalling more than 700 pounds of beef and poultry products in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania that may have been contaminated with listeria.

**Johnson Backlash:** Conservatives turned on Mike Johnson after he confirmed that tapes to be released publicly of the Capitol riot would blur the faces of some of those involved.

**Cold War:** Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo was criticized by Beijing for harboring a "deep-rooted Cold War mentality" after declaring that China is "not our friend."

**War in Ukraine:** Ukraine has shot down a Russian Su-24M bomber jet in the Black Sea, Kyiv's military has said, as Ukraine works to shield its southern coastline against Russian bombardment.

**Most Responsible Companies:** Newsweek has partnered with global research and data firm Statista for our fourth annual list of America's Most Responsible Companies, which focuses on being good corporate citizens and doing right by customers, employees and the planet. See which companies made the list.

**Plane Crash:** The Air Force has confirmed the death of all eight crew members aboard a U.S. military Osprey aircraft that crashed off the coast of Japan during a training mission on November 29.

## Celebrating a soon-to-be centenarian, economic development discussed during City Council meeting

by Elizabeth Varin

December 14 is for celebrating Elda Stange.

Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon signed a proclamation Tuesday evening declaring Dec. 14, 2023 as Elda Stange Day in the city of Groton.

Longtime resident Stange, who was born in rural Groton, will celebrate her 100th birthday that day. Elda settled in the city of Groton in the early 1960s and has resided at the same residence since.

Stange has been "an incredibly positive, active member of the community and continues to do so with her involvement in various organizations and clubs," reads the proclamation.

Stange currently serves as secretary for the Groton Senior Citizens, according to the proclamation.

### Volunteers needed to explore economic development opportunities

The city is looking for community members who want to see the community grow.

A group of city representatives met Tuesday afternoon with Dakota Resources officials to talk about economic development in the community.

The city is looking at additional housing, day care options and more options to grow the community, said Councilwoman Karyn Babcock. Now the city wants members of the public to move forward.

The city is looking to contract with Dakota Resources for \$2,500 for six months. That money, which two individuals volunteered to pay, will go to Dakota Resources to assemble and train a group of Groton citizens to form an economic development committee.

"I feel like it would be a great thing for us to do," Babcock said. "It's not going to hurt us. It's people coming together to find things for Groton, new housing, daycare, improvements, any type of growth."

City officials are looking for volunteers to help form the committee, which will explore different options, grant funding availability and more.

Mayor Hanlon said the city is going to move forward with creating the committee, but it needs community involvement. He asked anyone interested in joining the new committee to contact himself, Councilwoman Babcock or the city to find out more.

Hanlon also emphasized the need for diverse views, from different genders, ages, professions, "so we have lots of different ideas."

It's a great opportunity to see this town grow, not only for those on the committee, but their children, their neighbor's children and the whole future of the community, Hanlon said.

- The council approved hiring skating rink attendant at minimum wage plus 25 cents per year of experience. South Dakota's minimum wage increases to \$11.20 per hour on Jan. 1, 2024. Employees hired include Emma Davies, Gretchen Dinger, Anna Fjeldheim, Carly Guthmiller, Leah Jones, Kayleigh McGannon and Wyatt Wambach.

- The council approved entering into a lease agreement for a CASE Construction payloader for the public works department. The machine, a 2024 621G Zbar TS T4F, will cost \$211,500. The city will be able to trade in a 2009 John Deere payloader to help defray some of that cost. City staff were directed to explore different financing options for the piece of machinery, though financing is available through the seller, Titan Machinery in Aberdeen.

- A new engine is on the way for a Groton Police Department vehicle. While still under warranty, issues with one of the police department vehicles has been a familiar topic for the council. Police Chief Stacy Mayou suggested the council look into replacing department vehicles when they get close to the end of their warranties.

- A new wastewater facility plan is in the works. The council approved a proposal to contract with IMEG to create an updated plan, beginning in 2024. The plan would include improvements needed for the

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wastewater system in the city.

- A few reminders were given at the council meeting. The holiday lighting contest will be judged Dec. 12, with \$100, \$75 and \$50 in utility bill credits to be given away. City offices will be closed Dec. 25 and 26 for Christmas. Finally, dog licenses for 2024 are due Dec. 29, 2023.

- The council reappointed Gordon Nelson to the Planning and Zoning Board for another five-year term.
- The council tabled discussion on a building permit inspector after council members questioned whether there would be a conflict of interest if Planning and Zoning Board member Keith Wipf were to be hired for the inspector position. Councilwoman Karyn Babcock also asked about certifications needed for the position.

## Death Notice: Jerald Ackman

Jerald "Jim" Ackman, 86, of Groton passed away Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at home surrounded by his family. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

**'TIS THE  
SEASON TO  
SHOP LOCAL**

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce



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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.

**GDILIVE.COM**

**GT** Groton Area  
Tigers

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**

## Names Released in Davison County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 37, mile marker 71, 1 mile south of Mitchell, SD

When: 2:10 p.m., Saturday, December 2, 2023

Driver 1: Harlan Dale Miller, 63, Mitchell, SD, Fatal injuries

Passenger 1: Kenneth Leroy Miller, 72, Parker, SD, Serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2010 Ford Fusion

Driver 2: Todd Michael Hohn, 57, Mitchell, SD, No injuries

Vehicle 2: 2014 Chevrolet Silverado

DAVISON COUNTY, S.D.- A 63-year-old Mitchell, SD man has been identified as the person who died Saturday morning in a two vehicle crash one mile south of Mitchell, SD on Highway 37.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2010 Ford Fusion driven by Harlan Dale Miller, 63, of Mitchell, SD, was stopped or nearly stopped in the southbound lane on SD Highway 37 near milepost 71. A white 2014 Chevrolet Silverado driven by Todd Michael Hohn, 57, of Mitchell, SD, was southbound at the same location. The two vehicles collided in the southbound lane, with the Ford Fusion coming to a rest in the west ditch and the Chevrolet Silverado coming to rest in the east ditch.

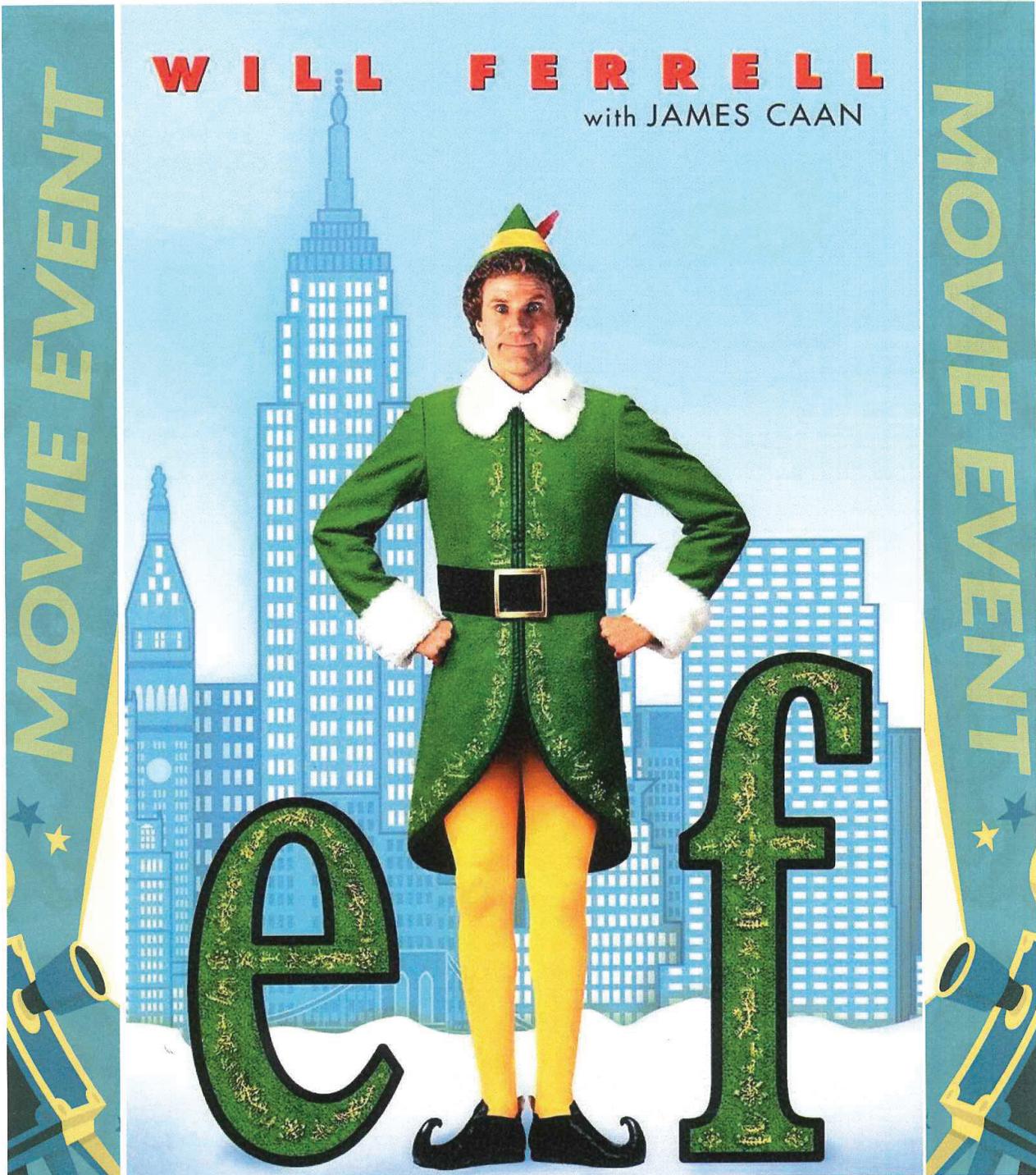
Harlan Miller was pronounced deceased at the scene of the crash. His passenger, Kenneth Leroy Miller, 72, received non-life-threatening injuries and was transported to the hospital. Seat belt use is under investigation for the driver. The passenger was wearing a seat belt. The driver of the Chevrolet Silverado, Todd Michael Hohn, was not injured in the crash and was not wearing a seat belt.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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Wage Memorial Library  
120 N Main St - Groton SD  
**MUST Preregister by calling the Library!**  
(605) 397-8422

Saturday, December 9th  
11am-1pm  
FREE Admission  
Jungle Pizza will be served!

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## State Budget Address

By: Governor Kristi Noem

December 5, 2023

Remarks as-prepared for delivery



### INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Lieutenant Governor Rhoden, Mr. Speaker, members of the House and Senate, and my fellow South Dakotans. I'm grateful my husband Bryon is here today. Would you all welcome him as well?

When most of us think about South Dakota, we think of our land, our economy, our assets, our natural beauty. But, when I think of South Dakota, I think of our people.

"Under God, the People Rule." That is not only our state motto, it's our way of life. It's my priority every day when I come to work.

Today, I am proud to present my budget for your consideration. This budget covers the remainder of Fiscal Year 2024 and all of Fiscal Year 2025. It's a budget that prioritizes people, not programs. It's a budget that shows what can be done with smart, conservative fiscal policies. And it is a budget that focuses on our core responsibilities of state government.

This year, national inflation has risen. That means family budgets are tighter and people have less discretionary spending. Every dollar in this budget is an investment in our people. This money belongs to them. They know what their needs are, and we are constitutionally required to spend it appropriately to meet their needs.

Our number one priority should be our kids and grandkids. They are our future. Hopefully, they are the reason why you come here to Pierre, why you take time away from your families, and why you take an oath to participate in public service. Every vote that you take, every dollar that we invest, and every policy that you support should be focused on making South Dakota safer, stronger, and healthier for our kids and our grandkids.

Our budget must be focused on the core purposes of state government as defined by our state constitution. My budget proposal today focuses on strengthening education, building a stronger workforce, keeping people healthy, investing in long term infrastructure, and avoiding debt so we can preserve our low tax, low regulatory environment that we are blessed with today.

### ECONOMIC UPDATE

These priorities are possible because of South Dakota's economic strength. Our economy is one of the strongest in the nation. Clearly, we are feeling the impact of burdensome regulations from the Biden Administration. Inflation has risen, and people are still adjusting to increased prices of everyday goods.

We will embrace conservative fiscal policies to keep South Dakotans financially secure. We have no individual income tax, no corporate income tax, no personal property tax, strong reserve balances, a AAA credit rating, and one of the only fully-funded pensions in the country.

This will be our 135th year of delivering a balanced budget. We make it a priority to cut government red tape wherever we can. And we let taxpayers keep as much money in their pockets as possible.

South Dakota has reaped the benefits of conservative policies. Even during recent recessions and global pandemics, South Dakota has continued to grow. We are the backbone of this country. We've had record surpluses and sales tax revenue over the last several years – and we have been able to use those additional dollars to give back to the people. This year, I am encouraging the legislature to do exactly what families across America are doing every single day – stick to a tight budget.

South Dakota's economy is strong. Since I took office in 2019, South Dakota has been second in the

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nation for personal income growth. Incomes have gone up by almost 30% for our people. As we move forward, South Dakota's economy will continue to grow faster than the national average, and our jobs numbers will continue to grow. Our unemployment rate will remain far below other states.

Given the success of the Freedom Works Here initiative, we can expect that South Dakota's economy will continue to thrive. People are coming to join our winning workforce because they believe in what we're doing. They believe in it so much that they want to be part of it. They want to live and work in the Freest state in America. We have a responsibility to budget accordingly – to extend Freedom and opportunity for our kids and for all those looking to join our way of life.

I am not proposing conservative spending because our economy is weak. I am proposing conservative spending because we are strong – and I want South Dakotans to continue to thrive for generations to come.

## REVENUE

South Dakota's revenues have continued to exceed projections. We're also projecting \$115.6 million in available ongoing revenue for the next fiscal year. We also have \$208 million in one-time dollars available. This is because our revenues have continued to exceed projections – and my administration found efficiencies.

Before we talk about how we're going to invest dollars, I want us to have a quick family discussion. Last year, the legislature spent tens of millions of dollars that wasn't in my budget recommendation. Clearly, I signed that budget, but this year will be different. I am committed to budgeting conservatively, spending within our means, returning money to the taxpayers, and focusing on our priorities. I hope that you will agree with me on that approach.

Remember, every interest group has a lobbyist in this Capitol building who wants a piece of this budget during legislative session. It is our job to be advocates for the South Dakota taxpayers.

### Sales Tax

The biggest component of our state revenues is sales tax. Our sales tax dollars are running approximately \$2.5 Million ahead of legislative estimates. Last year, the legislature chose to give the people of South Dakota a sales tax holiday to ease the burden of inflation, which I signed. It is still meaningful tax relief for the people, and I am hopeful that you will consider making it permanent.

### Unclaimed Property

A significant portion of our additional revenues comes from unclaimed property receipts – which are now \$76 million above estimates. We are treating this as one-time revenue. Over the last 10 years, a typical year brings in between \$45 and \$65 million in unclaimed property to the State of South Dakota. This amount has dramatically increased.

Our State Treasurer, Josh Haeder, is looking at what other states spend to market unclaimed property to help return money to its rightful owners. He and I will be working together to create a plan that ensures South Dakotans know that their own money can be returned to them.

## EDUCATION

Our kids deserve the very best educational opportunities available. My budget addresses teachers' salaries, invests in childhood literacy, and sets our kids up for the careers of the future.

### 4% to K-12

Let's talk about the "Big Three," our schools, our state workers, and our healthcare providers.

National inflation has continued to rise over the past year. State law requires that we increase funding to education at inflation or 3%, whichever is lower. I am recommending we go above and beyond that and provide a 4% increase for education, providers, and state employees.

We have to take care of our people first. We must address our responsibilities first before we consider special interest projects.

By investing 4% in our schools, we will give our school districts the money to pay teachers more. Our teachers are one of the most important factors to set our kids up for a lifetime of success. We've all seen the impact that a great teacher can have on our kids – on their lives – on their learning. Studies show that

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just one year with a great teacher can raise a student's earnings potential by thousands of dollars a year, and even substantially increase a student's self-esteem. Great teachers help make that happen. And we can retain great teachers by paying them what they deserve.

Every year when we invest in the Big Three, I advocate that schools put the money directly into teacher salaries. Two years ago, when I requested 6% for the Big Three, I asked schools to invest 6% into teachers. Last year, when we invested 7%, I said the same. Unfortunately, teacher salaries have not kept up. Since I took office, and with this 4% proposal, we will have increased state funding for our K-12 schools by 26.3%. But actual average teacher salaries have lagged far behind. Why should we continue to send money to school administrators and school boards when they do not pass it along to teachers? I am working with my Secretary of Education, Dr. Graves, to bring some ideas to the legislature about how to bridge this gap. Our teachers do incredible things for our kids – and they deserve a paycheck that reflects that.

## **Literacy**

I want to discuss a challenge that schools are facing across the country. Literacy rates are dropping. In fact, many kids aren't even attending schools in cities and states around America and right here in South Dakota, too. My budget tackles these challenges head on.

One of the biggest ways that teachers can help a student succeed is by helping them learn how to read. If a child can read by the time they leave 3rd grade, they will have a much higher chance to succeed in their lives. Research tells us that there is a better way to teach kids how to read. We are going to trust the science – the Science of Reading.

My Department of Education has launched a statewide literacy initiative based on the Science of Reading. It includes an emphasis on phonics, which is the proven best way to teach kids how to read. I am dedicating \$6 million in one-time funding to continue this effort. Let's make sure that our teachers are equipped to deliver this proven model for our kids.

## **JAG**

If our kids can graduate from high school ready for college or a career, we have set them up for success. When I first became Governor, I decided to make Jobs for America's Graduates – Or JAG – a priority because of its proven model of helping at-risk students become better prepared for their future. JAG is working. It helps kids who are at risk of not graduating from high school. Because of the skills that these students learn, 94% of kids who participate end up graduating. When I took office, just a few schools in South Dakota were utilizing JAG. In 2020, we established a full-time facilitator to cooperate with schools to set up JAG programs. Today, 13 schools across the state have full-fledged programs with students thriving. These kids are completing high school, going to college, and achieving the career of their dreams.

So why would we stop at just 13 schools? Today, I am proposing that we target available federal dollars to invest in JAG. We will expand JAG to more schools and set many more kids up for a lifetime of achievement.

## **WORKFORCE**

We educate our kids so that they can learn and be successful. We also educate them so that they can get a good-paying job in the career of their dreams. My proposed budget supports this priority in several ways.

## **DSU Quantum**

First, we have an exciting new opportunity for the jobs of the future. For too long, our kids were moving out of South Dakota to access exciting tech jobs. We've changed that. We've made tech research South Dakota's next big industry. Today, I'm announcing the next step in that effort. We will partner with several of our state universities on a Center for Quantum Information Science & Technology and invest \$6 million in one-time funds to offer unprecedented opportunities for students at Dakota State University, the School of Mines, SDSU, and USD. Our universities will be on the cutting edge of quantum computing. Quantum computing uses the physical properties of subatomic particles to hold a charge. This new field can do exponentially more than regular computers can. Imagine a task that it would take regular computers 20 years to accomplish – quantum computing could handle that task in a matter of seconds. This Center will combine numerous fields to make tremendous advancements in cybersecurity, agriculture, healthcare,

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and more. South Dakota will be a leader in emerging technology. This is our fastest growing industry, and South Dakota is making it a reality.

## **Tech College Equipment**

The jobs of the future are not just in cyber and tech. Our kids need good-paying and exciting jobs in a variety of fields. South Dakota has some of the very best tech colleges in America. They are setting our kids up for so many career opportunities. I am proposing \$4.8 million in one-time funds for equipment at our technical colleges. This builds on the investments that we have made over the past several years. We are giving South Dakota students the job training they need on the best and most up-to-date equipment right here at home.

## **4% for state employees**

Some of our kids will want to join careers in our state workforce. They will be called to public service just like those of us here in this chamber. This budget supports our state employees who do so much for the people of South Dakota. They work every day to make this state safer, stronger, and healthier. My proposal gives a 4% raise to state employees so that we can continue to attract and retain the best and brightest.

## **HEALTH**

If we want to give our kids the very best opportunity to succeed, we need to set them up for a healthy future.

## **4% for providers**

The 4% increase for our providers is an important step to promote good health for our kids, but also for South Dakotans at every age and stage of life. This increase doesn't pick winners and losers. Inflation is impacting all of our providers, so we should provide them all with relief. Nursing homes will get 4%. Community service providers will get 4%. Developmental disability providers will get 4%, as well. All of our providers are critical. I am sure that you'll have discussions and debate throughout this budget process about giving more money to this provider or that group. Some of you might support more money for long-term care, or a program that would really help your district, or even a tuition freeze at our state universities, instead of helping some providers. Last year, we made those types of targeted adjustments and worked hard to make sure they were covering the needs of each specialized group. This year, an equal increase is appropriate because inflation increases are hitting all of our providers.

## **Bright Start**

In 2022, we expanded Bright Start to every corner of the state. This program helps us take care of moms and their babies both before birth and after. Bright Start provides first-time moms with personal nursing services through pregnancy until their child's 2nd birthday. Since that expansion, there has been such high demand for Bright Start that there have even been waiting lists in a few communities. My budget takes advantage of available federal funds to provide this opportunity to more South Dakota moms and their babies, which will reduce and hopefully eliminate these waiting lists.

## **Foster Care, Guardianships, & Adoptions**

Every child deserves an opportunity to grow up in a safe and healthy home. For some, that isn't possible in their current home. We must support foster care, guardianships, and adoptions for kids who need them. My budget funds additional family treatment foster homes for kids that have more significant emotional or medical needs. We will also provide additional support for families after they choose guardianship or adoptions.

## **Medicaid Expansion**

I need to touch on one more aspect of public health. The voters decided that South Dakota public health will include Medicaid Expansion. We will continue to ensure that this program is funded responsibly and efficiently.

We still have one more full year of enhanced federal FMAP dollars, which are helping us to defer the total cost of Medicaid Expansion. But in fiscal year 2026, the full need will be about \$64 million. Last year, the legislature provided \$11.4 million to get us part of the way there. This year, my budget proposes an

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additional \$18.3 million to cover costs of the program. We will need to continue to address these funding issues in years to come.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Every South Dakotan needs safe roads, bridges, dams, and water infrastructure to live their day-to-day lives.

### **ARPA Water**

We still have about \$105 million in remaining federal ARPA dollars from the federal government. As you all know, we didn't ask for these dollars. The federal government sent them to us. Then they told us that if we sent them back, they'd just be reappropriated to other states. South Dakota has been more responsible than other states in how we utilize these dollars. We worked together to make historic investments in water and wastewater projects. We provided funding for sewer projects attached to workforce housing. We helped extend broadband access to every corner of the state. We replaced LIFEPAK devices in ambulances across South Dakota.

The legislature also set aside \$30 million to administer these grants and initiatives. The Bureau of Finance and Management has been able to return \$25 million of that in cost savings. They facilitated these efforts far more efficiently than we expected. The Department of Labor is also returning \$1 million. With that additional \$26 million in available dollars, we have a total of \$130.6 million that must be allocated within the next year.

Today, I am proposing that we appropriate \$10 million of those dollars to revenue replacement – that is what we are permitted under federal guidance. I am recommending that the remaining \$120.6 million be invested into various water efforts.

The bulk of that money, just over \$95 million, will go to the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resource's water programs – the same as the \$600 million two years ago. I also believe we should allocate about \$25 million to state water and wastewater projects.

### **Dams**

It's time to improve our infrastructure by repairing dams that need it. Richmond Dam still needs about \$20 million in repairs. If we invest \$9.7 million in one-time state dollars, School and Public Lands can leverage FEMA dollars for the rest. Similarly, my budget proposes \$2 million to repair the Lake Alvin and Newell Lake Dam. The federal government will provide additional funding to complete this project.

### **BIT**

I am proposing \$7 million in one-time funds to support IT modernization for our state government platforms. We have to keep investing in our technology to keep our systems protected. Our state systems are attacked by bad actors every day, and we have a responsibility to keep our citizens' information safe and secure.

## **AVOIDING DEBT**

By funding all of these infrastructure projects, we avoid having to bond for those needs. That means that we don't incur debt – debt that our kids will be responsible for paying off in the future.

I want to give a brief update on two projects that are major needs for our state: the men's prison near Sioux Falls and the women's prison in Rapid City. Both of these new, modern correctional facilities will keep our communities safer. But they will also address the space needs that we have now – space needs that prevent us from getting those in our custody the help that they need. With these new facilities, we will be able to address behavioral challenges, substance abuse, skills and jobs training, and other areas that will get these individuals out of our prisons and back into society.

Every dollar we set aside now for these projects ensures that the State doesn't need to issue debt in the future. Between the past two legislative sessions and my proposal for this year, we will have dedicated more than \$650 million to these important projects. This will save over \$600 million in interest and fees over the next 25 years – that's \$50 million in savings to the taxpayers every year.

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Setting aside resources now is the fiscally responsible thing to do. Together, we will ensure our state's long-term economic health for our kids and grandkids.

## **Men's prison**

The new men's prison in Sioux Falls is needed to replace the Hill, which was built before South Dakota was even a state. My proposed budget sets aside \$228 million in one-time dollars for this project. We do that by utilizing the \$95.7 million in reserves above 10%, as well as the remaining \$132.4 million in one-time funds. We will place these dollars in the Incarceration Construction Fund to prepare for construction of this new, safer facility.

## **Women's prison**

As for the women's prison in Rapid City, we broke ground at the completion of the design phase. However, since we broke ground, we learned that there is a \$27 million shortfall to build this facility with the space and programming that it needs. We will minimize this need by utilizing federal dollars for water, as well as almost \$4 million in remaining land & design dollars. However, that leaves \$21 million outstanding. I am proposing that we utilize one-time funds to complete this project.

## **Indigent Legal Defense**

A strong criminal justice system supports our American way of life. It upholds the rights of our people. That includes the Sixth Amendment right to legal counsel. South Dakota has not guaranteed this right in a coordinated way in the past. This makes it difficult for courts to obtain qualified and willing attorneys to fill this critical defender role. Chief Justice Jensen initiated a summer task force to analyze our current system and recommend solutions. They found a way to do this better – and cheaper.

I am recommending that South Dakota create a statewide indigent defense commission that will oversee a statewide appellate defender office to handle criminal appeals, child abuse and neglect appeals, and habeas appeals. This office would also provide training and mentorship to rural attorneys. If we invest \$1.4 million in ongoing funding, we will save the counties a net of up to \$600,000 a year.

## **CONCLUSION**

To be sure, there are uncertainties in the world today, but I am excited about South Dakota's future. We tackle challenges head on, and we do so united. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit us, we didn't shut down. Rather, we did the exact opposite. We invited people to come enjoy our open spaces and beautiful state. No matter what uncertainties may lie ahead, one thing is certain: South Dakota will budget responsibly and conservatively.

I want to thank my family. I couldn't do this job without them and their support. I also want to thank my team at BFM for seeing my vision for this budget – for understanding the importance of focusing on the responsibilities of state government and building a budget from that foundation. They're sitting behind me today – would you all give Commissioner Jim Terwilliger and his team a round of applause for their fantastic work?

I am excited about this budget proposal. It's a budget that invests in our kids and grandkids – the next generation; in their education, future careers, and health; in infrastructure that helps us avoid debt for the future. This budget proposal makes smart, conservative, common-sense decisions.

It is not the job of the government to do everything for people. The job of government is to empower people to do things for themselves. That's the ideal that America was built on.

I am proud to present a budget that prioritizes our kids and puts people first. "Under God, the People Rule." We do not come to work every day for ourselves. We come to work to serve the people that make this state great.

I hope that South Dakota can continue to be a shining example to the rest of the nation. We put people over programs. The people of South Dakota are strong. They are hardworking. And they inspire me each and every day. I pray that we can deliver a budget that they can be proud of – a budget that puts them first.

God bless you, and Merry Christmas.

## South Dakota Democratic Party statement to Governor's FY2025 Budget Address

Below are the statements from the South Dakota Democratic Party leadership to Governor Kristi Noem's FY2025 budget proposal.

"Like the Governor, Democratic legislators share a commitment to make our kids and grandkids a policy priority. However, unlike the Governor, we believe this should include free breakfast and lunches for our public school students, assistance for childcare, and accepting the federal government's offer of a summer EBT program for families. Hungry children struggle to learn. We're a rich state and can meet this need if it is a policy priority." - State Senator Reynold Nesiba District 15 & State Representative Oren Lesmeister District 28A

"The Governor talked about education, healthcare, foster care and prisons but left out any reference to our tribal members. If we are going to address these policy issues, tribal leaders need to be at the table. We need to work together to ensure that all South Dakotans have access to economic, educational, and healthcare opportunities. This can only be done with much greater coordination with tribal leadership. We hope the Governor takes steps toward greater reconciliation." - Senator Nesiba & Representative Lesmeister

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## Groton Goodness Sale

Members of Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. visited Becky of BK Custom T's & More and placed their shirt orders yesterday!

Becky has introduced the Groton Goodness SALE with shirts made with words describing Groton! Patrons can bring an item for the The Pantry - Groton, SD and receive \$2 off her already discounted prices. A portion of the proceeds will also be donated to the food pantry! Swing by her shop Wednesday from 10am-6pm to check out her sale!

Pictured are Pat Miller, Nancy Larsen, April Abeln and Becky Kotzer. (Courtesy photo)

## Conde National League

**December 4, 2023 Team Standings:** Giants 29½ (winner of first half), Cubs 29, Mets 29, Tigers 27½, Braves 23, Pirates 18

**Men's High Games:** Aaron Severson 190, Steve Hargis 172, Dalton Locke 170

**Men's High Series:** Aaron Severson 495, Dalton Locke 485, Russ Bethke 460

**Women's High Games:** Michelle Johnson 187, Suzi Easthouse 184, 175, Nancy Radke 169

**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 508, Michelle Johnson 486, Vickie Kramp 466

## Girls Basketball

### Second chance free throw propels Lady Tigers to one-point overtime win over James Valley Christian

A lane violation at the free throw line gave Jerica Locke a second chance at a missed free throw was the deciding factor in Groton Area's 54-53 overtime win over James Valley Christian.

The Vikings started out fast and took a 6-2 lead as the Tigers struggled in the season opening game. James Valley held a 9-4 lead, but then the Tigers scored nine straight points to take a 13-10 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Despite missing five of nine free throws in the second quarter, the Tigers slowly pulled away to a 31-24 lead at halftime. In the second quarter, Brooklyn Hansen made two three-pointers and had eight points to lead the Tigers.

Groton Area opened up an 11-point lead at 38-27 in the third quarter led it, 41-33 at the end of the third quarter.

Groton Area scored the first basket in the fourth quarter to have a 10-point lead, but then the Viking scored 10 unanswered points to tie the game at 43 with 4:20 left in the game. Groton Area still had the upper hand and had a three point lead, but Alexa Goertz would make seven of seven free throws in the fourth quarter to keep the Vikings within striking distance. The game was tied at 48 and would tie the game at 50 with 20 seconds left in the fourth quarter. Groton had a chance to win the game, but the shot would not fall, sending the game into overtime.

James Valley Christian's two leading scorers would be fouled out by the overtime. Groton Area had a 52-51 lead with 19 seconds left. Jerrica Locke was fouled. She made the first free throw. She missed the second one, but a lane violation on the Vikings gave Locke a second chance. She made the second one giving the Tigers a three-point edge. The Vikings would be put on the line in the closing seconds, but despite making both free throws, the one point difference was enough for the Tigers to win.

Rylee Dunker had a double-double on the night with 15 points and 10 rebounds, plus she had one assist. Kennedy Hansen had 10 points, four rebounds, four assists and one steal. Brooklyn Hansen had eight points and two assists. Jaedyn Penning had six points, two rebounds and one assist. Faith Trapahgen had six points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Jerica Locke had four points, seven rebounds, three assists and one steal. Sydney Leicht had two points, four rebounds, two assists and two steals. Laila Roberts had two points, one rebound and one assist. Talli Wright had one point and one rebound. Taryn Traphagen had two assists and one steal.

The Tigers were 14 of 41 in two-pointers for 34 percent, six of 15 in three-pointers for 40 percent, eight of 19 from the line for 42 percent, had 32 rebounds, 21 turnovers, 17 assists, seven steals and 15 team fouls.

Alexa Goertz led the Vikings with 20 points followed by Kaylie Robinson with 13, Addison Bartholow 11, Jacey Wipf four, Addyson Knight and Daril Frandsen each had two points and Rhayonna Hood added a free throw. The Vikings made 18 of 45 field goals for 40 percent, 15 of 18 free throws for 83 percent, had 25 team fouls and 18 turnovers.



**Brooklyn Hansen**  
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Kennedy Hansen**  
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Shane Clark doing the play-by-play. Game sponsors were Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms

Groton Area will host Hamlin on Friday as part of a double header.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 36-12, leading at the quarters tops at 9-2, 21-5 and 29-7. Rylee Dunker had 13 points while McKenna Tietz had six, Faith Traphagen, Taryn Traphagen and Mia Crank each had four points, Kella Tracy had three and Ashlynn Warrington had two points.

Rylin Wipf led the Vikings with six points.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Shane Clark doing the play-by-play. Ed and Connie Stauch sponsored the broadcast.

James Valley Christian won the junior high game, 18-16.



**Faith Traphagen**  
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

-Paul Kosel

**Columbia Hometown Holiday Party**  
**Saturday, Dec. 9**  
**5-7 p.m. at the Columbia Legion**  
**All ages are welcome!**  
**Christmas Music ~ Hayrides**  
**Crafts and Games**  
**Santa Claus**  
**Free will offering supper will be served**  
**Festive or ugly, wear your favorite Christmas attire!**  
**Home decorating winners will be announced!**  
**Come see the beautifully decorated**  
**Columbia City Park!**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Noem's spending plan totals \$7.28 billion, down slightly from current budget

**Despite tighter financial conditions, governor proposes 4% increases for schools, state workers, health providers**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - DECEMBER 5, 2023 5:31 PM**

PIERRE — Gov. Kristi Noem unveiled a \$7.28 billion budget proposal during a speech Tuesday at the Capitol, which would be a 1.33% decrease from the current budget.

She said it's time for state government to tighten its belt.

"Last year, the Legislature spent tens of millions of dollars that wasn't in my budget recommendation," Noem said during her annual budget address. "Clearly, I signed that budget, but this year will be different. I am committed to budgeting conservatively, spending within our means, returning money to the taxpayers and focusing on our priorities."

The state's income increased rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic as billions in federal aid flooded into the state. Noem's proposed budget includes the last remaining portion of that aid.

To help offset the impacts of inflation, Noem is proposing 4% funding increases for K-12 school districts, state employee compensation, and reimbursements for health and human services providers. That would mean \$46.5 million more for schools, \$20.6 million more for state workers, and \$26 million more for health and human services providers.

Noem's budget is only a proposal. The next step for legislators is to meet from January to March and adopt a budget for the 2025 fiscal year.

Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, said the budget address left him with a sense of optimism.

"At a time when we're seeing massive inflation across every aspect of life, a conservative budget address is smart," Crabtree said. "It tackles the issue head-on."

Rep. Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, was surprised to hear Noem say schools have been awarded 26% more funding since she took office, but teacher salaries have lagged behind.

"I want to make sure that we're getting those funds to teachers," Odenbach said. "I think we need to look into that."

Meanwhile, a Democrat said Noem omitted an important issue.

"Did you hear one word about our Native American population and how we're going to lift up our poorest populations?" said Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls. "Republicans continue to treat this state like a two-class system."

#### **Some revenue above estimates**

While Noem said the budget will be tight, she also said some revenues are surpassing projections, with an additional \$115.6 million expected in ongoing revenue for the next fiscal year and \$208 million in one-time funds.

Sales tax, a major revenue source, is \$2.5 million above estimates. Noem said she supports the idea of permanently cutting the sales tax from 4.5% to 4.2%, after lawmakers passed the cut last year but only made it effective through 2027.

"Remember, every interest group has a lobbyist in this Capitol building who wants a piece of this budget

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during legislative session," Noem said. "It is our job to be advocates for the South Dakota taxpayers."

Noem said unclaimed property receipts are \$76 million above expectations but did not offer a detailed explanation of why. She said State Treasurer Josh Haeder is exploring unclaimed property marketing strategies, like ads, to ensure residents reclaim their funds before they revert back to the state.

Unclaimed property consists of abandoned financial assets such as checking and savings accounts, unpaid wages, securities, life insurance payouts, uncashed checks, and the proceeds of safe deposit boxes that are without activity for a certain period of time.

## Investments in education

Noem said despite state funding for K-12 education increasing by 26% since she took office, "average teacher salaries have lagged far behind."

"Why would we continue to send money to school administrators and school boards when they don't pass it on to teachers?" she said.

Noem said she is working with the Department of Education to address that, but did not provide further details.

The budget also addresses declining literacy rates with a \$6 million proposed investment in a statewide literacy initiative, emphasizing phonics-based teaching methods.

Additionally, Noem highlighted the success of the Jobs for America's Graduates program in aiding at-risk students. She proposed expanding the program with two new positions and \$500,000 in federal funds to enroll more students. The program provides participants with classroom and work-based learning experiences leading toward the goal of a quality job.

## A 'quantum' workforce

Noem proposed a \$6 million investment for a new Center for Quantum Information Science & Technology, which would be a collaboration among Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota Mines in Rapid City, South Dakota State University in Brookings, and the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

Noem did not say whether the center would have its own physical location. The center would focus on using quantum computing in fields like cybersecurity, agriculture and health care.

"Our universities will be on the cutting edge of quantum computing," she said.

Additionally, the budget proposes \$4.8 million in one-time funding for updating equipment at South Dakota's technical colleges.

## Health and child care

Noem wants to expand the Bright Start program, which offers nursing services to first-time mothers from pregnancy until the child's second birthday. She proposed using \$194,000 in federal funding to add two positions for the program.

The proposed budget would also fund "additional family treatment foster homes for kids that have more significant emotional or medical needs," Noem said. "We will also provide additional support for families after they choose guardianship or adoptions."

Noem also addressed Medicaid expansion, which South Dakota voters passed in 2022. She wants an additional \$18.3 million to cover the continued cost of expansion.

"We will need to continue to address these funding issues in years to come," Noem said.

## Water and infrastructure

The state has around \$131 million in remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, which must be allocated within the next year.

Noem recommended spending \$121 million on water projects, with the majority directed to Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources water programs. This follows a previous allocation of \$600 million for similar purposes two years ago.

About \$25 million is proposed for state water and wastewater projects.

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, said she was disappointed to not hear Noem allocate funds toward an effort to build a water pipeline from the Missouri River to the Black Hills.

"We know we will need more water as the region grows," she said. "So, I'm hoping we can address that

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this session. I've been asking about this for a long time."

For dam infrastructure, the proposed budget includes \$9.7 million for repairs to Richmond Dam in Brown County, enabling the leveraging of federal funds for the remaining costs. Additionally, \$2 million is allocated for repairs to the Lake Alvin dam in Lincoln County and Newell Lake dam in Butte County, with federal funding expected to complete the projects.

The budget also proposes \$7 million in one-time funds for information technology modernization within state government systems. This investment aims to enhance security and protect citizen information against cyber threats.

"By funding all of these infrastructure projects, we avoid having to bond for those needs," Noem said. "That means that we don't incur debt – debt that our kids will be responsible for paying off in the future."

## Dodging prison debt

For the proposed new men's prison near Sioux Falls and the women's prison being constructed in Rapid City, Noem proposed setting aside another \$262 million from a combination of federal and state funds. That would bring the total set aside for the projects during the past several years to \$656 million, aimed at addressing space needs and enhancing rehabilitation services like behavioral support, substance abuse treatment and skills training. The women's prison would be an additional facility, while the men's prison would largely replace the antiquated penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Noem said the upfront investment is expected to save over \$600 million in interest and fees over 25 years.

Regarding the women's prison, Noem said, "since we broke ground, we learned that there is a \$27 million shortfall to build this facility with the space and programming that it needs." She did not elaborate on the reasons for the shortfall but proposed covering it with \$4 million in unused land and design funds and \$21 million in new funds.

Noem also recommended establishing a statewide indigent defense commission, including a statewide appellate defender office. This initiative, with proposed ongoing funding of \$1.4 million, aims to help provide legal counsel for defendants who can't afford it, as required by the U.S. Constitution. That responsibility is currently shouldered entirely by counties, and Noem said the proposal, formulated by a task force, could save counties up to \$600,000 annually.

"The people of South Dakota are strong. They are hardworking. And they inspire me each and every day," Noem said as the address concluded. "I pray that we can deliver a budget that they can be proud of — a budget that puts them first."

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

## Budget proposal includes \$6 million for quantum computing center

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - DECEMBER 5, 2023 5:49 PM

PIERRE — Several state universities would share \$6 million in funding to collaborate on research into quantum computing, if a proposal from the governor is adopted by legislators.

Gov. Kristi Noem proposed the funding Tuesday during her annual budget speech at the Capitol.

"Quantum computing uses the physical properties of subatomic particles to hold a charge," she said. "This new field can do exponentially more than a regular computer can do. Imagine a task that it would take regular computers 20 years to accomplish. A quantum computer could handle that task in just a matter of seconds."

The \$6 million budget request, along with the rest of Noem's budget, will be considered by legislators during the annual lawmaking session that begins in January and ends in March.

The quantum computing proposal would fund a new Center for Quantum Information Science & Technology. Neither Noem nor her budget documents said whether the center will include a physical location. She said it would involve a partnership among Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota Mines in

Rapid City, South Dakota State University in Brookings, and the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. Her budget documents say the funding would be used for initial startup costs, "to support faculty and graduate students, hold an annual research symposium, and purchase access to cloud quantum computing resources from one or more of the major computing providers." The long-term proposal also includes the implementation of degree programs.

"This center will combine numerous fields to make tremendous advancements in cybersecurity, agriculture, health care and more," Noem said. "South Dakota will be a leader in an emerging technology."

## Governor criticizes school districts for lagging teacher pay

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 5, 2023 5:01 PM

PIERRE — The total increase in state funding for schools is 26% since Gov. Kristi Noem took office in 2019, she said Tuesday during her annual budget address; meanwhile, statistics from the same period show average South Dakota teacher pay has increased about 10%.

That's left South Dakota near the bottom in teacher salaries compared to the rest of the country. South Dakota currently ranks 49th in the nation – roughly \$16,000 below the national average. South Dakota teachers make less than they did when Noem took office, when factoring in inflation.

"Why would we continue to send money to school administrators and school boards when they don't pass it on to teachers?" Noem said.

State law requires funding for K-12 schools to increase each year by at least 3% or the rate of inflation – whichever is lower. The last two years, Noem and legislators have approved 6% and 7% increases to compete with inflation. Each time, she encouraged school districts to put those raises toward teacher pay, she said Tuesday.

Noem is proposing a 4% increase for the next budget – ahead of current inflation.

The Legislature in 2016 required that school district teacher compensation each year through 2024 be higher than the district's average compensation in 2017, or else the district's state aid would be reduced. All South Dakota school districts met the increased teacher pay requirement this year.

The aim of the 2016 legislation was to increase teacher salaries in the state both as a recognition of educators' hard work and a greater incentive to draw people to, and keep people in, the field, said South Dakota Education Secretary Joseph Graves in an emailed statement.

"The Legislature and the governor provided the money, but the funds, as a percentage of overall school budgets, did not proportionately make their way into teacher salaries," Graves said. "They simply did not honor the annual increases provided by the state."

Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls and a former educator, said recent state funding increases are important since the state "fell behind" by "not giving decent increases" in the past.

However, school boards are obligated to focus on more than increasing teacher pay in their budgets, Duba added. That includes school bus drivers and food service workers, along with paying for rising food, supply and transportation costs – everything that "makes a school district and a school themselves successful," she said.

"So when a school board sits down to do its budget, it has to look across the board – we have to focus on teacher pay, but we have to elevate all of that and not turn a blind eye to it in state government," Duba added.

Noem announced she's working with Graves to "bring some ideas" to the Legislature about how to "bridge this gap" between the increase in state funding and the increase in teacher pay.

Graves added, "The DOE is working on accountability measures to ensure that money meant for teachers goes to teachers."

Neither Noem nor Graves provided further details on those measures.

"Our teachers do incredible things for our kids – and they deserve a paycheck that reflects that," Noem said.

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

## Doctors on (video) call: Rural medics get long-distance help in treating man gored by bison

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS - DECEMBER 5, 2023 11:44 AM

GANN VALLEY — Rural medics who rescued rancher Jim Lutter after he was gored by a bison didn't have much experience handling such severe wounds.

But the medics did have a doctor looking over their shoulders inside the ambulance as they rushed Lutter to a hospital.

The emergency medicine physician sat 140 miles away in a Sioux Falls office building. She participated in the treatment via a video system recently installed in the ambulance.

"I firmly believe that Jim had the best care anyone has ever received in the back of a basic life support ambulance," said Ed Konechne, a volunteer emergency medical technician with the Kimball Ambulance District.

The ambulance service received its video system through an initiative from the South Dakota Department of Health. The project, Telemedicine in Motion, helps medics across the state, especially in rural areas.

Telehealth became commonplace in clinics and patients' homes during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, and the technology is starting to spread to ambulances. Similar programs recently launched in regions of Texas and Minnesota, but South Dakota officials say their partnership with Avel eCare — a Sioux Falls-based telehealth company — appears to be the nation's only statewide effort.

Lutter, 67, and his wife, Cindy, are among the 12 residents of Gann Valley, a town just east of the Missouri River in central South Dakota. They operate a hunting lodge and ranch, where they raise more than 1,000 bison.

Last December, Lutter went to check on a sick bison calf. The animal was in the same pen as Bill, a 3-year-old bull that was like a family pet.

"We raised him from a tiny little calf, and I always told everybody he thinks I'm his mother. He just followed me everywhere," Lutter recalled. Lutter climbed into the pen and saw Bill calmly walk toward him.

"What does Chuck Norris say? 'Always expect the unexpected.' Well, I didn't do that. I didn't expect the unexpected," he said.

The bison suddenly hooked Lutter with his horns, repeatedly tossed him in the air, and then gored him in the groin. Lutter thought he was going to die but somehow escaped the pen and found himself on the ground, bleeding heavily.

"The red snow was just growing," he said.

Lutter couldn't reach his cellphone to call 911. But he managed to climb into a front-end loader, similar to a tractor, and drove a few miles to the house of his brother Lloyd.

Jim Lutter's pain didn't kick in until his brother pulled him out of the loader and into a minivan. Lloyd called 911 and began driving toward the ambulance base, about 18 miles away.

Rural ambulance services like the one in Kimball are difficult to sustain because insurance reimbursements from small patient volumes often aren't enough to cover operating costs. And they're largely staffed by dwindling ranks of aging volunteers.

That's left 84% of rural counties in the U.S. with at least one "ambulance desert," where people live more than 25 minutes from an ambulance station, according to a study by the Maine Rural Health Research Center.

Konechne, the volunteer medic, was working his regular job as a hardware store manager when a dispatcher came onto his portable radio with a call for help. He hustled two blocks to the Kimball fire station and hopped into the back of an ambulance, which another medic drove toward Gann Valley.

Lloyd Lutter and the ambulance driver both pulled over on the side of the country road once they saw each other coming from opposite directions.

"I opened the side door of the van where Jim was and just saw the look on his face," Konechne said. "It's a look I'll never forget."

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Rural medics often have less training and experience than their urban counterparts, Konechne said. Speaking with a more experienced provider via video gives him peace of mind, especially in uncommon situations. Konechne said the Kimball ambulance service sees only about three patients a year with injuries as bad as Jim Lutter's.

Katie DeJong was the emergency medicine physician at Avel eCare's telehealth center who took the ambulance crew's video call.

"What? A bison did what?" DeJong remembers thinking.

After speaking with the medics and viewing Lutter's injuries, she realized the rancher had life-threatening injuries, especially to his airway. One of Lutter's lungs had collapsed and his chest cavity was filled with air and blood.

DeJong called the emergency department at the hospital in Wessington Springs — 25 miles from Gann Valley — to let its staff know how to prepare. Get ready to insert a chest tube to clear the area around his lungs, she instructed. Get the X-ray machine ready. And have blood on standby in case Lutter needed a transfusion.

DeJong also arranged for a helicopter to fly Lutter from the rural hospital to a Sioux Falls medical center, where trauma specialists could treat his wounds.

Konechne said he was able to devote 100% of his time to Lutter since DeJong took care of taking notes, recording vital signs, and communicating with the hospitals.

Nurse practitioner Sara Cashman was working at the emergency department in Wessington Springs when she received the video call from DeJong.

"It was nice to have that warning so we could all mentally prepare," Cashman said. "We could have the supplies that we needed ready, versus having to assess when the patient got there."

A doctor inserted a tube into Lutter's chest to drain the blood and air around his lungs. Medics then loaded him into the helicopter, which flew him to the Sioux Falls hospital where he was rushed into surgery. Lutter had a fractured collarbone, 16 broken ribs, a partially torn-off scalp, and a 4-inch-deep hole near his groin.

The rancher stayed in the hospital for about a week and compared his painful wound-packing regimen near his groin to the process of loading an old-fashioned rifle.

"That's exactly what it was. Like packing a muzzleloader and you take a rod, let's poke that in there," Lutter said. "That was just a lot of fun."

The video technology that helped save Lutter had only recently been installed in the ambulance after Telemedicine in Motion launched in fall 2022. The program is financed with \$2.7 million from state funds and federal pandemic stimulus money.

The funding pays for Avel eCare employees to provide and install video equipment and teach medics how to use it. The company also employs remote health care professionals who are available 24/7.

So far, 75 of South Dakota's 122 ambulance services have installed the technology, and an additional 18 plan to do so. The system has been used about 700 times so far.

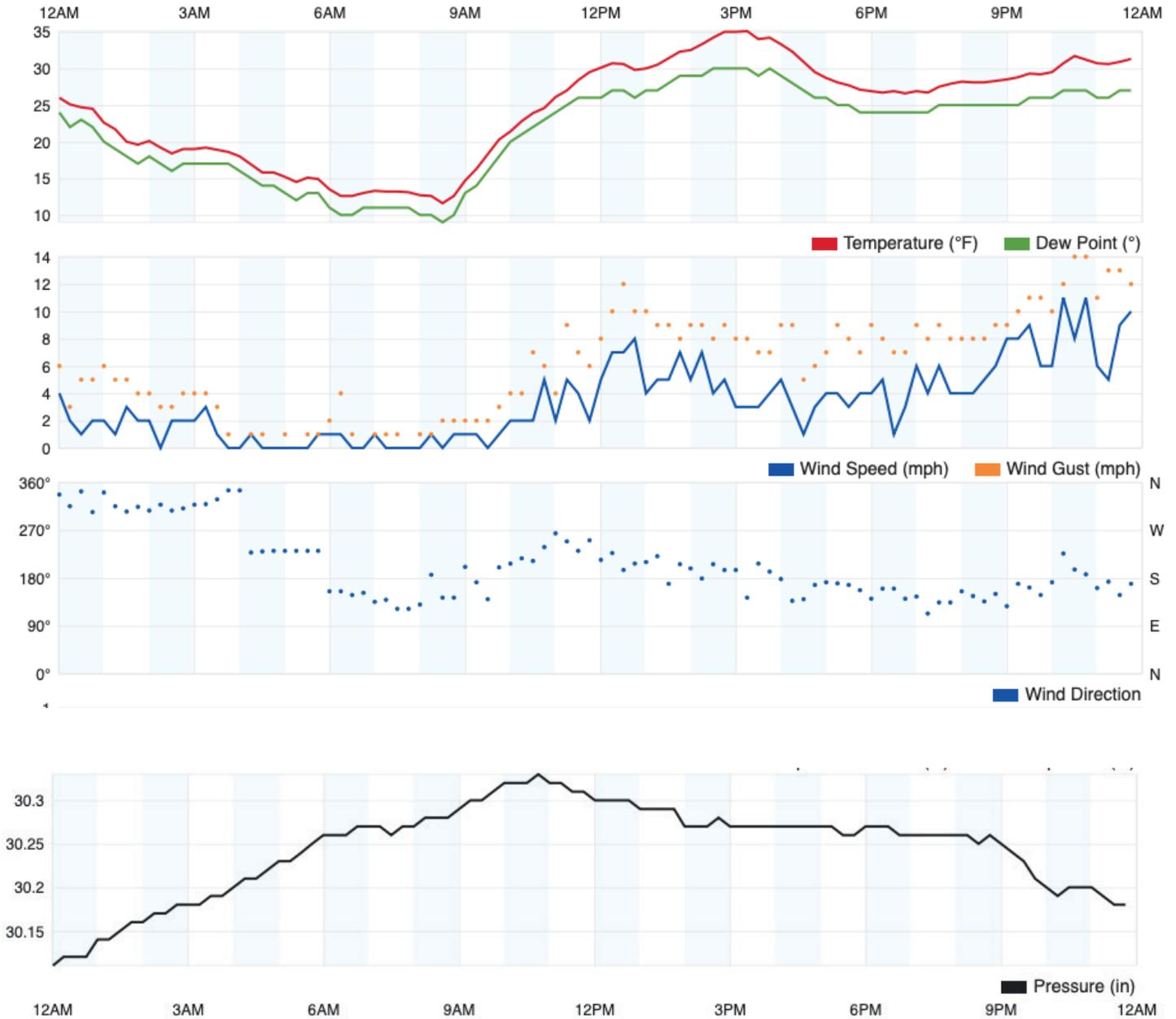
Avel's contract ends in April, but the company hopes the state will extend Telemedicine in Motion into a third year. Once the state funding ends, ambulance services will need to decide if they want to start paying for the video service on their own. Patients wouldn't be charged extra for the video calls, said Jessica Gaikowski, a spokesperson for Avel eCare.

*Arielle Zions, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed Dec 6	Thu Dec 7	Fri Dec 8	Sat Dec 9	Sun Dec 10	Mon Dec 11	Tue Dec 12
54°F 32°F	54°F 36°F	46°F 26°F	35°F 17°F	35°F 21°F	38°F 19°F	30°F 13°F
SSW 12 MPH	SSE 14 MPH	WSW 18 MPH	NNW 18 MPH	SSW 6 MPH	SSW 17 MPH	WNW 12 MPH



## Mild Next Couple Days

and dry too!

December 6, 2023  
2:02 AM

A ridge of high pressure aloft will keep it mild for the next couple of days.

**Today**

- Mild & Dry
- Highs 55-67°



**Tonight**

- Partly Cloudy
- Lows in the 20s to around 30



**Thursday**

- Partly Sunny & Mild
- Highs 50s North, 60s South





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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A ridge of high pressure aloft will keep it mild for the next couple of days.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 2:50 PM

Low Temp: 11 °F at 8:25 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 10:22 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 55 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 69 in 1939

Record Low: -30 in 1972

Average High: 32

Average Low: 11

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.12

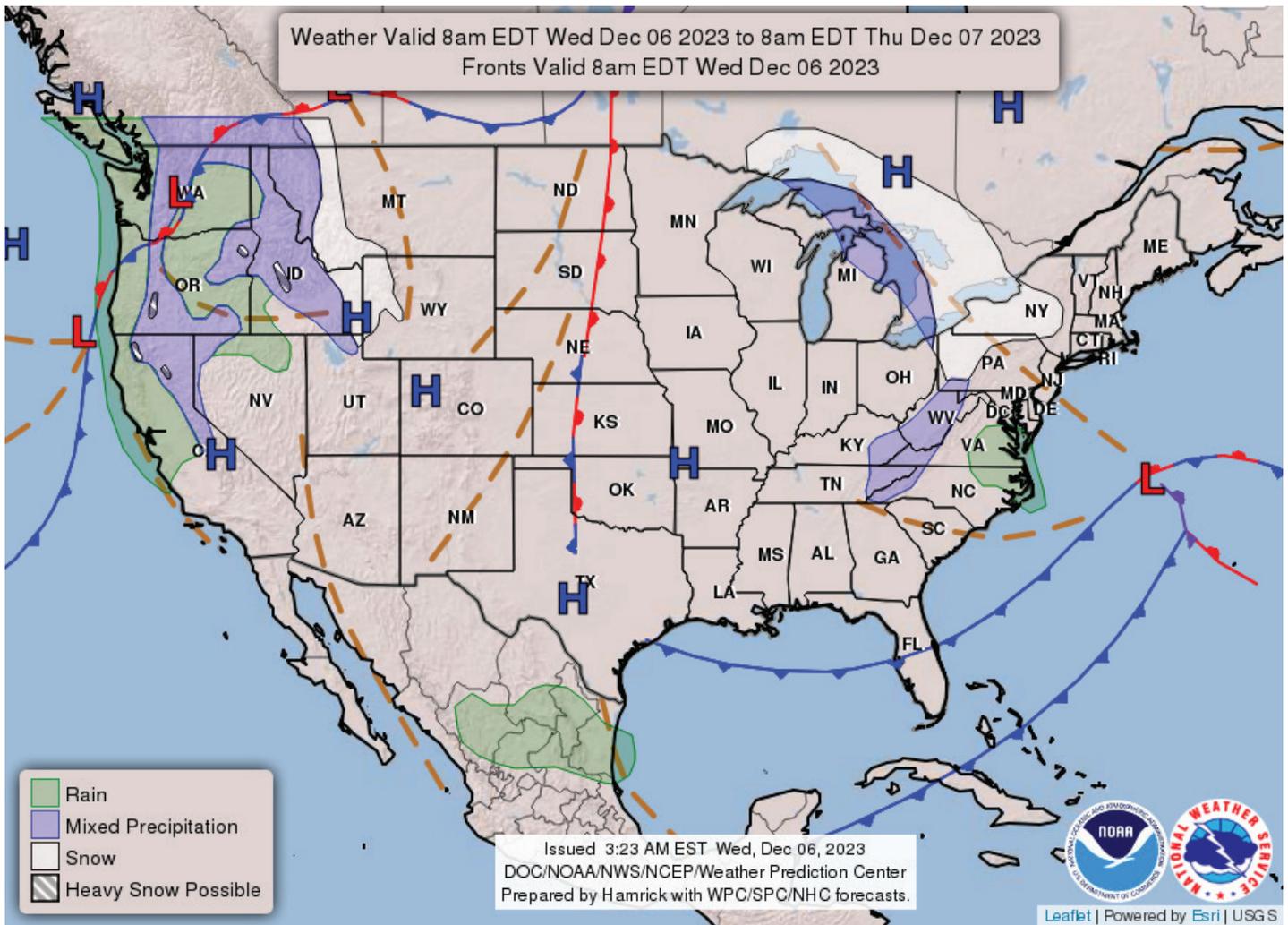
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.33

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:51:14 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:56:36 AM



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## Today in Weather History

December 6, 1969: An unusual period of almost continuous snow began in southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota on the afternoon of the 5th and continued until late on the 10th. The Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport reported 88 2/3 consecutive hours of snowfall, which amounted to 14.2 inches total. The snowfall was 3-9 inches in the western half of Minnesota, with slightly lesser amounts in eastern South Dakota. Two inches snow fell at Summit and Sisseton; 2.5 inches at Watertown and Waubay; 3.0 inches at Clear Lake; 3.1 inches at Aberdeen; and 4.0 inches at Artichoke Lake, Webster, and Milbank.

1886 - A great snowstorm hit the southern Appalachian Mountains. The three day storm produced 25 inches at Rome GA, 33 inches at Asheville NC, and 42 inches in the mountains. Montgomery AL received a record eleven inches of snow. Columbia SC received one to two inches of sleet. (4th-6th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1913: A snowstorm from December 1st through the 6th dumps a record total of 45.7 inches in Denver, Colorado. This storm produced the most snow ever recorded in a single Denver snowstorm.

1970: The National Christmas tree in 1970 was a 78 foot spruce from South Dakota. On the way to Washington, the train carrying the tree derailed twice in Nebraska. On the weekend before the lighting event, the tree toppled in gusty winds and required new branches to fill it out.

1987 - Another in a series of storms brought high winds and heavy rain to the northwestern U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. In northern California, Crescent City was drenched with 2.58 inches of rain, and winds gusted to 90 mph. Up to fourteen inches of snow blanketed the mountains of northern California, and snow and high winds created blizzard conditions around Lake Tahoe NV. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The morning low at Bismarck, ND, was eleven degrees warmer than the record low of 25 degrees at Meridian MS, and during the afternoon half a dozen cities in the north central and northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 57 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Heavy snow blanketed the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the southern foothills of Colorado ranged up to 17 inches at Rye. Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Lincoln NE, which reported a record high of 69 degrees the previous afternoon, was 35 degrees colder. International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 9 degrees below zero, and temperatures in northern Minnesota hovered near zero through the daylight hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NEVER MIND, SANTA...

Chris was sitting in Santa's lap and going over a long list of presents that he wanted for Christmas. "I want a bicycle," he said, "and I also want a wagon, a chemistry set, a telescope, an electric train, a football, a Kindle FIRE, and a pair of rollerblades."

"That's a long list," said Santa. "I'll have to check carefully to see if you were a good boy."

After thinking for a moment Chris said, "Don't bother, Santa, I'll just settle for the rollerblades."

Not many of us would be able to "pass" a really thorough investigation to discover if we were worthy of receiving a long list of gifts. We'd probably be like Chris and settle very quickly for very little. Nor would many of us want to have someone investigate our lives and then decide if we deserved a gift or not. We would be quite anxious - if not completely frightened.

But God is so very different. He knows everything there is to know about us and still offers us the most precious gift He has: His Son.

"Now, no one is likely to die for a good person," said Paul, "though someone might be willing to die for someone who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Christ: the source of eternal life.

There you have it. It is not about whether or not we are good or deserving of eternal life through Him. It is because of God's great love that we can have the gift of eternal life!

Prayer: May we realize during this season, our Father, the great Gift we have because of Your love. May Your Son be our main interest and attraction this year. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 5:5-11 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.



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:  
12.05.23

18 35 40 64 67 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$395,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 1  
DRAW: Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.04.23

4 16 18 36 47 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,650,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.05.23

11 12 21 22 35 1

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 31 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.02.23

8 19 23 24 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$78,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 31 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.04.23

21 51 52 59 63 7

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.04.23

18 19 27 28 45 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$435,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Arlington 63, Howard 41  
Avon 57, Gregory 37  
Bridgewater-Emery 38, Scotland 23  
Centerville 65, Canistota 38  
Chamberlain 44, Stanley County 25  
Florence-Henry 48, Deuel 33  
Freeman 66, Platte-Geddes 55  
Groton Area 54, James Valley Christian 53, OT  
Hamlin 53, Castlewood 39  
Kadoka Area 54, Little Wound 29  
Kimball/White Lake 51, Jones County 31  
Lennox 56, Dakota Valley 47  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 65, McCook Central-Montrose 32  
Omaha Central, Neb. 60, Harrisburg 48  
Sioux Falls Christian 60, Western Christian, Iowa 46  
Sully Buttes 65, Ipswich 30  
Timber Lake 66, Tiospaye Topa 38  
Tri-Valley 54, Garretson 53  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 44, Colome 14  
Waubay/Summit 63, Webster 31  
Wessington Springs 46, Wolsey-Wessington 26  
West Central 78, Baltic 20  
Wilmot 45, Waverly-South Shore 15  
Yankton 48, Huron 39

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

### **Manyawu scores 20 to lead Wyoming over South Dakota Mines 80-59**

By The Associated Press undefined

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — Cam Manyawu's 20 points helped Wyoming defeat South Dakota Mines 80-59 on Tuesday night.

Manyawu added 11 rebounds for the Cowboys (5-3). Sam Griffin added 17 points while shooting 5 for 12 (4 for 7 from 3-point range) and 3 of 4 from the free throw line, and he also had eight rebounds and seven assists. Akuel Kot was 5 of 11 shooting, including 2 for 4 from 3-point range, and went 3 for 4 from the line to finish with 15 points.

Kolton Frugoli led the way for the Hardrockers with 14 points and six steals. Alejandro Rama added 12 points and three steals for South Dakota Mines. In addition, Cameron Cohn finished with 10 points and three steals.

## Kent State defeats South Dakota State 82-73

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Giovanni Santiago scored 19 points as Kent State beat South Dakota State 82-73 on Tuesday.

Santiago had six rebounds for the Golden Flashes (6-3). Jalen Sullinger was 7-of-13 shooting (3 for 6 from 3-point range) to add 17 points. Chris Payton had 14 points and shot 3 for 10 (1 for 3 from 3-point range) and 7 of 8 from the free-throw line.

Charlie Easley led the way for the Jackrabbits (4-5) with 17 points, six rebounds, five assists and four steals. South Dakota State also got 16 points from William Kyle III. In addition, Zeke Mayo had 12 points and two steals.

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

## South Dakota governor proposes tighter spending along with increases for K-12 education

By JACK DURA Associated Press

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem outlined her budget vision on Tuesday, emphasizing tighter spending amid rising inflation, while also proposing funding increases for K-12 education, health care providers and state employees.

The second-term Republican governor's budget plan through fiscal year 2025 came in advance of the legislative session, which begins Jan. 9. State lawmakers and other officials gathered in the state House chamber to hear about Noem's budget, which she said prioritizes people over programs.

"This year, I am encouraging the Legislature to do exactly what families across America are doing every single day: to stick to a tight budget," Noem said.

Earlier this year, she signed a \$7.4 billion budget for fiscal year 2024 and a four-year sales tax cut she wants to see made permanent next year. Her fiscal year 2025 budget proposal is nearly \$7.3 billion.

Noem proposed a 4% increase for K-12 education, health care providers and state employees. Noem also wants a pay raise for teachers, whose salaries she said have not kept up with increased K-12 spending in recent years.

Her budget includes continuing a state literacy effort, and expanding an education and jobs program for helping at-risk students graduate high school. She also announced a partnership with several South Dakota universities for a quantum computing and technology center.

South Dakota has over \$130 million remaining from federal COVID-19 aid. Noem's plan would primarily put that money toward state water programs and water and wastewater projects.

The governor also recommended the creation of an indigent defense commission to oversee an appellate defender office, and to train and mentor rural attorneys.

Noem's budget proposes \$228 million for a new men's prison to replace the aging facility at Sioux Falls. Construction is underway on a new women's prison in Rapid City, but the project incurred a shortfall with \$21 million remaining to be covered. Noem proposed one-time money to do so.

Between the two most recent legislative sessions and the governor's current proposal, South Dakota will have put over \$650 million toward the prison projects.

"Every dollar that we set aside now for these projects ensures that the state doesn't need to issue debt in the future," she said.

Republican House Majority Leader Will Mortenson said Noem "really put out a meat and potatoes budget proposal," focused on core items of schools, nursing homes and state employees.

"I appreciated that she focused on those obligations as opposed to creating new obligations or new government programs, but the devil is in the details," Mortenson said.

Democratic lawmakers said they share Noem's commitment to children, but don't agree with her execu-

tion. Democrats want to see assistance such as free school breakfast and lunch provided for all children and child care subsidized by the state government, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Reynold Nesiba said.

"We believe that South Dakota could be a better place for children, for our kids and our grandkids, and I'm just surprised that the governor didn't emphasize any of those things that we see as priorities," he said.

Republicans control South Dakota's Legislature by 31-4 in the Senate and 63-7 in the House of Representatives.

## Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Saudi Arabia and UAE as Ukraine war grinds on

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin began a trip Wednesday to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, hoping to shore up support in the Mideast from two major oil producers allied to the U.S. as his war on Ukraine grinds on.

Putin landed in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms now hosting the United Nations' COP28 climate talks. It marked his first trip to the region from before the coronavirus pandemic and the war — and as he faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court over the war in Ukraine.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE has signed the ICC founding treaty, meaning they don't face any obligation to detain Putin over the warrant accusing him of being personally responsible for the abductions of children from Ukraine during his war on the country. Putin skipped a summit in South Africa over concerns he could be arrested on arrival there.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's foreign minister, met a smiling Putin after he bounded down the stairs of his presidential plane. As he arrived at Abu Dhabi's Qasr al-Watan palace to meet Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the country's ruler, the UAE's military acrobatics team flew in formation with red, white and blue smoke trailing them in the colors of the Russian flag.

Soldiers on horseback and with camels lined his arrival route, Russian and Emirati flags also hanging from lightpoles.

The pageantry in the Emirates, which relies on America as its major security partner, highlights the UAE's expansive business ties to Russia that have exploded in the time since grinding Western sanctions have targeted Moscow.

Ukrainians on hand for the event expressed outrage over Putin being in the country at the same time they described him as committing environmental crimes in their country.

"It is extremely upsetting to see how the world treats war criminals, because that's what he is, in my opinion," said Marharyta Bohdanova, a worker at the Ukrainian pavilion at the United Nations COP28 climate summit in Dubai, wiping away tears. "Seeing how people let people like him in the big events, ... treating him like a dear guest, is just so hypocritical in my opinion."

Officials at Russia's pavilion at the talks declined to speak to The Associated Press.

Putin last visited the UAE in 2019, receiving a warm welcome from Sheikh Mohammed, then the crown prince of Abu Dhabi. In the time since, however, the world has greatly changed.

The Russian president isolated himself during the coronavirus pandemic. He launched an invasion targeting Ukraine in February 2022, a grinding war that continues on today and has been a topic for Ukrainian diplomats at the COP28 talks.

Meanwhile, the Israel-Hamas war remains a major concern for the Mideast, particularly the UAE, which reached a diplomatic recognition with Israel in 2020. Recent attacks by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels also threatens commercial shipping in the Red Sea as Iran's nuclear program continues its rapid advances since the collapse of the 2016 nuclear deal.

Putin is scheduled to meet with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Thursday for what Ushakov has described as "a rather lengthy conversation." The two countries have been discussing ways to get around the Western sanctions targeting them.

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Putin will travel onto Saudi Arabia and meet with powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the one-day trip, Ushakov said. Those discussions likely will focus on Moscow's other major concern in the Middle East — oil.

Russia is part of OPEC+, which is a group of cartel members and other nations that have managed production to try and boost crude oil prices. Last week, the group expanded some output cuts into next year and brought up-and-coming oil supplier Brazil into the fold. Benchmark Brent crude traded Wednesday around \$77 a barrel, down from nearly \$100 in September, over concerns about a weakening economy worldwide.

The visit comes after COP28 saw a parade of Western leaders including U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and others backing Ukraine speak at the summit. So did Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, long a Putin ally.

A readout on Putin's trip from the state-run Tass news agency published early Wednesday offered no suggestion Putin might come to the COP28 site, instead quoting Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov saying he'd land and have a "meeting at the palace" and one-on-one talks with Sheikh Mohammed. Still, some reports suggest Putin could make an appearance at the climate talks.

The U.N.'s Framework Convention on Climate Change's spokesperson Alexander Saier said at a press conference that he is "not aware that Mr. Putin will come to the conference, but I would also need to check the host country with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." He declined to immediately answer whether U.N. police would be obligated to make an arrest.

The Emirati organization committee for COP28 referred questions to the UAE's Foreign Ministry, which did not immediately respond. The UAE repeatedly feted the now-deposed Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir in the past despite an ICC warrant seeking his arrest over charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

"I'm talking about his crimes and this person is literally right now here, somewhere near me," said Alina Abramenko, another worker at the Ukrainian pavilion that highlights the environmental damage wrought by the war. "You know, it's really strange."

## Former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson admits to making mistakes but defends COVID record at inquiry

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended his handling of COVID-19 on Wednesday at a public inquiry into the pandemic, saying his government "got some things wrong" but did its best.

Johnson began two days of questioning under oath by lawyers for the judge-led inquiry about his initial reluctance to impose a national lockdown in early 2020 and other fateful decisions.

Johnson opened his testimony with an apology "for the pain and the loss and the suffering of the COVID victims," though not for any of his own actions. Four people stood up in court as he spoke, holding signs saying: "The Dead can't hear your apologies," before being escorted out by security staff.

"Inevitably, in the course of trying to handle a very, very difficult pandemic in which we had to balance appalling harms on either side of the decision, we may have made mistakes," Johnson said. "Inevitably, we got some things wrong. I think we were doing our best at the time."

Johnson had arrived at the inquiry venue at daybreak, several hours before he was due to take the stand, avoiding a protest by relatives of some of those victims.

Among those wanting answers from the inquiry are families of some of the more than 230,000 people in the U.K. who died after contracting the virus. A group gathered outside the office building where the inquiry was set, some holding pictures of their loved ones. A banner declared: "Let the bodies pile high" — a statement attributed to Johnson by an aide. Another sign said: "Johnson partied while people died."

Johnson was pushed out of office by his own Conservative Party in mid-2022 after multiple ethics scandals, including the revelation that he and staff members held parties in the prime minister's Downing Street

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offices in 2020 and 2021, flouting the government's lockdown restrictions.

Former colleagues, aides and advisers have painted an unflattering picture of Johnson and his government over weeks of testimony.

Former Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick Vallance said Johnson was "bamboozled" by science. In diaries that have been seen as evidence, Vallance also said Johnson was "obsessed with older people accepting their fate." Former adviser Dominic Cummings, now a fierce opponent of Johnson, said the then-prime minister asked scientists whether blowing a hair dryer up his nose could kill the virus.

Former senior civil servant Helen McNamara described a "toxic," macho culture inside Johnson's government, and Cabinet Secretary Simon Case, the country's top civil servant, called Johnson and his inner circle "basically feral."

Johnson defended his government, saying it contained "challenging" characters "whose views about each other might not be fit to print, but who got an awful lot done."

The U.K. has one of the highest COVID-19 death tolls in Europe, with the virus recorded as a cause of death for more than 232,000 people.

Johnson said he was "not sure" whether his government's decisions had caused excess deaths. He said deciding when to impose lockdowns and other restrictions had been "painful."

"People point, quite rightly, to the loss of education, the economic damage, the missed cancer and cardiac appointments, and all the other costs," he said. "When it came to the balance of the need to protect the public and protect the (health service), and the damage done by lockdowns, it was incredibly difficult."

Johnson agreed in late 2021 to hold a public inquiry after heavy pressure from bereaved families. The probe, led by retired Judge Heather Hallett, is expected to take three years to complete, though interim reports will be issued starting next year.

The inquiry is divided into four sections, with the current phase focusing on political decision-making. The first stage, which concluded in July, looked at the country's preparedness for the pandemic.

Johnson has submitted a written evidence statement to the inquiry but has not handed over some 5,000 WhatsApp messages from several key weeks between February and June 2020. They were on a phone Johnson was told to stop using when it emerged that the number had been publicly available online for years. Johnson later said he'd forgotten the password to unlock it.

A Johnson spokesman said the former prime minister had not deleted any messages but a "technical issue" meant some had not been recovered.

## Live updates | Dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza grow worse as Israel widens its offensive

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel's widening air and ground offensive in southern Gaza has displaced tens of thousands more Palestinians and worsened the enclave's dire humanitarian conditions, with the fighting preventing distribution of food, water and medicine outside a tiny sliver of southern Gaza and new military evacuation orders squeezing people into ever-smaller areas of the south.

The United Nations said 1.87 million people — more than 80% of Gaza's population — have been driven from their homes since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, triggered by the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas assault on southern Israel. The U.N. also says that all telecom services were shut down due to cuts in the main fiber routes.

On Tuesday, Israel's military entered Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, in its pursuit to wipe out the territory's Hamas rulers. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the military must retain open-ended security control over the Gaza Strip long after the war ends. Around 1,200 people have been killed on the Israeli side, mainly civilians killed during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll in the territory has surpassed 16,200, with more than 42,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths,

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but said 70% of the dead were women and children.

Currently:

— Widespread sexual and gender-based crimes were committed during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, a rights group says. Biden calls on the world to condemn Hamas for the reported brutalities.

— Generation after generation, Israeli prison marks a rite of passage for Palestinian boys.

— In a rare action against Israel, the U.S. says extremist West Bank settlers will be barred from America.

— The presidents of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and MIT defend actions in combatting antisemitism on campus.

— The U.N.'s food agency stops deliveries to millions in Yemen areas controlled by Houthi rebels.

— Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's what's happening in the war:

**ERDOGAN WARNS ISRAEL NOT TO ATTACK HAMAS ON TURKISH SOIL**

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Israel that there would be serious consequences if Israel pressed ahead with a threat to attack Hamas officials on Turkish soil. The Turkish leader also said his country has petitioned the International Criminal Court for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials to be prosecuted for alleged war crimes in Gaza.

His comments — made Tuesday and reported by Turkish media on Wednesday — echoed warnings from other Turkish officials in response to the head of Israel's domestic security agency, Shin Bet, who said in an audio recording that his organization is prepared to destroy Hamas "in every place," including in Lebanon, Turkey and Qatar.

Erdogan also said thousands of lawyers from various countries were employed to petition the ICC.

"We brought the war crimes committed in Gaza to the court's agenda and we will be following up on this," Erdogan said. "Netanyahu will not be able to evade paying the penalty for his actions. Sooner or later, he will be tried and will pay the price for the war crimes he committed."

**GAZA'S HEALTH MINISTRY SAYS THE WAR DEATH TOLL IS MORE THAN 16,200**

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says 16,248 Palestinians have been killed and more than 42,000 wounded since the Israel-Hamas war broke out two months ago.

The ministry said Tuesday evening that the death toll included more than 6,000 children and more than 4,000 women. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The figures show a sharp rise in deaths since a weeklong truce between Israel and Hamas collapsed on Dec. 1. Since the resumption of fighting Friday, more than 1,000 Palestinians were killed, according to the Health Ministry. The United States had urged Israel to do more to protect Palestinian civilians as its blistering air and ground campaign shifted to southern Gaza, particularly in and around Khan Yunis, the territory's second largest city.

## After a fast start, COP28 climate talks now in murky middle of hope, roadblocks

By SETH BORENSTEIN and DANA BELTAJI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — After a first-day blur of rare quick action and agreement, negotiators at a critical United Nations climate summit Wednesday finished up their first week in a more familiar place for them: the murky middle where momentum and roadblocks intertwine.

"Negotiations, as are often the case, are a mixed picture right now. We see big differences between individual states in some areas," German climate envoy Jennifer Morgan said, "but there is a will to make progress."

Proponents who are calling for a ground-shifting phase-out of fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal have hope for the first time in years, but also see where it could be torpedoed. Key issues of financial help for poor nations to decarbonize and how to adapt to warming need much more work, officials said.

That is in contrast to the first day when the conference — called COP28 — put into effect a climate compensation fund — called loss-and-damage — and started seeing its coffers grow to more than \$720 million.

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U.N. Climate Secretary Simon Stiell on Wednesday warned against putting “a tick on the box” for that victory and think it solves the multi-trillion dollar problem of financial aid that’s needed to help cut emissions worldwide.

“We need COP to deliver a bullet train to speed up climate action. We currently have an old caboose chugging over rickety tracks,” Stiell said.

Adnan Amin, the No. 2 official in the COP presidency official and a veteran United Nations diplomat, was a bit more optimistic, saying all negotiations have both an up period and depressing times. This one, he said, is in that time where “there’s still a buzz. There’s still positivity.”

Discussions have been focused on the so-called Global Stocktake — a status of where nations are at with meeting their climate goals to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times and how they can get there. On Tuesday, negotiators produced a new draft of the text, but it had so many possibilities in its 24 pages that it didn’t give too much of a hint of what will be agreed upon when the session ends next week.

Negotiators for 197 countries are going over the document word by word to see what they can live with and what they can’t, Amin said: “They have so many demands and needs. But I think it provides a very good basis for moving forward.”

Cedric Schuster, the chair of the Association of Small Island States, said failing on the global stocktake would “make it significantly more difficult to leave this COP saying we can achieve the 1.5 C limit.” He said major emitters and developed countries need to take the lead and ramp up efforts to phase out fossil fuels.

“If we fail, the consequences will be catastrophic,” he said.

While United Nations officials highlight worries about finance and adaptation, many at the Dubai conference are focused on language about what to do about fossil fuels. Burning coal, oil and natural gas are the chief causes of climate change. For the first time in nearly three decades of talks, the idea of getting rid of all of three of them is on the agenda and a serious possibility.

But issues about language, timing and meaning — especially defining terms — are far from settled. Some are using phase-down as less stringent, along with the term “unabated” tossed in front of fossil fuels. When asked to define “unabated,” Stiell said that’s up to negotiators.

“We have seen options about fossil fuel phase-out in the text. And while it’s historic to have them, they’re not enough,” said environmental activist Romain Ioualalen of Oil Change International. He pointed to 106 nations signing a document calling for a phase-out, which was mentioned by many world leaders when they made speeches in the first few days.

“The situation we’re in right now, it was unthinkable just three COPs ago to have these debates on the phase-out of all fossil fuels,” Ioualalen said. “There’s definitely momentum in the conversation. There’s definitely opposition, of course. And that’s that’s to that’s to be expected. But that’s what we need to solve.”

“We’ve never been closer to an agreement for sure,” he said.

Ioualalen said Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Turkey seem clearly against fossil fuel phase-out language.

“If there is some disagreement between ‘phase-out’ and ‘phase-down,’ let’s all agree there should be no disagreement that oil demand in 2050 has to be a fraction of what it is today, if not zero,” said Jason Bordoff, director of the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University. “We are fighting over ‘phase-out’ or ‘phase-down’ while oil demand is rising each year.”

Wednesday’s sessions were to focus on transport, the second-leading sector for the carbon dioxide emissions warming the planet, with panels like building out EV charging infrastructure and decarbonizing urban freight transportation.

Despite rapid growth of electric vehicles in some countries, oil still accounts for nearly 91% of the energy used in the transport sector, according to the International Energy Agency. And it’s a sector that includes hard-to-decarbonize industries like aviation and shipping, where cutting emissions will require big ramp-ups in production of sustainable aviation fuel, for airplanes, and alternative fuels like hydrogen for ships.

Wednesday was a day for negotiators to talk about moving people around the world in transportation systems that produce less carbon emissions, yet when United Nations officials were asked about how

much carbon pollution was caused by bringing more than 100,000 people to Dubai, they said they had no figures but that the gathering was worth it.

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

## Generation after generation, Israeli prison marks a rite of passage for Palestinian boys

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

NABI SALEH, West Bank (AP) — For all Palestinian parents, Marwan Tamimi said, there comes a moment they realize they're powerless to protect their children.

For the 48-year-old father of three, it came in June, when Israeli forces fired a large rubber bullet that struck the head of his eldest son, Wisam. A week later, Marwan said, soldiers came for the 17-year-old, dragging him out of bed with a fractured skull.

Wisam was charged with a range of offenses he denied — throwing stones, possessing weapons, placing an explosive device and causing bodily harm — and sent to prison. Last Saturday, after six months behind bars, he returned home with 38 other Palestinians in exchange for Israeli hostages — part of a temporary cease-fire in the war that started after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

His parents said they hadn't seen or heard from him in two months, since the war started. Wisam said he stayed in an overcrowded cell, was beaten and interrogated, and lacked food and medication.

"I yelled, 'No, he's my boy, you can't take him, he's injured,'" Marwan Tamimi said. "If I stop them, they will put his life in danger."

Wisam's homecoming last week, along with the release of his well-known activist cousin, Ahed Tamimi, touched every home in Nabi Saleh, a village where prison is a grim rite of passage for Palestinian boys.

People clapped. Tears fell. Wisam hugged loved ones. But the euphoria spoke to pain as much as joy in the West Bank, where the U.N. estimates 750,000 Palestinians have been arrested since Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Mideast war.

The competing claims of Palestinians and Israelis have left scars on Nabi Saleh, home to activists, journalists and lawyers. Once an idyllic village on a hilly stretch of farmland, it's now a powerful example of how Israeli prison over decades of war has crushed families, constrained lives and stamped out popular resistance.

Israel's security service didn't respond to questions about Wisam's case. The military defended large-scale arrests of Palestinians, including minors, to prevent militant attacks. In a statement, the army said it aims to "preserve the rights and dignity" of suspects and that convicting a minor "requires a burden of proof of guilt beyond reasonable doubt."

IN EVERY HOUSE, A STORY

Most of Nabi Saleh's 550 residents are related by blood or marriage. Nearly all share the surname Tamimi. Most boys — like their fathers and grandfathers — have landed in prison at some point, as the close-knit village became known for its protests.

"We live in a village of resistance," Wisam said. "Every house has its own story."

Before Israel and Hamas resumed their war Friday, the militant group had pushed for the release of high-profile prisoners in exchange for remaining Gaza hostages.

But the vast majority of Palestinians passing through Israeli prisons, experts say, are teenage boys and young men who mostly go unnamed, plucked from bed in the middle of the night for throwing stones and firebombs or associating with militants in towns and refugee camps near Israeli settlements. Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements illegal.

Under the weeklong cease-fire agreement, Israel released 240 Palestinian minors and women. Most of the the 14- to 17-year-olds freed were detained for investigation and not convicted, reported the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, an advocacy group, based on Israeli Prison Service data. Over that same week, Israel

arrested 260 other Palestinians, the group said.

Yearly, the Israeli military court sentences hundreds of minors to prison, mostly for throwing stones, according to Military Court Watch. Most are 16 or 17. Israel says stone-throwing can be dangerous and deadly.

## 'THE CRACKDOWN'

The conviction rate for security offenses in the West Bank is more than 99%. Lawyers often encourage young clients to plead guilty to avoid lengthy trials and detentions. Some are never formally charged or tried, held under a practice known as "administrative detention."

Israel has arrested 3,450 Palestinians across the West Bank since the war erupted. An all-time high of 2,873 Palestinians are in administrative detention, according to Israeli rights group HaMoked.

"The crackdown in a way contradicts our intention not to open another front in the West Bank," said Ami Ayalon, former director of Israel's Shin Bet security service. "We understand the more people killed and arrested, the more hatred rises. But on the other hand, we don't want to pay the price in terrorist attacks."

The intensifying violence and constraints on Palestinian freedom of movement have generated fear in Nabi Saleh. It's the latest chapter in the tumultuous history of a village once at the center of a spirited protest movement that began in 2009 and made global headlines. Each week, residents rallied over the loss of their ancestral lands and freshwater spring to the fast-growing Israeli settlement across the road.

Israel says troops responded only after protesters started throwing stones and trying to enter a military zone.

Troops sent protesters fleeing with tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, blasts of noxious liquid and live fire. They carried out nighttime raids, arresting mostly young men, and killed six Palestinian villagers during protests, all young men, residents said.

## PARENTAL PLEAS AND THE 'RESISTANCE'

Marwan Tamimi begged his sons to stay away from what Palestinians call the "muqawama," or resistance. "All of us here, we care so much about our children. We tell them, 'Look, don't go and throw stones, you don't need to prove yourself,'" he said.

Wisam lost 12 kilograms (26 pounds) in prison, where he said he shared meals of undercooked chicken and stale bread with 11 others, an account supported by prisoner rights groups. They were packed into a cell that held half that number pre-war, he said.

The Israeli Prison Service denied authorities crowded cells or reduced meals. But national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has promoted harsh disciplinary treatment of Palestinian prisoners. Parliament temporarily approved prisons filling beyond legal capacity.

For Wisam, solitary confinement was the real torment. Authorities blasted air conditioning and his only human contact came as punches during interrogations, he said.

The Prison Service said Palestinians are detained according to law.

A week after his release, Wisam winces at the sight of his home's grated door. He takes driving classes in hopes of avoiding arrest even for traffic offenses.

"This is what I was trying to prevent," said Marwan Tamimi, who moved his family to Ramallah at the height of the Nabi Saleh protests in 2014. The family returned in 2021, after the military's response brought the rallies to an end. An uneasy calm prevailed.

But beneath the surface, pressure builds. More minors pass through Israel's jailhouse door.

"I expected to die in there," Wisam said. "I don't want to go there ever again."

## Generation after generation, Israeli prison marks a rite of passage for Palestinian boys

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

NABI SALEH, West Bank (AP) — For all Palestinian parents, Marwan Tamimi said, there comes a moment they realize they're powerless to protect their children.

For the 48-year-old father of three, it came in June, when Israeli forces fired a large rubber bullet that

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struck the head of his eldest son, Wisam, as he watched a raid unfold from his grandmother's rooftop with his family. A week later, Marwan said, soldiers came for the 17-year-old, dragging him out of bed with a fractured skull as his mother cried.

Wisam was later charged with a range of offenses he denied — throwing stones, possessing weapons, placing an explosive device and causing bodily harm. He was sent to Israel's Ofer Prison. Last Saturday, after six months behind bars, he returned home with 38 other Palestinians in exchange for Israeli hostages released from Hamas captivity in Gaza — part of a temporary cease-fire in the war that started after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel.

His parents said they hadn't seen or heard from him in two months, since the war started. Wisam said he spent that time in an overcrowded cell and was denied adequate food and medication, was interrogated about his friends, and was beaten repeatedly.

"I yelled, 'No, he's my boy, you can't take him, he's injured,'" Marwan Tamimi said. "That's when I realized they will take him. And if I stop them, they will put his life in danger."

Wisam's homecoming last week, along with the release of his well-known activist cousin, Ahd Tamimi, touched every home in the village of Nabi Saleh, where prison is a grim rite of passage for Palestinian boys.

People clapped. Tears fell. Wisam hugged friends and family, one by one. But the euphoria spoke to pain as much as to joy in the occupied West Bank, where the United Nations estimates 750,000 Palestinians have been arrested since Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Mideast war.

The competing claims of Palestinians and Israelis have left their scars on Nabi Saleh, home to charismatic activists, journalists and lawyers known for their refusal to submit to occupation. Once an idyllic village on a hilly stretch of farmland growing grapes and green olives, it serves today as a powerful example of how Israeli prison over decades of war has crushed families, constrained lives and stamped out popular resistance.

Israel's security service didn't respond to questions about Wisam's case. But the military defended large-scale arrests of Palestinians, including minors, as necessary to prevent militant attacks. In a statement to The Associated Press, the army said it aims to "preserve the rights and dignity" of Palestinian suspects during court proceedings and detention and that convicting a minor "requires a burden of proof of guilt beyond reasonable doubt."

Palestinian activists and human rights watchdogs say Israel's mass detentions seek to sow fear among the youngest, breaking communities that continue to defy Israeli military rule, now in its 57th year.

"We've seen that this system suppresses and intimidates the majority of children," said Salwa Duaibis, co-founder of Military Court Watch, a Palestinian legal advocacy group. "It crushes their spirit so that even when they're 40, they'll be running away when they see soldiers."

## IN EVERY HOUSE, A STORY

Most of Nabi Saleh's 550 residents are related by blood or marriage, and nearly all share the surname Tamimi. Most boys — like their fathers and grandfathers — have landed in prison at some point, as the close-knit village became known for its grassroots protest movement.

"We live in a village of resistance," Wisam said. "Every house has its own story."

Wisam was raised on the history of his activist grandfather's deportation to Jordan in 1970 and his triumphant return to Nabi Saleh as part of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

Wisam's father, Marwan, served time at the height of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in 2002. His journalist uncle, Bilal, was locked up four times starting in the late 1980s, during the first intifada.

His neighbor, 45-year-old pastry chef Haitham Tamimi, said he was once held up and questioned in the street by a soldier who "found it suspicious I was from Nabi Saleh and hadn't been imprisoned." Haitham's explanation: He'd lived mostly in Jordan.

Before Israel and Hamas resumed their war Friday, the militant group had pushed for the release of high-profile prisoners in exchange for the remaining Gaza hostages.

But the vast majority of Palestinians passing through Israel's ever-revolving prison door, experts say, are teenage boys and young men who mostly go unnamed, plucked from bed in the middle of the night for throwing stones and firebombs or associating with militants in towns and refugee camps near Israeli settle-

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ments. Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements illegal and obstacles to peace. Under the weeklong cease-fire agreement, Israel released 240 Palestinian minors and women. Most of 14- to 17-year-olds freed had been detained for investigation and not convicted of a crime, reported the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, an advocacy group, based on data from the Israeli Prison Service. Over that same week, Israel arrested 260 other Palestinians, the group said.

Every year, the Israeli military court sentences hundreds of minors to prison, mostly for throwing stones, according to Military Court Watch. Most are 16 or 17.

Israel argues that stone-throwing can be dangerous and even deadly.

"The victim who gets hit in the head by stones doesn't care how old the person throwing it is," said Maurice Hirsch, Israel's top military prosecutor from 2013 to 2016. "There are very young terrorists who commit very violent offenses."

## 'AN ORCHESTRA' OF ARRESTS

The conviction rate for security offenses in the West Bank is more than 99%. Defense lawyers often encourage young clients to plead guilty to avoid lengthy trials and detentions. Some are never formally charged or tried, held under a practice known as "administrative detention" that allows Israeli authorities to arrest Palestinians based on secret evidence and renew detention indefinitely.

The pace of arrests — already quickening over the past two years — soared after Hamas' Oct. 7 rampage that killed 1,200 people and resulted in the abduction of more than 240.

Israel has arrested 3,450 Palestinians across the West Bank since the war erupted, according to the Israeli military, in a sweeping campaign aimed to deter militant attacks. An all-time high of 2,873 Palestinians are now held in administrative detention, according to Israeli rights group HaMoked.

"The crackdown in a way contradicts our intention not to open another front in the West Bank," said Ami Ayalon, former director of Israel's Shin Bet security service. "On one hand, we understand the more people killed and arrested, the more hatred rises. But on the other hand, we don't want to pay the price in terrorist attacks."

Lawyers say the crackdown affects Palestinians of every stripe, branding people as security threats for even mild social media posts.

"It was an orchestra, as though a composer led all the courts across the country to understand they had a duty to arrest young men," said Lea Tsemel, a prominent Israeli human rights lawyer. "We saw police stopping youngsters and checking phones to see if they could find anything constituting incitement."

Israeli forces have ramped up deadly raids in the northern West Bank, such as in the flashpoint Jenin refugee camp, using airstrikes to target militants with unprecedented force.

The intensifying violence and constraints on Palestinian freedom of movement have generated fear in Nabi Saleh. New Israeli checkpoints have turned a 15-minute drive to the Palestinian city of Ramallah into a nauseating two-hour maze.

In recent months, Israeli troops repeatedly stormed the village. An explosive tear gas canister set Marwan Tamimi's SUV on fire in mid-October. A rubber projectile, much larger than a bullet, slammed into Wisam's head, causing brain bleeding and sending him to intensive care for a week. Four bullets sliced through Haitham Tamimi's car door, piercing his shoulder and killing his 2-year-old son, Mohammed, in June — an incident the army admitted was a mistake.

It's the latest chapter in the tumultuous history of a village once at the center of a spirited protest movement that began in 2009, inspired other villages and made global headlines. Each week, residents rallied over the loss of their ancestral lands and freshwater spring to the fast-growing Israeli settlement across the road.

The Friday marches, just after the midday call to prayer, became family affairs. Villagers waved national flags, clapped and crooned Palestinian songs while trying to reach their spring that had become a picnic spot for settlers. Inevitably, boys pelted Israeli jeeps with stones.

"We were showing the world what was really happening here, and it felt so good, so important," said Janna Jihad, now 17, who became an internet fixture filming herself reporting on protests at just 7 years old.

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Israel says troops responded only after protesters started throwing stones and trying to enter a military zone around the village. "The Tamimi family trained and organized these children to ambush soldiers," said Hirsch, the former military prosecutor.

Troops sent protesters fleeing with tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, blasts of noxious liquid and live fire. They carried out nighttime raids, arresting most young men, and killed six Palestinian villagers during protests, all young men, residents said.

## PARENTAL PLEAS AND THE 'RESISTANCE'

Marwan Tamimi begged his sons to stay away from what Palestinians call the "muqawama," or resistance.

Sensitive and studious, his youngest, Kenan, said he'd rather run on a soccer field than away from bullets. Now 14, he's resisted peer pressure to join protests.

"I don't like going out," he said, huddled over a princess coloring book with his 6-year-old sister last week.

Wisam had friends who confronted Israeli soldiers, like his cousin Ahed, whose arrest for slapping Israeli soldiers five years ago transformed her into a symbol of Palestinian resistance.

"All of us here, we care so much about our children. We tell them, 'Look, don't go and throw stones, you don't need to prove yourself,'" Marwan Tamimi said.

But parents' pleas often go unheeded.

"There was nothing I could do to stop the boys," said 56-year-old Imtithal Tamimi, mother of nine. Her son Mohammed, was disfigured at 14 when Israeli forces fired a rubber bullet that lodged in his head.

"Mohammed had no job, he wasn't in school," she said. "He was trying to let off steam."

All the men in her household got sucked into Israel's prison system, she said, and she noticed a change in each when they emerged. Mohammed, now 21, couldn't shake his state of rage. Tamim, her eldest, locked himself in his bedroom for three months after serving a year. Her 64-year-old husband, Fadel passed in and out of prison for decades and struggles with a central nervous system disorder.

Mohammed, arrested for the third time the same night as Wisam, remains in jail. Imtithal hasn't heard anything of his condition or whereabouts since the war started, when Israeli authorities banned prisoners from using phones or receiving visitors.

Wisam, his eyes sunken and face gray and gaunt, lost 12 kilograms (26 pounds) in prison, where he said he shared two daily meals of undercooked chicken and stale bread with 11 others, an account supported by prisoner rights groups. They were packed like teeth into a cell that held half that number before the war, he said, and on the rare occasions they were let out, guards ordered them to walk with wrists bound tight under their knees.

In response to questions, the Israeli Prison Service denied authorities were crowding cells or reducing meals. But national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has publicly promoted harsh disciplinary treatment of Palestinian prisoners. Parliament passed a temporary measure allowing prisons to fill beyond legal capacity.

For Wisam, 45 days in solitary confinement was the real torment. Every night, authorities blasted air conditioning in his tiny cell. He shivered in the darkness, homesick, imagining his mother warming him with her hug and cooking mansaf — milky mountains of rice with mutton. His only human contact came in the punches raining down on his head during daily interrogations, he said.

The Prison Service said Palestinians are detained according to law and had the right to file complaints over conditions. Palestinians say their complaints are not taken seriously and rarely yield results.

A week after his release, Wisam still winces when he catches sight of a grated door, even in his house. He fills shelves beside his bed with chocolate bars and chips, for his "canteen." He spends his days quietly weaving lighter cases from plastic and string, a prison habit, and taking driving classes in hopes of preventing arrest even for traffic offenses.

When 22-year-old cousin Ahed emerged from prison last week, she also looked exhausted, her typically self-assured voice halting and frail in TV interviews.

"This is what I was trying to prevent," said Marwan Tamimi, who moved his family to Ramallah at the height of the Nabi Saleh protests in 2014 so his boys could attend school and play without encountering soldiers.

The family returned home in 2021, after the military's harsh response brought the rallies to an end. There

were too many killed, wounded and imprisoned — and too few achievements, residents said.

An uneasy calm prevailed over Nabi Saleh and other villages that had become symbols of civil disobedience. Without progress toward a political solution, protest leaders insist the relative quiet shouldn't be mistaken for acceptance.

Beneath the surface, pressure builds. More minors pass through Israel's jailhouse door.

"I expected to die in there," Wisam said. "I don't want to go there ever again."

## Europe was set to lead the world on AI regulation. But can leaders reach a deal?

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — The generative AI boom has sent governments worldwide scrambling to regulate the emerging technology, but it also has raised the risk of upending a European Union push to approve the world's first comprehensive artificial intelligence rules.

The 27-nation bloc's Artificial Intelligence Act has been hailed as a pioneering rulebook. But with time running out, it's uncertain if the EU's three branches of government can thrash out a deal Wednesday in what officials hope is a final round of talks.

Europe's yearslong efforts to draw up AI guardrails have been bogged down by the recent emergence of generative AI systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT, which have dazzled the world with their ability to produce human-like work but raised fears about the risks they pose.

Those concerns have driven the U.S., U.K., China and global coalitions like the Group of 7 major democracies into the race to regulate the rapidly developing technology, though they're still catching up to Europe.

Besides regulating generative AI, EU negotiators need to resolve a long list of other thorny issues, such as limits on AI-powered facial recognition and other surveillance systems that have stirred privacy concerns.

Chances of clinching a political agreement between EU lawmakers, representatives from member states and executive commissioners "are pretty high partly because all the negotiators want a political win" on a flagship legislative effort, said Kris Shrishak, a senior fellow specializing in AI governance at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

"But the issues on the table are significant and critical, so we can't rule out the possibility of not finding a deal," he said.

Some 85% of the technical wording in the bill already has been agreed on, Carme Artigas, AI and digitalization minister for Spain, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said at a press briefing Tuesday in Brussels.

If a deal isn't reached in the latest round of talks, starting Wednesday afternoon and expected to run late into the night, negotiators will be forced to pick it up next year. That raises the odds the legislation could get delayed until after EU-wide elections in June — or go in a different direction as new leaders take office.

One of the major sticking points is foundation models, the advanced systems that underpin general purpose AI services like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard chatbot.

Also known as large language models, these systems are trained on vast troves of written works and images scraped off the internet. They give generative AI systems the ability to create something new, unlike traditional AI, which processes data and completes tasks using predetermined rules.

The AI Act was intended as product safety legislation, like similar EU regulations for cosmetics, cars and toys. It would grade AI uses according to four levels of risk — from minimal or no risk posed by video games and spam filters to unacceptable risk from social scoring systems that judge people based on their behavior.

The new wave of general purpose AI systems released since the legislation's first draft in 2021 spurred European lawmakers to beef up the proposal to cover foundation models.

Researchers have warned that powerful foundation models, built by a handful of big tech companies, could be used to supercharge online disinformation and manipulation, cyberattacks or creation of bio-

weapons. They act as basic structures for software developers building AI-powered services so that "if these models are rotten, whatever is built on top will also be rotten — and deployers won't be able to fix it," said Avaaz, a nonprofit advocacy group.

France, Germany and Italy have resisted the update to the legislation and are calling instead for self-regulation — a change of heart seen as a bid to help homegrown generative AI players, such as French startup Mistral AI and Germany's Aleph Alpha, compete with big U.S. tech companies like OpenAI.

Brando Benifei, an Italian member of the European Parliament who is co-leading the body's negotiating efforts, was optimistic about resolving differences with member states.

There's been "some movement" on foundation models, though there are "more issues on finding an agreement" on facial recognition systems, he said.

## **Under Putin, the uber-wealthy Russians known as 'oligarchs' are still rich but far less powerful**

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — When Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, the outside world viewed those Russians known as "oligarchs" as men whose vast wealth, ruthlessly amassed, made them almost shadow rulers. A "government of the few," in the word's etymology.

The term has persisted well into Putin's rule, broadening in popular usage to refer to almost any Russian with a substantial fortune.

How much political power any of Russia's uber-rich now wield, however, is doubtful.

A few hours after Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, a televised meeting he held in the Kremlin with top industrialists and entrepreneurs showed how the dynamics had changed: Putin simply told them he had no choice but to invade.

Despite the harsh consequences to their wealth that the tycoons could expect from the war, they had to accept it; the power was his, not theirs.

### **THE ORIGINAL OLIGARCHS**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, astute businessmen who had already begun building operations as government controls loosened under Mikhail Gorbachev's "perestroika" reform policies took advantage of the privatizing of state industries to quickly establish vast holdings.

Fast-talking mathematician Boris Berezovsky epitomized the breed, becoming the largest dealer for Russia's largest automaker and managing to buy the vehicles at a loss to the manufacturer. He took over the management of the Sibneft oil company, the national airline Aeroflot and gained control of Russia's biggest TV channel, then known as ORT.

Somewhat less-colorful than Berezovsky but still prominent figures from the era included media mogul Vladimir Gusinsky, whose NTV channel made him highly influential, and oil tycoons Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Roman Abramovich.

### **PUTIN'S NEW DEAL**

Upon taking office, Putin was well aware of the widespread resentment ordinary Russians felt for the ultra-wealthy who thrived while millions struggled through the economic changes. In the summer of 2000, Putin met in the Kremlin with about two dozen of the men regarded as the top oligarchs. The meeting was closed, but reports later said he made them a sternly clear deal: Stay out of politics and your wealth won't be touched.

"The guarantee ... was that all the riches amassed before his presidency could be kept by their owners, and this has never changed," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace analyst Alexandra Prokopenko wrote in a commentary this year. "Loyalty is what Putin values above all else."

By then, Berezovsky had already begun criticizing Putin. Within months, he left Russia for the United Kingdom and was granted asylum in 2003. Ten years later, he was found dead in his home; a disputed post-mortem examination said he appeared to have hanged himself.

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Gusinsky, whose media holdings were critical of Putin and even satirized him, was hauled into jail amid an investigation of misappropriated funds; within weeks, he agreed to sell his holdings to an arm of Russia's state natural gas monopoly, and he left the country.

Khodorkovsky, regarded as Russia's richest man at the time, lasted longer, establishing the Open Society reformist group and showing increased political ambitions. But he was arrested in 2003 when special forces stormed onto his private plane and spent a decade in prison on convictions of tax evasion and embezzlement before Putin pardoned him and he left Russia.

Putin tolerated the 2012 presidential run against him by Mikhail Prokhorov, who made a fortune in metals, but the bid was widely seen as a Kremlin-supported red herring aimed at creating the impression of genuine political pluralism in Russia.

## THE OLIGARCHS' FUTURE

Despite the blows to their assets as a result of the Ukraine war, most of Russia's ultra-wealthy have stayed quiet about the conflict or offered only mild, token criticism.

Banking and brewing entrepreneur Oleg Tinkov was a rare exception, denouncing the war and calling its supporters "morons." He left the country in late 2022 and later renounced his citizenship.

Mikhail Fridman, a co-founder of Russia's largest private bank, called the war a tragedy and for the "bloodshed" to end. He holds Israeli citizenship and had lived in Britain, but reportedly returned to Moscow after fighting between Israel and Hamas began.

"Even as the elites grumble, they continue to show loyalty," Prokopenko wrote.

But she and other analysts suggest that loyalty had not been enough for Putin and that he wants to create a new cadre of hugely wealthy figures who are beholden to him by distributing the assets that the state has seized from foreign companies exiting Russia and through invalidating the privatizations from the 1990s.

Analyst Nikolai Petrov of Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs wrote that Russia is engaged in deprivatization "intended to redistribute wealth to a new generation of less-powerful individuals and shore up the president's own position."

"A new group of quasi-owner state oligarchs is being created, with wealth and control redistributed from the 'old nobles' to the new," he said.

## Washington's center of gravity on immigration has shifted to the right

By SEUNG MIN KIM and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a decade ago that Capitol Hill was consumed by an urgency to overhaul the nation's immigration system, fueled in no small part by Republicans who felt a political imperative to make inroads with minority voters by embracing more generous policies.

But nothing ever became law and in the time since, Washington's center of gravity on immigration has shifted demonstrably to the right, with the debate now focused on measures meant to keep migrants out as Republicans sense they have the political upper hand.

Long gone are the chatter and horse-trading between parties over how to secure a pathway to citizenship for immigrants, or a modernized work permit system to encourage more legal migration. Instead, the fights of late have centered on how much to tighten asylum laws and restrain a president's traditional powers to protect certain groups of migrants.

Now, Democrats and Republicans are again struggling to strike an immigration deal — and the consequences of failure stretch far beyond the southern border. Congressional Republicans are insisting on tougher border measures as their price for greenlighting billions in additional aid to Ukraine, and the stalemate is putting the future of U.S. military assistance to Kyiv at risk as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears the two-year mark.

Democrats have "ceded the ground to Republicans on immigration and the border," said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy director at the American Immigration Council, a nonprofit that advocates for immigrant rights. "The administration seems to see no advantage in leading on this issue, but I think that they're shooting themselves in the foot."

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The intractable nature of immigration debates is coming into sharp relief this week as a bipartisan group of senators tasked with finding a border deal is running out of time to reach an agreement. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has promised to put up for a vote a nearly \$106 billion emergency spending request from Biden to cover national security needs including Ukraine, Israel and the border. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is an unwavering backer of Ukraine yet has stressed privately to President Joe Biden that the administration will need to bend on border policy to unlock that money.

Behind closed doors, Democrats have resisted demands from Republicans to scale back Biden's executive powers to temporarily admit certain migrants into the country. Yet Democrats privately appear willing to concede to GOP negotiators in other areas, particularly on making it tougher for asylum-seekers to clear an initial bar before their legal proceedings can continue in the United States.

That's a shift in favor of Republicans from even last year: There were similar agreements around asylum among Senate negotiators back then, but that would have been in exchange for a conditional pathway to citizenship for roughly 2 million "dreamers" who came to the United States illegally as children.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., a perennial negotiator on immigration, stressed that in "every Congress, the foundation for compromise changes."

"The Democrats have to understand we lead one of the two chambers on Capitol Hill," Tillis said. "They have to understand that we rightfully will get something more conservative than some of the deals that are negotiated in the last Congress."

Throughout the Senate border negotiations, the White House has remained visibly hands off, largely trying to replicate its strategy on previously successful legislative talks like those that eventually led to tougher gun restrictions becoming law.

But it's also no secret the border is one issue Biden would prefer to avoid.

Though Biden as vice president spearheaded the Obama administration's diplomatic efforts in Central America, the border specifically is one of the few issues that he did not manage during his 36 years in the Senate nor two terms as vice president.

As president, Biden's aim has been to adopt a foreign policy approach to the border, framing the issue as a hemispheric challenge, not solely a U.S. problem. Biden almost immediately after taking office unraveled some of former President Donald Trump's more hardline policies. And last year, he oversaw the end of Title 42, the pandemic-era health restrictions at the border that had made it easier to deny migrants entry into the U.S.

He has tried to broaden legal pathways while cracking down on illegal border crossings. But the number of migrants at the border, after an initial dip following the end of Title 42, has been climbing dramatically. Now, cities like Chicago, New York and Denver are struggling to manage the migrants who have been relocated to their cities, forcing Democrats in areas far north to confront similar challenges to those long faced by border states.

Inside the White House, deputy chief of staff Natalie Quillian — tapped initially to oversee implementation of Biden's signature laws, like the massive infrastructure package that just turned two years old — is now coordinating the administration's response to Democratic-led cities and states that have asked for help managing the influx of migrants.

"There is a fundamental shift in the Democratic Party on immigration" that has happened within the past six months, as the number of migrants in those cities has swelled, said Muzaffar Chishti, a senior fellow and director of the Migration Policy Institute office at New York University's law school.

Before, Democrats would bristle at any potential discussion over the border, particularly following Trump. But Chishti added: "That's no longer true. Their backs don't go up when they see someone saying we want to make some changes in the policies at the border."

Aides and allies to Biden have said the president is willing to accept new restrictions on asylum and potentially other Republican-led immigration policy changes, particularly as the numbers at the border continue to rise. His supplemental funding request, which seeks \$14 billion for the border, would hire more asylum officers, increase detention capacity for migrant families and hire more immigration court judges.

There's now a backlog of more than 1 million cases, and it's only increasing. Some migrants are released

into the U.S. and wait for years before they are told whether they qualify for asylum.

Arrests at the U.S.-Mexico border in August through October more than doubled over the previous three months as migrants and smugglers adjusted to new asylum regulations following the end of Title 42. Illegal border crossings were at 188,778 in October, down from 218,763 in September, which was the second-highest month on record.

The White House decision to lump additional funding for the border in with Ukraine assistance has given lawmakers, Republicans say, an implicit nod to negotiate policy changes that would otherwise make Democrats feel uncomfortable.

"The fact that they are trying to actually work and figure out what we can do to come up with border security tells me he understands the American people are getting fed up with their current posture," Tillis said of Biden and the White House.

Bolstering the GOP posture even further is a new House Republican majority that is largely resistant to continued Ukraine assistance, making the price of additional aid for the White House that much higher.

And unlike the successful gun talks last year — when Democrats wielded political advantage after mass shootings galvanized public calls for increased restrictions — immigration is largely seen as an issue that is being fought on Republicans' turf.

But in the Democrats' view, Trump and his hardline immigration policies, coupled with antipathy toward Ukraine aid, continue to loom large, rendering Republicans unable to close any deal that would involve irking portion of their base that remain staunchly opposed to Ukraine aid and anything less than the hardline policies they've already laid out.

Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., one of the chief authors of the 2013 immigration bill that never became law, said the U.S. immigration system, writ large, still needs an overhaul.

But "we can't do that right now in the context of this Ukraine bill," he said. "It's too complicated. It's too far reaching. And frankly, there's no reason to be attaching the border to Ukraine funding."

## **A second Trump administration will 'come after' people in the media in the courts, an ally says**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Donald Trump ally who worked in his Justice Department said Tuesday that if the former president is elected again, his administration will retaliate against people in the media "criminally or civilly."

Kash Patel, who was also chief of staff in the Defense Department and held a role on the National Security Council, made the comment on Steve Bannon's podcast. He said that, in a second Trump administration, "We will go out and find the conspirators not just in government, but in the media," over the 2020 election, which Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump and his allies have repeatedly claimed the election was stolen, despite the fact that numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staffers and even his own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges. Trump has also promised "retribution" as a central part of his campaign message as he seeks a second term in the White House.

Trump's campaign distanced itself from Patel's comments, saying that proclamations "like this have nothing to do with" them. The campaign did not respond to questions about whether Trump is considering the plans Patel described.

In a Fox News Channel interview later Tuesday, Trump declined twice to say he would not abuse power to seek retribution in a second White House term.

"You mean like they're using right now?" Trump responded to one question, alleging that the Biden administration was abusing power.

Patel is a fellow at the Center for Renewing America, a conservative think tank that is part of a network of conservative groups that is preparing for a possible second White House term for Trump or any conservative who aligns with their views.

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In his interview with Bannon, Patel said: "We're going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections. We're going to come after you, whether it's criminally or civilly. We'll figure that out. But yeah, we're putting you all on notice."

Trump has long targeted the media, labeling news organizations as "Fake News" and the "Enemy of the People," a phrase linked to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

In a post on his Truth Social network in September, Trump repeated both phrases and vowed to investigate NBC News and MSNBC for "Country Threatening Treason" and try to curb their access to the airwaves.

"I say up front, openly, and proudly, that when I WIN the Presidency of the United States, they and others of the LameStream Media will be thoroughly scrutinized for their knowingly dishonest and corrupt coverage of people, things, and events," Trump said in the post. "Why should NBC, or any other of the corrupt & dishonest media companies, be entitled to use the very valuable Airwaves of the USA, FREE? They are a true threat to Democracy and are, in fact, THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE! The Fake News Media should pay a big price for what they have done to our once great Country."

In the interview, Bannon suggested Patel might be a possible director of the CIA if Trump wins another term.

The Trump campaign did not respond to a question about whether Patel was being considered for a role as CIA director.

Patel was a guest at Trump's kickoff for his 2024 presidential campaign last year at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. In June, he attended Trump's speech at his Bedminster resort following the former president's appearance in court on federal charges he mishandled classified documents.

## **A narrowing Republican presidential field will debate with just six weeks before the Iowa caucuses**

By BILL BARROW and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — The shrinking field of Republican presidential hopefuls will gather on a debate stage Wednesday for the fourth time this year, running out of time to shake up a race that's been dominated by former President Donald Trump.

Four candidates will be on stage at the University of Alabama for their last scheduled meeting before the Iowa caucuses kick off the presidential nominating season next month. Trump, the race's clear front-runner, will not be among them. Trump, who has staged public appearances to compete for attention during the three prior GOP debates, will this time spend the evening at a closed-door fundraiser in Florida.

Six weeks before voters in Iowa start making their choices, the debate offers a fresh opportunity for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy to assert themselves as the best alternatives to Trump.

The candidates' recent maneuvers, though, suggest they will spend more time going after each other than taking aim at Trump, and many Republican power players say there are diminishing returns in attacking the former president given his popularity among Republicans.

"It's challenging for anybody else when Donald Trump is consolidating supporters," Republican pollster Brent Buchanan said.

The debate may be hard to find for many prospective viewers. It will air on NewsNation, a cable network still trying to build its audience after taking over WGN America three years ago. NewsNation's Elizabeth Vargas will moderate alongside Megyn Kelly, a former Fox News anchor who now hosts a popular podcast, and Eliana Johnson of the conservative news site Washington Free Beacon.

Haley has risen in recent polling to challenge the Florida governor's position as the leading non-Trump contender. She's leaned on her foreign policy experience since the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7. And she recently won the support of the Koch brothers' powerful political operation, which will send organizers and canvassers into early primary states on her behalf.

DeSantis, meanwhile, faces new upheaval in his political operation. A pro-DeSantis super PAC that is handling much of his campaign apparatus in Iowa parted ways with several top staffers over the weekend.

Ramaswamy has been a fiery presence in the three earlier debates. He'll be looking to resurrect the surge in interest he saw over the summer but remains stalled in single digits in most polls.

And Christie, who barely met the requirements to participate, is the only leading contender to consistently go after Trump, needling his rivals for focusing on each other instead of the race's front-runner. He has focused his campaign on New Hampshire, which holds its primaries eight days after the Iowa caucuses.

The field of invited candidates has shrunk in half since eight were on the stage at the first debate in Milwaukee in August as the Republican National Committee tightened the criteria to reach the stage each time. For Tuesday, candidates had to get at least 6% in multiple polls and amass 80,000 unique donors.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum have all dropped out of the race after participating in at least one debate. Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson is continuing his campaign but failed to qualify.

The debate setting looms as another reminder of Trump's strong position – and how he outpaced an even larger Republican field when he first ran and won in 2016. Trump swept Southern primaries from Virginia to Arkansas and Louisiana in his first campaign. And the changes in Alabama Republican politics in many ways reflect Trump's influence over the party.

## **Netanyahu alleges global indifference to what rights group calls 'widespread' sexual crimes by Hamas**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A man hiding in a pit during the Oct. 7 Hamas assault on an outdoor music festival in Israel said he heard someone nearby screaming she was being raped. Elsewhere in the area, a combat paramedic saw the body of a young woman with her legs open, her pants pulled down, and what looked like semen on her lower back. An army reservist who was tasked with identifying those killed by the militants said some of the women were found wearing only bloodied underwear.

Such accounts given to The Associated Press, along with first assessments by an Israeli rights group, show that sexual assault was part of an atrocities-filled rampage by Hamas and other Gaza militants who killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took more than 240 hostages that day.

While investigators are still trying to determine the scope of the sexual assaults, Israel's government is accusing the international community, particularly the United Nations, of ignoring the pain of Israeli victims.

"I say to the women's rights organizations, to the human rights organizations, you've heard of the rape of Israeli women, horrible atrocities, sexual mutilation — where the hell are you?" Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a news conference Tuesday, switching to English to emphasize the point.

U.S. President Joe Biden called the reports of sexual violence "appalling" and urged the world to condemn "horrific accounts of unimaginable cruelty."

Two months after the Hamas attacks on the music festival, farming communities and army posts in southern Israel, police are still struggling to put together the pieces.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, priority was given to identifying bodies, not to preserving evidence. Police say they're combing through 60,000 videos seized from the body cameras of Hamas attackers, from social media and from security cameras as well as 1,000 testimonies to bring the perpetrators to justice. It has been difficult finding rape survivors, with many victims killed by their attackers.

The group Physicians for Human Rights Israel, which has a record of advocating for Palestinian civilians in Gaza suffering under Israel's longtime blockade of the territory, published an initial assessment in November.

"What we know for sure is that it was more than just one case and it was widespread, in that this happened in more than one location and more than a handful of times," Hadas Ziv, policy and ethics director for the organization, said Tuesday. "What we don't know and what the police are investigating is whether it was ordered to be done and whether it was systematic."

Hamas has rejected allegations that its gunmen committed sexual assault.

'THEY'RE RAPING ME'

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Ron Freger fled the music festival when Hamas attacked and said he heard a woman screaming for help. "I was lying in a pit (and) I heard (a girl) yelling: 'They're raping me, they're raping me!'" he told the AP.

Several minutes later, he heard gunshots close by and she fell silent, he said. "The feeling in that moment is one of complete powerlessness. I'm lying in this hole and I have no ability to do anything. I have no weapon, I have nothing, I'm surrounded by other people who are hiding with me and we're completely powerless," said the 23-year-old from the northern Israeli town of Netanya.

Last month, Israel's police chief presented to the international news media videotaped testimony of a rape witness at the music festival. Her face blurred, she said she watched militants gang-rape a woman as she lay on the ground. The men then stood her up as blood trickled from her back, yanked her hair and sliced her breast, playing with it as they assaulted her. The last man shot her in the head while he was still inside her. The woman in the video described watching the militants as she pretended to be dead.

"I couldn't understand what I saw," she said.

A combat medic told the AP that he came across half a dozen bodies of women and men with possible signs of sexual assault when he reached one of the attacked communities.

One girl had been shot in the head and was lying on the floor, her legs open and pants pulled down, with what looked like semen on her lower back, said the medic who spoke on condition of anonymity because his unit was classified. Other bodies had mass bleeding around the groin with limbs at distorted angles, he said.

At the Shura military base where victims are being identified, Shari Mendes, a member of the army reserve unit that deals with the identification and religious burial preparation of female soldiers, said some of the women's bodies came in with little clothing, such as parts of their pajamas. Some only had bloodied underwear.

## 'WIDESPREAD' CRIMES

Based on open-source information and interviews, the Physicians for Human Rights Israel report documents incidents at the music festival, homes around the Gaza Strip and an Israeli military base, all attacked by Hamas.

"It is becoming more apparent that the violence perpetrated against women, men and children also included widespread sexual and gender-based crimes," it says.

Before this war, Hamas, an Islamic militant group sworn to Israel's destruction, wasn't known to use rape as a weapon, said Colin P. Clarke, director of research at The Soufan Group, a global intelligence and security consulting firm. Its tactics included suicide bombings and shooting attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians.

A country like Israel should have the means to do rigorous testing to confirm if people were sexually assaulted in a more systematic way, said Nidhi Kapur, a specialist on sexual abuse in situations of armed conflict.

"Forensic testing should have been a priority to build a full picture of the attack," said Kapur, who has worked in the region. "In a conflict you first take care of the survivors, you don't count bodies."

On Tuesday, Netanyahu and members of his war cabinet held a tense and emotional meeting with recently released hostages and family members of hostages still held in Gaza. Some of the recently released hostages shared testimonies of sexual abuse during their time in Gaza, participants said.

Separately, a doctor who treated some of the 110 released hostages told the AP that at least 10 men and women among those freed were sexually assaulted or abused, but did not provide further details. He spoke on condition of anonymity to protect the hostages' identities.

According to the Israeli military, 138 hostages, including 15 women, are still held by Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza. Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, a military spokesman, said the army is "absolutely" concerned about sexual violence against female hostages.

## FAILURE TO SUPPORT WOMEN

On Monday, Israel hosted a special event at the United Nations, where former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and top technology executive Sheryl Sandberg were among

those who criticized what they called a global failure to support women who were sexually assaulted and in some cases killed.

But some groups say Israel isn't making it easy to investigate.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said it requested access to Israel and the Palestinian territories to allow it to collect information from the events that took place on Oct. 7 and 8, and since then, but Israel has not responded to its requests, said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the U.N. Human Rights Office.

Israel says the office has preexisting biases against Israel and it will not cooperate with the body. Israeli officials said they would consider all options for independent international mechanisms to investigate.

Rights experts say the United Nations is best placed to conduct a fair, credible and impartial investigation.

"These accounts are horrifying and deserve an urgent, thorough, and credible investigation," said Heather Barr, associate director for the women's rights division at Human Rights Watch.

## Israel moves into Gaza's second-largest city and intensifies strikes in bloody new phase of the war

By WAFAA SHURAF, JACK JEFFERY and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel said Tuesday that its troops had entered Gaza's second-largest city as intensified bombardment sent streams of ambulances and cars racing to hospitals with wounded and dead Palestinians, including children, in a bloody new phase of the war.

The military said its forces were "in the heart" of Khan Younis, which has emerged as the first target in the expanded ground offensive into southern Gaza that Israel says aims to destroy Hamas. Military officials said they were engaged in the "most intense day" of battles since the ground offensive began more than five weeks ago, with heavy firefights also taking place in northern Gaza.

The assault into the south threatens to fuel a new wave of displaced Palestinians and a worsening of Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. The U.N. said 1.87 million people — more than 80% of Gaza's population — have been driven from their homes, and that fighting is now preventing distribution of food, water and medicine outside a tiny sliver of southern Gaza. New military evacuation orders are squeezing people into ever-smaller areas of the south.

Bombardment has grown fiercer across the territory, including areas where Palestinians are told to seek safety. In the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah, just north of Khan Younis, a strike Tuesday destroyed a house where dozens of displaced people were sheltering. At least 34 people were killed, including at least six children, according to an Associated Press reporter at the hospital who counted the bodies.

Footage from the scene showed women screaming from an upper floor of a house shattered to a concrete shell. In the wreckage below, men pulled the limp body of a child from under a slab next to a burning car. At the nearby hospital, medics tried to resuscitate a young boy and girl, bloodied and unmoving on a stretcher.

Israel's assault in retaliation for Hamas's Oct. 7 attack has killed more than 16,200 people in Gaza — 70% of them women and children — with more than 42,000 wounded, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, which released new figures late Tuesday. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. It says hundreds have been killed or wounded since a weeklong cease-fire ended Friday, and many still are trapped under rubble.

Israel says it must remove Hamas from power to prevent a repeat of the attack that ignited the war, when Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took captive some 240 men, women and children.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday the military would have to retain open-ended security control over the Gaza Strip long after the war ends. His comments suggested a renewed direct Israeli occupation of Gaza, something the United States says it opposes.

Netanyahu said only the Israeli military can ensure Gaza remains demilitarized. "No international force can be responsible for this," he said at a news conference. "I'm not ready to close my eyes and accept

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any other arrangement.”

Under U.S. pressure to prevent further mass casualties, Israel says it is being more precise as it widens its offensive and is taking extra steps to urge civilians to evacuate out of its path. Weeks of bombardment and a ground offensive obliterated much of northern Gaza.

The military accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields when the militants operate in dense residential areas. But Israel has not provided accounting for targeting in individual strikes, some of which have leveled entire city blocks and complexes of dozens of multi-story apartment towers.

Military Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi acknowledged that Israeli forces use heavy force against civilian structures, saying militants keep weapons in houses and buildings so fighters in civilian clothes can use them to fire on troops.

“Striking them requires significant use of fire, both to target the enemy but also to, of course, protect our forces,” he said. “Therefore the forces operate powerfully.”

## BATTLES IN KHAN YOUNIS AND NORTH GAZA

Halevi said his forces had begun the “third phase of the ground operations,” moving against Hamas in the south after seizing much of the north. Israel has not given specific details on troop movements.

Residents said troops advanced to Bani Suheila, on Khan Yunis’ eastern edge. Israeli forces also appear to be moving to partially cut across the strip between Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah. Satellite photos from Sunday showed around 150 Israeli tanks, armored personnel carriers and other vehicles on the main road between the two cities.

The past days brought some of the heaviest bombardment of the entire war, the U.N.’s humanitarian affairs office OCHA said.

Witnesses said a strike Tuesday hit a school in Khan Yunis where hundreds of displaced people were sheltering. Casualties overwhelmed the nearby Nasser Hospital, where wounded men and children were lain on a bloody floor amid a tangle of IV tubes. In the morgue, a woman draped herself over the stretcher where her dead husband and child lay among at least nine bodies.

“What’s happening here is unimaginable,” said Hamza al-Bursh, who lives near the school. “They strike indiscriminately.”

In northern Gaza, the military said its troops were battling Hamas militants in the Jabaliya refugee camp and the district of Shujaiya, capturing Hamas positions and destroying rocket launchers and underground infrastructure.

The battles in the north signaled the tough resistance from Hamas since Israeli forces moved in on Oct. 27. The military says 86 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza offensive and that thousands of Hamas fighters have been killed, though it has not produced evidence.

Even after weeks of bombardment, Hamas’ top leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar — whose location is unknown — was able to conduct complex cease-fire negotiations and orchestrate the release of more than 100 Israeli and foreign hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners last week. Palestinian militants have also kept up their rocket fire into Israel.

## FEWER PLACES TO GO

After the full-scale evacuation of northern Gaza ordered by Israel early in the war, most of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million is squeezed into the 90 square miles of central and southern Gaza.

Since moving into the south, the Israeli military has ordered people out of nearly two dozen neighborhoods in and around Khan Yunis. That further reduced the area where civilians can seek refuge by more than a quarter. It was not clear how many people followed the evacuation call.

“Nowhere is safe in Gaza, and there is nowhere left to go,” Lynn Hastings, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, said Monday. “The conditions required to deliver aid to the people of Gaza do not exist. If possible, an even more hellish scenario is about to unfold.”

For the past two days, aid distribution — mainly just supplies of flour and water — has been possible only in the city of Rafah, at the far south by the border, the U.N. said. Locations deeper inside Gaza, including Khan Yunis, Deir al-Balah and northern Gaza, could not be reached because of fighting.

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Dr. Nasser Bolbol, head of neonatal intensive care at the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Younis, said acute hunger was spreading, with some deaths of children from dehydration and undernourishment, after nearly two months with only limited aid entering the territory, under an Israeli seal.

"Gaza is entirely covered in death and darkness," he said.

## STILL HOSTAGE

Family members of hostages still held in Gaza held tense talks with Netanyahu and the war cabinet Tuesday. Observers present said more than 100 people attended the nearly three-hour meeting. Some relatives shouted at cabinet members, perceiving they did not have any immediate plans to rescue some 138 hostages still captive. Nearly half the room left in disappointment before the meeting ended.

During the gathering, five hostages released during the truce shared harrowing details of their experience. One spoke of Hamas fighters "touching" female hostages, and another said militants shaved off a male hostage's body hair to humiliate him, according to a group representing the hostages' families. Others said they were deprived of water.

A doctor who treated some of the 110 released hostages told the AP separately that at least 10 women and men among those freed were sexually assaulted or abused, but did not provide further details. He spoke on condition of anonymity to protect the hostages' identities.

Noam Peri, whose 80-year-old father is still being held captive, said the meeting with Netanyahu and the war cabinet was not a relaxed discussion.

"After 60 days, people are tired and worried," Peri said.

## Maduro orders the 'immediate' exploitation of oil, gas and mines in Guyana's Essequibo

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Tuesday directed the country's state-owned companies to "immediately" begin to explore and exploit the oil, gas and mines in Guyana's Essequibo region, a territory larger than Greece and rich in oil and minerals that Venezuela claims as its own.

The announcement came a day after Maduro got the victory he sought in a weekend referendum on whether to claim sovereignty over the region.

Maduro said he would "immediately" proceed "to grant operating licenses for the exploration and exploitation of oil, gas and mines in the entire area of our Essequibo." He also ordered the creation of local subsidiaries of Venezuelan public companies, including oil giant PDVSA and mining conglomerate Corporación Venezolana de Guayana.

It is not clear how the Maduro administration intends to implement the idea of exercising jurisdiction over the territory once it's officially declared part of Venezuela through a law that is to be soon discussed by the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling party.

In addition to the announcement regarding the exploitation of resources in Essequibo, Maduro announced Tuesday the creation of a new Comprehensive Defense Operational Zone, Zodi in Spanish, for the disputed strip, similar to the special military commands that conduct operations in different regions of the country.

The 61,600-square-mile (159,500-square-kilometer) area accounts for two-thirds of Guyana. Yet, Venezuela has always considered Essequibo as its own because the region was within its boundaries during the Spanish colonial period, and it has long disputed the border decided by international arbitrators in 1899, when Guyana was still a British colony.

Venezuela's commitment to pursue the territorial claim has fluctuated over the years. Its interest piqued again in 2015 when ExxonMobil announced it had found oil in commercial quantities off the Essequibo coast.

Guyana has denounced Venezuela's actions and Sunday's referendum as pretext to annex the land. It had appealed to the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' top court, which on Friday ordered Venezuela not to take any action to change the status quo until the panel can rule on the two countries' competing claims, which could take years.

## More bodies found after sudden eruption of Indonesia's Mount Marapi, raising confirmed toll to 23

By MARDI ROSA TANJUNG Associated Press

BATU PALANO, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers searching the hazardous slopes of Indonesia's Mount Marapi volcano found the last body of climbers who were caught by a surprise weekend eruption, raising the number of confirmed dead to 23, officials said Wednesday.

About 75 climbers started their way up the nearly 2,900-meter (9,480-foot) mountain in Agam district of West Sumatra province on Saturday and became stranded.

Some 52 climbers were rescued after the initial eruption Sunday, and 11 others were initially confirmed dead. New eruptions on Monday and Tuesday spewed more hot ash as high as 800 meters (2,620 feet) into the air, reducing visibility and temporarily halting search and recovery operations, said Abdul Malik, chief of the Padang Search and Rescue Agency.

The bodies of two climbers were located on Monday and nine more on Tuesday, the National Search and Rescue Agency said.

West Sumatra's Police Chief Suharyono said the body of the last climber was found early Wednesday, just a few meters (yards) from the eruption site, bringing the death toll rise to 23.

The rescuers contended with bad weather and difficult terrain, along with winds that brought heat from the eruptions, while distraught relatives gathered at a relief post command in Batu Palano on the mountain slope, hoping for news of missing family members.

Twenty bodies had been taken to a hospital for identification by Wednesday morning, as more than 300 rescuers, including police and soldiers, struggled to bring the others down the mountain and search for the missing climber, said Suharyono who goes by a single name like many Indonesians.

Marapi has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic activity under which climbers and villagers must stay more than 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) from the peak, according to Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

Officially, climbers were only allowed below the danger zone and had to register at two command posts or online. However, local officials acknowledge that many people may have climbed higher than permitted.

Marapi spewed thick columns of ash as high as 3,000 meters (9,800 feet) in Sunday's eruption and hot ash clouds spread for several kilometers (miles). Nearby villages and towns were blanketed by tons of volcanic debris that blocked sunlight, and authorities recommended that people wear masks to protect themselves from the ash.

About 1,400 people live on Marapi's slopes in Rubai and Gobah Cumantiang, the nearest villages, about 5 to 6 kilometers (3 to 3.7 miles) from the peak.

Marapi is known for sudden eruptions that are difficult to predict because the source is shallow and near the peak, and its eruptions are not caused by a deep movement of magma, which sets off tremors that register on seismic monitors.

Marapi has been active since a January eruption that caused no casualties. It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin.

## Senate approves hundreds of military promotions after Republican senator ends blockade of nominees

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate in a single stroke Tuesday approved about 425 military promotions after Sen. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama ended a monthslong blockade of nominations over his opposition to a Pentagon abortion policy.

Tuberville had been under pressure from members of both sides of the political aisle to end his holds as senators complained about the toll it was taking on service members and their families, and on military

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readiness.

President Joe Biden called the Senate's action long overdue and said the military confirmations should never have been held up.

"In the end, this was all pointless. Senator Tuberville, and the Republicans who stood with him, needlessly hurt hundreds of servicemembers and military families and threatened our national security — all to push a partisan agenda. I hope no one forgets what he did," Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer teed up the military confirmations for a vote just a few hours after Tuberville emerged from a closed-door lunch with fellow GOP senators and told reporters he's "not going to hold the promotions of these people any longer." He said holds would continue, however, for about 11 of the highest-ranking military officers, those who would be promoted to what he described as the four-star level or above.

There were 451 military officers affected by the holds as of Nov. 27. It's a stance that had left key national security positions unfilled and military families with an uncertain path forward.

Tuberville was blocking the nominations in opposition to Pentagon rules that allow travel reimbursement when a service member has to go out of state to get an abortion or other reproductive care. The Biden administration instituted the new rules after the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to an abortion, and some states have limited or banned the procedure.

"Well, certainly we're encouraged by the news," Pentagon spokesman Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said at a briefing Tuesday. "We continue to stay engaged with Senator Tuberville in the Senate directly, to urge that all holds on all our general flag officer nominations be lifted."

Critics said that Tuberville's tactics were a mistake because he was blocking the promotions of people who had nothing to do with the policy he opposed.

"Why are we punishing American heroes who have nothing to do with the dispute?" said Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska. "Remember, we are against the Biden abortion travel policy. But why are we punishing people who have nothing to do with the dispute and if they get confirmed can't fix it? No one has had an answer for that question because there is no answer."

For months, many of the military officers directly impacted by Tuberville's holds declined to speak out, for fear any comments would be seen as political. But as the pressures on their lives and the lives of the officers serving under them increased, they began to speak about how the uncertainty surrounding their next move was impacting not only them, but their children and spouses.

They talked about how some of their most talented junior officers were going to get out of the military because of the instability they saw around them, and they talked about how having to perform multiple roles because of so many vacancies was putting enormous additional stress on an already overworked military community.

The issue came to a head when U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith suffered a heart attack in October, just two days after he'd talked about the stress of the holds at a military conference.

"We can't continue to do this to these good families. Some of these groups that are all for these holds, they haven't thought through the implication of the harm it's doing to real American families," said Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa.

In response to the holds, Democrats had vowed to take up a resolution that would allow the Senate to confirm groups of military nominees at once during the remainder of the congressional term, but Republicans worried that the change could erode the powers of the minority in the Senate.

Tuberville emerged from his meeting with GOP colleagues, saying "all of us are against a rule change in the Senate." He was adamant that "we did the right thing for the unborn and for our military" by fighting back against executive overreach. He expressed no regrets, but admitted "we didn't get as much out of it as we wanted."

"The only opportunity you got to get the people on the left up here to listen to you in the minority is to put a hold on something, and that's what we did," Tuberville said. "We didn't get the win that we wanted."

We've still got a bad policy."

In the end, Schumer said Tuberville ended up failing to get anything he wanted and held it out as a warning to others who might attempt similar efforts in the future to undo policies they oppose.

"The senior senator from Alabama has nothing to show for his 10 months of delay. No law is changing in any way," Schumer said.

Sen. Jack Reed, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said after the vote that the first thing he wanted to do was to apologize to the hundreds of officers whose promotions were stalled.

"We have to recognize in the future, we can never do this again," Reed said.

## **A second Trump administration will 'come after' people in the media in the courts, an ally says**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Donald Trump ally who worked in his Justice Department said Tuesday that if the former president is elected again, his administration will retaliate against people in the media "criminally or civilly."

Kash Patel, who was also chief of staff in the Defense Department and held a role on the National Security Council, made the comment on Steve Bannon's podcast. He said that, in a second Trump administration, "We will go out and find the conspirators not just in government, but in the media," over the 2020 election, which Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump and his allies have repeatedly claimed the election was stolen, despite the fact that numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staffers and even his own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges. Trump has also promised "retribution" as a central part of his campaign message as he seeks a second term in the White House.

Trump's campaign distanced itself from Patel's comments, saying that proclamations "like this have nothing to do with" them. The campaign did not respond to questions about whether Trump is considering the plans Patel described.

In a Fox News Channel interview later Tuesday, Trump declined twice to say he would not abuse power to seek retribution in a second White House term.

"You mean like they're using right now?" Trump responded to one question, alleging that the Biden administration was abusing power.

Patel is a fellow at the Center for Renewing America, a conservative think tank that is part of a network of conservative groups that is preparing for a possible second White House term for Trump or any conservative who aligns with their views.

In his interview with Bannon, Patel said: "We're going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections. We're going to come after you, whether it's criminally or civilly. We'll figure that out. But yeah, we're putting you all on notice."

Trump has long targeted the media, labeling news organizations as "Fake News" and the "Enemy of the People," a phrase linked to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

In a post on his Truth Social network in September, Trump repeated both phrases and vowed to investigate NBC News and MSNBC for "Country Threatening Treason" and try to curb their access to the airwaves.

"I say up front, openly, and proudly, that when I WIN the Presidency of the United States, they and others of the LameStream Media will be thoroughly scrutinized for their knowingly dishonest and corrupt coverage of people, things, and events," Trump said in the post. "Why should NBC, or any other of the corrupt & dishonest media companies, be entitled to use the very valuable Airwaves of the USA, FREE? They are a true threat to Democracy and are, in fact, THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE! The Fake News Media should pay a big price for what they have done to our once great Country."

In the interview, Bannon suggested Patel might be a possible director of the CIA if Trump wins another term.

The Trump campaign did not respond to a question about whether Patel was being considered for a role as CIA director.

Patel was a guest at Trump's kickoff for his 2024 presidential campaign last year at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. In June, he attended Trump's speech at his Bedminster resort following the former president's appearance in court on federal charges he mishandled classified documents.

## **Man believed to have fired shots before a Virginia house exploded died in the blast, police say**

By MATTHEW BARAKAT and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — The owner of a Virginia house that exploded as police tried to execute a search warrant is believed to have died in the blast, officials said Tuesday, as details emerged about numerous grievances he expressed against neighbors and others on social media and in lawsuits.

James Yoo, 56, was identified by Arlington County Police Chief Andy Penn at a news conference as the person whose actions brought police to the Arlington home after he fired a "flare-type gun" from inside the house into the neighborhood more than 30 times.

Penn said police responded to the house about 4:45 p.m. Monday after receiving reports of shots fired. When attempts to communicate with Yoo were largely unsuccessful, police obtained a search warrant.

As officers breached the door to enter the home, the suspect fired multiple gunshots from within the house, Penn said. He said it wasn't clear where in the house the shots were coming from or what the suspect was firing at.

Soon after that, just before 8:30 p.m., the house exploded, shooting flames and debris into the air in a blast that was felt for miles.

An investigation into the cause of the explosion is ongoing, fire officials said. Police asked that anyone with photos or video of the area share them with investigators.

Assistant Fire Chief Jason Jenkins said authorities turned off gas service to the home and evacuated nearby residents — including people who lived in the other part of the duplex — about 90 minutes before the explosion.

"I'm not going to speculate on cause or origin," he said of the blast.

"The fire department personnel absolutely saved lives" by evacuating residents of the neighborhood, Jenkins said.

Investigators have not yet identified human remains found inside the home, but "all factors point to that it's this individual (Yoo)," Penn said.

Yoo publicly aired grievances against multiple people in his life. On LinkedIn, he recently posted paranoid rants about his neighbors and a former co-worker.

He also filed federal lawsuits that were dismissed as frivolous against his ex-wife, younger sister, a moving company and the New York Supreme Court.

Each of four lawsuits filed between 2018 and 2022 case were dismissed, and some were described by judges as "convoluted" or "confused."

In 2018, Yoo filed a 163-page federal lawsuit in New York against his then-wife, younger sister and a hospital after he said he was committed against his will. Yoo alleged conspiracy and deprivation of his rights, among other crimes.

The sprawling complaint included biographical details, such as who was at his wedding, and also wove in facts about who was president of the United States at the time. Yoo described how his then-wife drove him to Rochester General Hospital in November 2015 "against his will."

Yoo denied having any thoughts of suicide or prior depression. He cited hospital records that reference a suicide note that he left for his wife, which he said he never wrote.

A man who identified himself on the phone as the husband of Yoo's ex-wife said she had no comment. Yoo's sister did not respond to an email or LinkedIn message requesting comment.

In his lawsuits, Yoo referenced many attempts to contact the FBI. He wrote that he believed that a New

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York Times reporter he saw on television was someone who had claimed to be an FBI agent and came to his house in 2017. He said the person warned him against further attempts to communicate with a U.S. attorney in western New York or he would face a harassment charge.

David Sundberg, assistant director of the FBI's Washington field office, said Yoo had communicated with the FBI with phone calls, letters and online tips "over a number of years."

"I would characterize these communications as primarily complaints about alleged frauds he believed were perpetrated against him," Sundberg said. "The information contained therein and the nature of those communications did not lead to opening any FBI investigations."

On Tuesday, officers wearing Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives jackets combed a nearby street looking through papers scattered in the debris field. Junk mail carrying Yoo's name and the address of the home that exploded was visible on the street.

Craig Kailimai, special agent in charge of the Washington field division for the ATF, said investigators were conducting a "grid search" of the home to determine the cause and origin of the explosion.

The White House was monitoring developments in the case, a spokeswoman said.

"Our thoughts are with the police officers that were injured in that explosion," Olivia Dalton, the White House principal deputy press secretary, told reporters on Air Force One on Tuesday.

Carla Rodriguez of South Arlington said she could hear the explosion more than 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away and came to the scene, but police kept onlookers blocks away.

"I actually thought a plane exploded," she said.

Bob Maynes thought maybe a tree had fallen on his house when he heard the explosion.

"I was sitting in my living room watching television and the whole house shook," Maynes said.

Arlington is located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The explosion occurred in Bluemont, a neighborhood in north Arlington where many of the homes are duplexes.

## **Peruvian constitutional court orders release of former President Alberto Fujimori**

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's constitutional court ordered an immediate humanitarian release Tuesday for imprisoned former President Alberto Fujimori, 85, who was serving a 25-year sentence in connection with the death squad slayings of 25 Peruvians in the 1990s.

The court ruled in favor of a 2017 pardon that had granted the former leader a release on humanitarian grounds but that later was annulled.

In a resolution seen by The Associated Press, the court told the state prisons agency to immediately release Fujimori "on the same day."

Fujimori was sentenced in 2009 to 25 years in prison on charges of human rights abuses. He had been accused of being the mastermind behind the slayings of 25 Peruvians by a military death squad during his administration from 1990 to 2000, while the government fought the Shining Path communist rebels.

Fujimori's 2017 pardon granted by then-President Pablo Kuczynski was annulled under pressure from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and its status was the subject of legal wrangling since then.

The constitutional court previously had ordered a lower court in the southern city of Ica to release Fujimori, but that court declined to do so, arguing in ruling last Friday that it lacked the authority. It returned the matter instead to the constitutional court.

## **Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai urges world to confront Taliban's 'gender apartheid' against women**

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai said Tuesday that the world needs to recognize and confront the "gender apartheid" against women and girls imposed by the Taliban since they seized power in Afghanistan more than two years ago.

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She urged the international community to take collective and urgent action to end the “dark days” in Afghanistan. Yousafzai was awarded the peace prize in 2014 at the age of 17 for her fight for girls’ education in her home country, Pakistan. She is the youngest Nobel laureate.

Two years earlier, she survived an assassination attempt by the Pakistani Taliban — a separate militant group but an ally of the Afghan Taliban — when she was shot in the head on a bus after school.

The 26-year-old activist spoke to The Associated Press after delivering the annual Nelson Mandela lecture in Johannesburg on the 10th anniversary of the death of South Africa’s anti-apartheid leader and Nobel laureate.

Yousafzai is also the youngest person to give the lecture, following in the footsteps of past lecturers, including former President Barack Obama, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and philanthropist and Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

She dedicated her speech to Afghan women and girls, hoping to re-focus the world’s attention on their oppression amid the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

“It took a bullet to my head for the world to stand with me,” she said. “What will it take for the world to stand with girls in Afghanistan?”

Since their takeover, the Taliban have banned education for girls beyond the sixth grade and imposed severe restrictions on women, barring them from work and most public spaces and seeking to implement their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

“Afghanistan has only seen dark days after it fell to the Taliban,” Yousafzai said in the AP interview. “It has been two and half years and most girls have not seen school again.”

Yousafzai appealed to the United Nations to “recognize the current state of Afghanistan as a gender apartheid” and cited recent reports of “women being detained, put into prisons and beaten and even put into forced marriages.”

“Two and a half years is a very long time,” Yousafzai said and added that it could cost a woman her future.

Yousafzai also described as “heartbreaking” Islamabad’s new policy of forceful deportations of Afghans who are in Pakistan illegally, saying that deporting them would put the lives of women and girls who are forced to go back at risk.

She also called for an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war and decried that “so many children’s and women’s lives (have been) lost” in besieged Gaza.

The war — sparked by the militant Hamas group’s unprecedented Oct. 7 attack that killed about 1,200 people in Israel — has so far killed more than 15,890 people in Gaza, the majority of them women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory’s Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Yousafzai said the world must hold accountable those on both sides who have violated international law and committed war crimes.

“We need to make sure that we always are on the side of the innocent people,” she said. “And we are advocating for protecting them and we are advocating for stopping more wars and conflicts.”

Yousafzai praised the awarding of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize to Iranian women’s rights and pro-democracy activist Narges Mohammadi, who remains imprisoned in Tehran’s notorious Evin Prison. Mohammadi’s children are due to accept the Nobel medal and diploma on her behalf on Sunday.

“When we see more women being appreciated for their tireless efforts to bring justice, to fight against oppression and to fight against gender discrimination, it gives us hope because you realize that you are not alone,” Yousafzai said.

Yousafzai began her fight against the oppression of women and girls by writing and publishing blogs at the age of 11.

She had a heartfelt message for young girls today, urging them to find their voice.

“Don’t wait for anyone else to speak for you,” she said. “You have the power to stand up for yourself.”

## To phase out or phase down fossil fuels? That is the question at COP28 climate talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — After days of shaving off the edges of key warming issues, climate negotiators Tuesday zeroed in on the tough job of dealing with the main cause of what's overheating the planet: fossil fuels.

As scientists, activists and United Nations officials repeatedly detailed how the world needs to phase-out the use of coal, oil and natural gas, the United Arab Emirates-hosted conference opened "energy transition day" with a session headlined by top officials of two oil companies.

Negotiators produced a new draft of what's expected to be the core document of the U.N. talks, something called the Global Stocktake, but it had so many possibilities in its 24-pages that it didn't give too much of a hint of what will be agreed upon when the session ends next week. Whatever is adopted has to be agreed on by consensus so it has to be near unanimous.

"It's pretty comprehensive," COP28 CEO Adnan Amin told The Associated Press Tuesday. "I think it provides a very good basis for moving forward. And what we're particularly pleased about it is that it's this early in the process."

That will give time for a lot of give-and-take, Amin said, particularly over the area of the future of fossil fuels, "where there's going to be a very intensive engagement process."

Climate scientist Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics, said the central issue of the meeting "is to reach a conclusion about the phasing out of fossil fuels. And unless we do that, I doubt whether we're going to see an improvement in temperature."

The options in the draft on the future of fossil fuels range from a less-stringent "phasedown of unabated coal power" to a simple but dramatic "an orderly and just phase out of fossil fuels."

Amin said since September there's been quite a bit of "momentum and clarity" for a phase-out of fossil fuels. Two-and-a-half months ago he thought the requirement for all countries to agree would likely doom "phase-out" language.

But that could still change. Amin said because some countries, particularly poorer ones may see phase-out as too restrictive, negotiators could even hit their thesauruses for alternatives to the much discussed phase-out or phase-down wording.

"Several parties have talked about this, including proponents of the phase-out idea," Amin said in a sit-down interview in his office Tuesday. "I think whatever the language, there needs to be clarity and the sense of comfort that what whatever language we actually get to begins to take us in the direction we need to be going in."

"Everybody's going through it with a fine tooth comb right now to see whether their issues are identified or not," Amin said.

Scientists who track climate action said it's crucial to watch the language for loopholes.

"We need to phase out of fossil fuels completely without a back door," said New Climate Institute's Niklas Hohne. "At this conference, there's actually many back doors being proposed at the briefing table ... mainly for prolonging the life of fossil fuels, and one is to talk about 'unabated' fossil fuels."

Including "unabated" means allowing the burning of fossil fuels if their emissions can be captured and stored, a technology that's much talked about but really hasn't proven to work well, Hohne and other scientists have said.

Hohne and Hare's organizations on Tuesday released an updated version of the Climate Action Tracker, which looks at pledges, policies and actions by nations and tries to calculate what kind of temperature increases that means. It found, based on pledges, the world is going in the wrong direction.

A year ago the world's pledges, if fulfilled, would lead to 2.4 degrees Celsius (4.3 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming over pre-industrial times, but now it's up to 2.5 degrees (4.5 Fahrenheit). That's because several nations with weak pledges — especially Indonesia and Iran — have increased emissions so much that the world is heading more on a warmer track, said report lead author Claire Stockwell of Climate Analytics.

"We haven't really seen any action from governments," Stockwell said.

"Many, many countries still fund significant fossil fuel expansion," said New Climate Institute analyst Ana Missirliu. "And in the last year since the previous COP, we've seen quite a cascade of worrying announcements actually starting with the (host country) UAE, whose \$150 billion investment plan to expand its oil and gas industry largely — very largely — overshadows its recent renewable energy investment plans."

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company — run by COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber — signed a memo of understanding Monday evening with Morocco's state-owned mining company OCP. Morocco's state-owned news agency announced the deal, which did not include details, as one part of a broad agreement to deepen partnerships and trade ties between the North African country and the United Arab Emirates.

Missirliu also pointed to fossil fuel production expansion in the United States, United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.

However, one bright spot is that China, the world's biggest carbon polluter, is now set to hit peak emissions in 2025, years earlier than pledged, and by 2035 will be down to about 2017 levels, Stockwell said.

Activists had a series of events and actions lined up Tuesday at the summit seeking to amp up pressure on conference participants to agree to phase out — not down — coal, oil and gas, responsible for most of the world's emissions, and move to clean energy in a fair way.

A team of scientists reported Tuesday that the world pumped 1.1% more heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the air than last year, largely due to increased pollution from China and India.

Protests — which are limited to "action zones" around the U.N. site — centered on phasing out fossil fuels and calling for finance to ramp up the move to clean energy.

Over 100 countries have pledged to triple their renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by the end of the decade.

Francesco La Camera, director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, said it's possible to meet the renewable energy goal and welcome the commitment from the international community.

He urged that the transition to clean energy should "be in line with scientific U.N. studies that look at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius."

## Patients of color more often brace for unfair treatment in health care, survey finds

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

A trip to the doctor's office comes with a bit of preparation for most, maybe even an internal pep talk to prepare for being told to get more exercise or calm a simmering fear of needles.

But dressing well in hopes of warding off unfair treatment — or even bracing for being insulted?

A newly released poll by KFF, a health policy research group, found many patients of color — including 3 in 5 Black respondents — take such steps at least some of the time when seeing a doctor.

The poll found that 55% of Black respondents said they feel like they must be very careful about their appearance to be treated fairly at medical visits. That's similar to the rate for Hispanic and Alaska Native patients — and nearly double the rate for white patients.

Nearly 30% of Black respondents prepare to be insulted, also about double the rate for white patients.

"It's exhausting," survey respondent Christine Wright, 60, told The Associated Press.

Wright, who is Black, says she's faced years of discrimination — including once being called a racial slur by a nurse. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017 and recently found a doctor she trusts. But she still makes sure to dress well for any medical appointments, putting on jewelry, a nice coat and making sure her hair is done.

She braces herself for looks and comments from doctors and staff. "They don't control you," she tells herself. "They don't. Doesn't matter what they're saying about you. Because you're not that."

While more than 90% of those polled said they were not treated unfairly or with disrespect in a health care setting because of their race or ethnic background in the past three years, the anticipation of unequal treatment can influence patients' interactions with their doctors, experts say. That's a particular concern

because of the wide disparities in health outcomes along racial lines in the U.S.

"This survey shows the impact racism and discrimination continues to have on people's health care experiences," said KFF President Drew Altman.

Dr. Allison Bryant, an obstetrician at Massachusetts General Hospital who was not involved in the survey, said it provided important – though not necessarily surprising – results.

Bryant, who also serves as her hospital system's associate chief health equity officer, said she has heard similar stories from patients of color and seen it in the system's own patient satisfaction data. And as a Black woman, she lives the experience herself, often double-checking she has her ID or wedding ring visible to ward off assumptions from others.

"I think everybody experiences that to some extent," Bryant said. "But I understand why it's more exaggerated in individuals of color, who have a legacy of not being treated well."

The behavior indicates a deeper problem, Bryant said, one that can influence critical interactions between a doctor and patient.

If you anticipate someone may treat you badly you may be more tense, you may not speak properly, she said. "There are deep harms that are associated with this that go beyond what it might look like at the surface, which is like, 'I put on some high heels and I put on some lipstick.'"

Jeymie Luna Roldán, 45, also participated in the survey. She thinks her previous lack of health insurance or her imperfect English contributed to her bad experiences at the doctor. She spoke to the AP in Spanish.

"In my case, I'm Latina," said Roldán, of Lake Worth, Florida. "So when I have an appointment, I have to dress up a little – put on earrings, makeup – so that they don't see me in my work clothes. There's a saying that goes, 'Como te miro, te trato.'"

That translates to: "You're treated how you look."

Despite high percentages of people saying they prepare for insults or feel their appearance can influence how they are treated at the doctor, 93% said they have not felt they were treated unfairly or with disrespect in a health care setting because of their race or ethnic background in the past three years.

But there were still wide differences among racial groups. Asians and Hispanics were three times more likely to say they've been treated badly in a health care setting because of their race than white respondents and Black respondents were 6 times more likely.

Beyond the doctor's office, 58% of American Indians and Alaska Natives, 54% of Black respondents, 50% of Hispanics, and 42% of Asians said they experienced at least one type of discrimination in daily life at least a few times in the past year. That includes getting poorer service at stores and restaurants, being threatened, harassed, or treated like they are not smart, or being criticized for speaking a language other than English.

While this shows health care is just one of the settings where discrimination is persistent, Bryant said, being treated with disrespect at a car dealership or profiled at a department store poses a different type of risk. A dismissive cardiologist not ordering the right tests because a patient doesn't "look the part" is potentially more dangerous.

"The consequences in health care are really striking and very frightening, honestly, to understand what people need to do to be taken seriously, to be seen as a whole person," she said. "I think these data really speak to that."

## **NCAA President Charlie Baker calls for new tier of Division I where schools can pay athletes**

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — NCAA President Charlie Baker is asking members to make one of the most dramatic shifts in the history of college sports by allowing highly resourced schools to pay some of their athletes.

In a letter sent to more than 350 Division I schools Tuesday, Baker said he wants the association to create a new tier of NCAA Division I sports where schools would be required to offer at least half their

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athletes a payment of at least \$30,000 per year through a trust fund.

Baker also proposed allowing all Division I schools to offer unlimited educational benefits and enter into name, image and likeness licensing deals with athletes.

He said the disparity in resources between the wealthiest schools in the top tier of Division I called the Football Bowl Subdivision and other D-I members — along with the hundreds of Division II and III schools — is creating “a new series of challenges.”

“The challenges are competitive as well as financial and are complicated further by the intersection of name, image and likeness opportunities for student-athletes and the arrival of the Transfer Portal,” wrote Baker, the former Massachusetts governor who took over at the NCAA in March.

Baker is scheduled to speak Wednesday at the Sports Business Journal’s Intercollegiate Athletic Forum in Las Vegas.

Division I is currently divided for football into the FBS, which has 133 schools, and FCS (Football Championship Subdivision).

Baker’s proposal is aimed at creating a new subdivision, covering all sports, where the richest athletic departments in the so-called Power Five conferences — the Big Ten, Southeastern Conference, Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference and Pac-12 — can operate differently than the rest, while still competing with the rest of Division I.

Conference realignment starting in 2024 will move the Pac-12 out of that group.

The proposed shift would not require all members of a conference to be part of the new subdivision. Schools would be allowed to make that determination individually.

Baker noted athletic budgets in Division I range from \$5 million and \$250 million annually, with 59 schools spending over \$100 million annually and another 32 spending over \$50 million. He said 259 Division I schools, however, spend less than \$50 million on their athletic programs.

Baker said the difference in the way schools that participate in revenue-generating college sports such as major college football and basketball operate and the vast majority of college sports is complicating attempts to modernize the entire enterprise.

“The contextual environment is equally challenging, as the courts and other public entities continue to debate reform measures that in many cases would seriously damage parts or all of college athletics,” he wrote.

Mountain West Commissioner Gloria Nevarez said during the Sports Business Journal’s Intercollegiate Sports Forum that subdivision can be a trigger word in the NCAA, stoking worries some schools will be shut out of championship events or lose out on revenue. Nevarez didn’t read Baker’s proposal that way.

“When I read it ... it talked about space to make governance,” she said.

Baker and college sports leaders have been pleading with Congress to help the NCAA with a federal law to regulate the way athletes can be paid for NIL deals.

“I am 100% supportive of your efforts. Intercollegiate Athletics needs the proactive and forward thinking you are providing,” Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said in a post on social media platform X.

Smith oversees one of the largest athletic departments in the country with operating expenses of above \$225 million annually.

Former Southern California and NFL star Reggie Bush called schools paying athletes, “Long overdue.”

Bush, who was being inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame on Tuesday night in Las Vegas, was the focus of an NCAA impermissible benefits infractions case during his USC career that resulted in the vacation of a national title for the Trojans and Bush’s 2005 Heisman Trophy victory.

Baker’s letter is an aggressive first step toward a major shift for the NCAA. To turn his vision into detailed legislation will take member feedback, lots of work by the Division I Council and final approval from the Division I Board of Directors.

There is no timetable to bring the proposal to fruition.

The NCAA is also facing a new round of legal threats that could force its members to share some of the billions in revenue generated by major college football and basketball, along with giving athletes employees

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status. One antitrust case working its way through federal court could cost the NCAA billions in damages. Baker called on NCAA member schools to create a new framework to make what he called "fundamental changes."

"First, we should make it possible for all Division I colleges and universities to offer student-athletes any level of enhanced educational benefits they deem appropriate. Second, rules should change for any Division I school, at their choice, to enter into name, image and likeness licensing opportunities with their student-athletes," he wrote. "These two changes will enhance the financial opportunities available to all Division I student-athletes."

Currently, schools are allowed — though not required — to provide athletes \$5,980 per year in educational benefits under NCAA rules.

Baker said the changes would help level the playing field between men's and women's athletics by forcing schools to abide by gender equity regulations as they invest.

He said schools in a new tier of Division I should be allowed, while staying compliant with Title IX, to "invest at least \$30,000 per year into an enhanced educational trust fund for at least half of the institution's eligible student-athletes."

A new D-I subdivision should also allow members to create unique rules regarding "scholarship commitment and roster size, recruitment, transfers or NIL," he said.

Mid-American Conference Commissioner Jon Steinbrecher said Baker's proposal merely defines what already exists: The power conference schools have separated themselves financially, already provide greater benefits to athletes and have some autonomy in the NCAA legislative process.

"I think probably a lot of people are saying this is the precursor of the great breakaway (of power conferences from the NCAA)," Steinbrecher said. "I would suggest to you it's exactly the opposite. It's taking the pressure valve off."

## Top TV of 2023: AP's selections include 'Succession,' 'Jury Duty,' 'Shrinking,' 'Swarm'

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

With so many shows on TV and streaming services, it's impossible not to miss a gem or two. This year's top television offerings as selected by The Associated Press include a mix of dramas and comedies that will draw you in.

Some are new, some have already ended their runs and some have new episodes on the horizon. There's no time like December to add a title to your growing TBW (to be watched) list or settle in for a marathon during that time warp between Christmas and New Year's when no one knows what day it is.

Here are 10 shows from 2023 that simply shouldn't be missed.

"The Bear," FX on Hulu

Let's start off with a public service announcement to watch "The Bear" if you haven't already. The FX show about an award-winning, fine dining chef named Carmy (played by Jeremy Allen White), who returns home to Chicago to run his late brother's dive quietly debuted on Hulu in 2022 and was a word of mouth and critical hit. Season two did not experience a sophomore slump. In fact, it excelled. Any given episode can make you laugh, cry, feel anxious and excited by its genius casting of guest stars.

Episode six, called "Fishes," is a masterpiece.

"The Big Door Prize," Apple TV+

"Schitt's Creek" ended its run in 2020 and left a void for a show about acceptance and unlikely friendships. It was humanity at its best and yet still funny, quotable and meme-worthy. Fans missing that vibe should watch "The Big Door Prize," which follows the residents of a small town whose lives are turned upside down when a new game called Morpho appears in the general store that promises to tell each user what their life's potential is. Some of Morpho's answers prompt people to make major changes, while others feel dejected, insecure or second guess the results. Each episode follows a different character's reaction to their Morpho reveal. The show's charming cast is led by Chris O'Dowd with the story based

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on a novel by M.O. Walsh. And yes, it has a "Schitt's Creek" connection — its showrunner is David West Read, a "Schitt's Creek executive producer and writer.

Good news for fans: season two is coming.

"The Golden Bachelor," ABC and Hulu

After 27 seasons of "The Bachelor," the franchise managed to lure in viewers with a senior-centric version of the show called "The Golden Bachelor." Instead of hate-watching, people tuned in as a 70-something widower named Gerry Turner set out to find a new partner. The streaming numbers set a record on Hulu. Turner told The Associated Press he believed people could feel the authenticity of the cast. "I never once questioned anyone's motives about being on the show. At the age of 70, you're only there for the right reason."

Even better: Turner's wedding will air live on ABC Jan. 4.

"Swarm," Prime Video

Dominique Fishback was already a rising Hollywood star when she landed the lead in "Swarm," but now she's an Emmy nominee for this seven-episode satirical slasher. Co-created by Donald Glover, Fishback plays Dre, an obsessed fan of a Beyoncé-like R&B singer named Ni'Jah whose fan base is dubbed the swarm. Dre's devotion to Ni'Jah is unhinged and deadly. A commentary on celebrity worship, "Swarm" features Chloe Bailey in a recurring role and Damson Idris, Paris Jackson, Halsey and Billy Eilish are among guest stars.

"The Other Two," Max

For a lighter offering that takes on celebrity, particularly the internet famous, there's the "The Other Two." Created by two former "Saturday Night Live" writers, the show followed Cary and Brooke, the older brother and sister of a teen pop idol, Chase — who goes by Chase Dreams. Canceled by Max after three seasons, the show is still worth a watch for how it pokes fun at internet culture, millennials, celebrities and sibling rivalry.

Drew Tarver and Heléne Yorke play the older siblings, Molly Shannon is their mother and momager to a clueless Chase, played by Case Walker.

"Beef," Netflix

For a dark comedy about an unhealthy fixation, look no further than the limited series "Beef."

Ali Wong and Steven Yeun play two people almost get into a car accident in a parking lot and the incident escalates to road rage on 'roids. Instead of eventually calming down and moving on, the two become obsessed with ruining the other by infiltrating each other's lives and wreaking havoc. At some point you may start to wonder, do these two actually like each other?

Wong told AP earlier this year: "At first you think it's about these two people who are enemies, but they keep involving each other in each other's lives and they keep coming back to each other. And there's a reason for that. It's because they are letting those walls down. They're seeing each other at their ugliest and the worst but somehow it's very connecting and they still want to be around each other."

"Jury Duty," Amazon Freevee

In "Jury Duty," everyman Ronald Gladden is led to believe he was picked for and then sequestered on a jury trial being filmed for a documentary. Everyone surrounding Gladden is an actor, including James Marsden, who plays a hilarious, heightened version of himself. The situations that occur from "witness" testimony to interactions among the other jury members is so absurd, it's amazing Gladden never caught on. The best part is his reaction to the truth in the final episode.

The series was created by Lee Eisenberg and Gene Stupnitsky, the duo who wrote the "Dinner Party" episode of "The Office," which was uncomfortable humor at its finest.

"Perry Mason," HBO

Something happened between season one and season two of HBO's "Perry Mason" starring Mathew Rhys. It got good.

The first season had an impressive cast but it was an origin story of Mason the attorney, and the guy was dark: broke, divorced, angry and a drunk. The story was also hard to follow. Season two, however, did a 180. The central mystery was gripping, its supporting characters served the story, there were some

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light moments, and Mason showed his investigative skills that helped him to be a successful lawyer. And then... it was also canceled, but you can still watch on Max.

"Shrinking," Apple TV+

Therapy and grief don't sound like a recipe for a feel-good comedy, but "Shrinking" pulls it off. Jason Segel stars as Jimmy, barely coping with the recent death of his wife and making bad choices all around, as his teenage daughter resentfully watches from the sidelines and is essentially being raised by a neighbor (Christa Miller.) The irony? Jimmy is a therapist whose colleagues are played by Harrison Ford and Jessica Williams — each with their own set of issues playing out in their lives.

Segel created the series with Bill Lawrence ("Scrubs," "Cougar Town") and Emmy winner Brett Goldstein, who played Roy Kent on "Ted Lasso." Their creation is a show where each character is delightful, and the writing is smart and quick and honest.

"Succession," HBO and Max

Yes, most people know of "Succession." The drama aired its series finale on HBO in the spring after four seasons but for those who haven't watched it, now is the time to discover what the hype is about. The show about the Roy family — one-percenters who own a large media conglomerate — was nominated for 27 Emmy Awards and 14 of those are in acting categories. At its center is patriarch Logan Roy (Brian Cox), who has four adult children and three want to be his successor.

The battle over who is the rightful heir to his business empire came to a head in the stellar final season, and it was a rollercoaster.

## Vice President Harris breaks nearly 200-year-old record for Senate tiebreaker votes, casts her 32nd

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris broke a nearly 200-year-old record for casting the most tiebreaking votes in the Senate when she voted Tuesday to advance the confirmation of a new federal judge in Washington, D.C.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, called Harris' 32nd tiebreaking vote a "great milestone."

Harris returned to Capitol Hill later in the day to cast her 33rd vote as well, securing the judge's confirmation.

The previous recordholder was John C. Calhoun, who cast 31 tiebreaking votes during his eight years as vice president, from 1825 to 1832. Harris, a Democrat, tied Calhoun's record in July.

Schumer presented Harris with a golden gavel after Tuesday's vote. Harris, who beamed as she made history from the Senate dais, said afterward she was "truly honored."

Casting tiebreaker votes is among the only constitutional duties for vice presidents, and Harris has been repeatedly called on to break deadlocks because the Senate is closely divided between Democrats and Republicans.

The pace of Harris' votes dropped off this year, when Democrats expanded their slim majority in the Senate by a single seat. But she still managed to surpass Calhoun's record in less than half the time that he took to set it.

Harris has helped advance the American Rescue Plan, which was a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief measure, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which limited the costs of prescription drugs and created financial incentives for clean energy.

Most of Harris' votes have involved President Joe Biden's judicial nominees. On Tuesday, she boosted Loren AliKhan's nomination to be a U.S. District Court judge. AliKhan was confirmed hours later.

Schumer credited Harris with helping to confirm more women and people of color to the bench to help make the judiciary "look more like America."

## Supreme Court signals it will uphold a tax on foreign income and leave a wealth tax for another day

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday seemed inclined to uphold a tax on foreign income while leaving questions about a broader, never-enacted tax on wealth for another day.

On the first issue, conservative and liberal justices voiced concerns that ruling for a Washington state couple challenging a provision of the 2017 tax bill would threaten other provisions of the tax code.

After two hours of arguments, there seemed to be a consensus on the court that “there is room for some narrow ground” to decide the case, as Justice Neil Gorsuch said. Such an outcome would avoid what Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar said would be “several trillion dollars in lost revenues.”

At the same time, the court would not address the bigger question of Congress’ ability to enact taxes based on wealth, instead of income.

The case argued Tuesday was brought by Charles and Kathleen Moore of Redmond, Washington. They challenged a \$15,000 tax bill based on Charles Moore’s investment in an Indian company.

Backed by anti-regulatory and business interests, they contend that the tax violates the 16th Amendment, which allows the federal government to impose an income tax on Americans. Moore said in a sworn statement that he never received any money from the company, KisanKraft Machine Tools Private Limited.

The 2017 tax law that was passed by a Republican Congress and signed by then-President Donald Trump includes a provision that applies to companies that are owned by Americans, but do their business in foreign countries. It imposes a one-time tax on investors’ shares of profits that have not been passed along to them, in order to offset other tax benefits.

The provision is expected to generate \$340 billion, mainly from the foreign subsidiaries of domestic corporations that parked money abroad to shield it from U.S. taxes.

The case attracted outside attention because some groups allied with the Moores argue that the challenged provision is similar to a wealth tax, which would apply not to the incomes of the very richest Americans but to their assets, like stock holdings, that now only get taxed when they are sold.

Paul Ryan, the Wisconsin Republican who was speaker of the House when the tax bill was passed by a Republican Congress and signed into law by then-President Donald Trump, has called the challenge misguided and has said “a lot of the tax code would be unconstitutional if that thing prevailed.”

Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon said a court ruling for the Moores could stymie legislation like the Billionaires Income Tax he introduced last week. “The Moore case could make it impossible to close those loopholes,” Wyden said.

Some conservative justices seemed to have a wealth tax in mind when they asked Prelogar, the Biden administration’s top Supreme Court lawyer, about the “far-reaching consequences,” in Justice Samuel Alito’s words, of her arguments.

But Justice Brett Kavanaugh chimed in to say “we don’t have to agree with you on that for you to prevail.” Even Alito at one point acknowledged he “was quite concerned by the potential implications” of the Moores’ arguments.

The case also has kicked up ethical concerns and raised questions about the story the Moores’ lawyers told in court filings. Public documents show that Charles Moore’s involvement with the company, including serving as a director for five years, is far more extensive than court filings indicate.

Alito rejected calls from Senate Democrats to step away from the case because of his ties to David Rivkin, a lawyer who is representing the Moores.

## Senior EU official warns of huge security risk in Europe over Christmas as Israel-Hamas war rages

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Europe faces a “huge risk of terrorist attacks” over the Christmas holiday period due to the fallout from the war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, the European Union’s home affairs commissioner warned Tuesday.

The warning came as French investigators probe a fatal weekend attack near the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Questions were raised about the mental health of the suspect, who swore allegiance to the extremist Islamic State group before stabbing a tourist to death and injuring two other people with a hammer.

“With the war between Israel and Hamas, and the polarization it causes in our society, with the upcoming holiday season, there is a huge risk of terrorist attacks in the European Union,” EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson told reporters.

“We saw (it happening) recently in Paris, unfortunately we have seen it earlier as well,” she said, as EU interior ministers gathered in Brussels. She provided no details about any police or security information that might have led to her warning.

The fallout from Hamas’ attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, which killed about 1,200 people, and the ongoing Israeli military response that health officials in Gaza say has killed at least 15,890 Palestinians, has spread to Europe.

In several European capitals in recent weeks, tens of thousands of people have staged pro-Palestinian rallies and also marched in support of Israel and against rising antisemitism.

Pressed repeatedly by reporters after the meeting, Johansson said that she drew the threat conclusion herself based on the high security levels in some of the 27 EU member countries and an increase in reports of antisemitic incidents, as well as more hate speech and extremist content online.

“Taking all this together, I do the assessment that yes, the threat is significant,” she said. She declined to offer any security advice to shoppers over the festive season or people going to Christmas markets, saying that this was the responsibility of national governments.

Johansson, whose brief includes security and immigration, said the European Commission will provide an additional 30 million euros (\$32.5 million) to bolster security in vulnerable areas, notably places of worship.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser sent her condolences to France over the weekend attack and said it highlights “just how acute and how serious the threat posed by Islamist terrorism is currently in the EU.”

“The war in Gaza and Hamas’ terror are exacerbating this situation,” she told reporters.

Faeser said she had spoken with her counterparts from Austria, Belgium, France, Spain and Sweden about the risks.

“Our security agencies are working very closely together. We must keep a particularly close eye on the Islamist threats right now and take action against Islamist propaganda together with neighboring countries,” she said.

A 15-year-old boy and an alleged accomplice were accused last week of plotting to blow up a small truck at a Christmas market in the west of Germany in an attack modeled on the methods of the Islamic State group, prosecutors said.

## In ‘Wonka,’ Timothée Chalamet finds a world of pure imagination

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Hugh Grant learned some years ago that if a filmmaker doesn’t make something from the heart, it shows. The films that work best, and are most loved, he’s found, are the ones that the directors really meant.

It applied to his romantic comedies with Richard Curtis as well as “Paddington 2.” And he’s pretty sure it’s true of “Wonka.” The lavish big screen musical about a young Willy Wonka — before Charlie, before the chocolate factory — is dancing into theaters this month with its heart on its velvet sleeve.

Like the “Paddington” movies, “Wonka” was dreamt up by Paul King, a lifetime Roald Dahl fan and a

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writer and director whom his collaborators somewhat universally agree may actually be Paddington in a human costume. With a beloved troupe of actors, including Grant, Timothée Chalamet, Olivia Colman, Sally Hawkins as well as newcomer Calah Lane, its vibrant costumes and sets and a contagious "let's put on a show" energy, "Wonka" feels like a modern homage to classic MGM productions of the 1940s.

But King wasn't so sure about "Wonka" at first. He worried that like so many other "brands," a young Willy Wonka movie was something devised in a boardroom with visions of "12,000 movies and a TV show."

Then he went back to the book, which he'd read so many times as a child that the pages fell out of the spine. This time he found not just a great character in Willy Wonka, an unapologetically flamboyant dreamer whom Dahl also seemed a bit obsessed with, but also a breakthrough about his work.

"I realized how informative Dahl had been to everything that I love about family movies. They've got these great heightened characters, but there's a real beating heart to them," King said. "It was like, oh this is the mothership."

And, with his "Paddington 2" co-writer Simon Farnaby (of "stop that stunning sister" fame), he would spend years toiling over what they're calling a companion piece to the Gene Wilder "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."

Chalamet, the wildly popular Oscar-nominated actor of "Call Me By Your Name" and "Dune," wasn't technically a song and dance man (though his digital footprint from his teen years contains some evidence to the contrary) when he signed on to play Wonka. But King was convinced that he was the perfect person to balance "sincere" and "ridiculous" thanks in part to his memorable (and "hella-tight") performance in Greta Gerwig's "Lady Bird."

This was a little baffling to Chalamet, who only learned this at the premiere in London. But for him, "Wonka" was a chance to do something a bit different, on a grand scale. He also understands audiences being a little skeptical of any spin-off of a beloved character, but he takes comfort in something Gerwig said while they were making "Little Women."

He recalled her telling him "something like, 'For anybody that's saying that a lot of versions of this have been made, you know, when it's done well, no one complains,'" he said. "I think Paul really did that here."

In addition to "Pure Imagination" and the Oompa Loompa song from the 1971 film, Neil Hannon, front-man of The Divine Comedy, wrote six original songs, while Christopher Gatelli ("Hail, Caesar!") oversaw the choreography.

Though Chalamet grew up surrounded by dancers (his sister, mother and grandmother included), and had done musicals at his performing arts high school, he didn't fully appreciate the exhaustive rigor of it. He'd trained for "Wonka" for months, but he was still not fully prepared for how taxing "take 13" of a large-scale dance number would be.

"He's very modest and I think that's one of the nice things about him," said King, who has compared Chalamet's singing voice to Bing Crosby.

The sets, overseen by production designer Nathan Crowley ("Interstellar") were also something grand to behold. King wanted the city to look like "the best of Europe." In total, they built more than 50 set across three soundstages, a backlot and an aircraft hanger around Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, in addition to several on-site locations in the U.K. to give the film its whimsical, but grounded feel. Lindy Hemming ("Paddington") designed the vibrant costumes.

Perhaps the most inspired twist of "Wonka" is Grant, an actor made world famous for his good looks and charm and romantic leads, who is playing an Oompa-Loompa.

King had already introduced Grant to a new generation of youngsters having him as the washed-up actor Phoenix Buchanan in "Paddington 2." When he was re-rereading "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" he found "Hugh's voice" coming into his head for the devious little workers.

"They're so biting and satirical and funny, but they've got a real kind of edge to them ... and they take an enormous delight in these children's demise," King said. "I had this vision of Hugh Grant, you know, this high with orange skin and green hair. And once you have that picture come into your mind, you have to try and get it out there."

Grant is also a self-proclaimed miserable curmudgeon, which he'll say with a straight face right before

saying something completely contradictory. In his interviews, which often go viral, he's witty and wry and reliably unreliable.

Yet when he talks about King, and "Wonka," and it all being from the heart, something melts away.

"One of the things that made those romantic comedies that I made with Richard Curtis work, apart from the fact that he's very good at writing comedy was that he meant it. He really cared about love and he was always falling in love, falling out of love and being traumatized by it. But he meant it," Grant said. "Paul King means all this. The message of Paddington and the message of this one, you know, family matters, the people you share your chocolate with. It's not a trite, tacked on motto. It comes from his heart."

And it's easy to believe that Grant, miserable though he may be, actually means it too.

## **In a rare action against Israel, US says extremist West Bank settlers will be barred from America**

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a rare punitive move against Israel, the State Department said Tuesday it will impose travel bans on extremist Jewish settlers implicated in a rash of recent attacks on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the step after warning Israel last week that President Joe Biden's administration would be taking action over the attacks. Blinken did not announce individual visa bans, but department spokesman Matthew Miller said the bans would be implemented starting Tuesday and would cover "dozens" of settlers and their families, with more to come if the settler violence continued. He wouldn't give a number and refused to identify any of those targeted due to confidentiality reasons.

The decision comes at a sensitive moment in U.S.-Israeli relations. The Biden administration has firmly backed Israel since it was attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7, even as international criticism of Israel has mounted.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington declined to comment on the development.

In recent weeks, the administration has stepped up calls on Israel to do more to limit civilian casualties as the Israelis expand their offensive and target densely populated southern Gaza. The U.S. has refrained from outright criticism of that offensive. It has been increasingly outspoken, however, about settler violence in the West Bank and Israel's failure to respond to U.S. calls to stop it.

"We have underscored to the Israeli government the need to do more to hold accountable extremist settlers who have committed violent attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank," Blinken said in a statement. "As President Biden has repeatedly said, those attacks are unacceptable."

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Monday that since Oct. 7 at least eight Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by settlers. The U.N. agency said it has recorded 314 attacks by settlers that have resulted in Palestinian casualties, damage to Palestinian-owned property or both. One-third of the attacks included threats with firearms, including shootings, and in nearly half of the attacks the settlers were accompanied or actively supported by Israeli forces.

"Today, the State Department is implementing a new visa restriction policy targeting individuals believed to have been involved in undermining peace, security or stability in the West Bank, including through committing acts of violence or taking other actions that unduly restrict civilians' access to essential services and basic necessities," Blinken said.

He said the U.S. would continue to seek accountability for settler violence against Palestinians as well as Palestinian attacks against Israelis in the West Bank and Israel, particularly as tensions are extremely high due to the conflict in Gaza.

"Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have the responsibility to uphold stability in the West Bank," Blinken said. "Instability in the West Bank both harms the Israeli and Palestinian people and threatens Israel's national security interests."

Tuesday's move comes just a month after Israel was granted entry into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, which allows its citizens visa-free entry into the U.S. Those targeted by the action will not be eligible for the program, and those who hold current U.S. visas will have them revoked.

## Texas high school sends Black student back to in-school suspension over his locs hairstyle

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY Associated Press

A Texas high school sent a Black student back to in-school suspension Tuesday for refusing to change his hairstyle, renewing a monthslong standoff over a dress code policy the teen's family calls discriminatory.

The student, Darryl George, was suspended for 13 days because his hair is out of compliance when let down, according to a disciplinary notice issued by Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas. It was his first day back at the school after spending a month at an off-site disciplinary program.

George, 18, already has spent more than 80% of his junior year outside of his regular classroom.

He was first pulled from the classroom at the Houston-area school in August after school officials said his braided locs fell below his eyebrows and ear lobes and violated the district's dress code. His family argues the punishment violates the CROWN Act, which became law in Texas in September and is intended to prohibit race-based hair discrimination. The school says the CROWN Act does not address hair length.

"We are just trying to take it day by day. That's all we can do," his mother, Darresha George, told The Associated Press. "We do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. But we are not giving up."

The dress code policy at Barbers Hill Independent School District attracted headlines in 2020 when a Black student was forbidden to return to school or attend his graduation ceremony unless he cut his locs. Greg Poole, who has been district superintendent since 2006, has said the policy is legal and teaches students to conform as a sacrifice benefitting everyone.

School officials said George was sent to the disciplinary program for violating the dress code and the tardy policy, disrupting the in-school suspension classroom and not complying with school directives. As he completed his punishment there, district spokesperson David Bloom said George was told he would go back to in-person suspension unless he trimmed his hair.

George's family has filed a formal complaint with the Texas Education Agency and a federal civil rights lawsuit against the state's governor and attorney general along with the school district, alleging they failed to enforce the new law outlawing discrimination based on hairstyles.

The school district has filed a lawsuit in state district court asking a judge to clarify whether its dress code restrictions limiting student hair length for boys violate the CROWN Act.

State Rep. Ron Reynolds, a Democrat and chair of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus, said he planned to file an amendment to the law during the next session that "specifically addresses length to stop their pretextual argument to not comply with the Crown Act."

"They are acting in bad faith to continue discriminating against African American students," Reynolds said in an email.

George said he feels like is being singled out because there are other boys in the school with longer hairstyles than his. He was denied an exemption that the family requested because of the hairstyle's cultural and religious importance.

"It's frustrating because I'm getting punished for something everyone else is doing, growing hair, having hair," George said.

## Today in History: December 6

### 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is ratified

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 6, the 340th day of 2023. There are 25 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified as Georgia became the 27th state to endorse it.

On this date:

In 1790, Congress moved to Philadelphia from New York.

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In 1907, the worst mining disaster in U.S. history occurred as 362 men and boys died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia.

In 1917, some 2,000 people were killed when an explosives-laden French cargo ship, the Mont Blanc, collided with the Norwegian vessel Imo at the harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, setting off a blast that devastated the Canadian city.

In 1922, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State, came into force one year to the day after it was signed in London.

In 1923, a presidential address was broadcast on radio for the first time as Calvin Coolidge spoke to a joint session of Congress.

In 1947, Everglades National Park in Florida was dedicated by President Harry S. Truman.

In 1957, America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit failed as Vanguard TV3 rose about four feet off a Cape Canaveral launch pad before crashing down and exploding.

In 1962, 37 coal miners were killed in an explosion at the Robena No. 3 Mine operated by U.S. Steel in Carmichaels, Pennsylvania.

In 1969, a free concert by The Rolling Stones at the Altamont Speedway in Alameda County, California, was marred by the deaths of four people, including one who was stabbed by a Hell's Angel.

In 1973, House minority leader Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as vice president, succeeding Spiro T. Agnew.

In 1989, 14 women were shot to death at the University of Montreal's school of engineering by a man who then took his own life.

In 1998, in Venezuela, former Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez (OO'-goh CHAH'-vez), who had staged a bloody coup attempt against the government six years earlier, was elected president.

In 2017, President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem to be Israel's capital, defying warnings from the Palestinians and others around the world that he would be destroying hopes for Mideast peace.

In 2018, Kevin Hart announced that he had stepped down as Oscars host following an outcry over anti-gay tweets and comments he had made in the past.

In 2021, the Justice Department said it was ending its investigation into the 1955 lynching of the Black teenager Emmett Till, who was killed after witnesses said he whistled at a white woman in Mississippi.

In 2022, Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock defeated Republican challenger Herschel Walker in a Georgia runoff election that ensured Democrats an outright majority in the Senate for the rest of President Joe Biden's term.

Today's Birthdays: Comedy performer David Ossman is 87. Actor Patrick Bauchau is 85. Country singer Helen Cornelius is 82. Actor James Naughton is 78. Former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is 78. R&B singer Frankie Beverly (Maze) is 77. Former Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., is 75. Actor JoBeth Williams is 75. Actor Tom Hulce is 70. Actor Wil Shriner is 70. Actor Kin Shriner is 70. Actor Miles Chapin is 69. Rock musician Rick Buckler (The Jam) is 68. Comedian Steven Wright is 68. Singer Tish Hinojosa is 68. Rock musician Peter Dinklage (R.E.M.) is 67. Rock musician David Lovering (Pixies) is 62. Actor Janine Turner is 61. Rock musician Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl) is 61. Writer-director Judd Apatow is 56. Rock musician Ulf "Buddha" Ekberg (Ace of Base) is 53. Writer-director Craig Brewer is 52. Actor Colleen Haskell is 47. Actor Lindsay Price is 47. Actor Ashley Madekwe is 42. Actor Nora Kirkpatrick is 39. Tennis player CoCo Vandeweghe is 32. NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo (YAH'-nihs an-teh-toh-KOON'-poh) is 29.