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Sunday, Dec. 10

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

St. John's Lutheran: worship at St. John's 9 a.m., worship at Zion 11 a.m., Sunday school 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion; Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school Christmas program practice, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; PEO meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.

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

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

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



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

Monday, Dec. 11

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes with gravy, 7-layer salad, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

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

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

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Boys JV Wrestling Jamboree at Madison, 5 p.m.

Boys Junior High Wrestling at Webster, 4:30 p.m.

Junior High Girls Basketball at Sisseton, 8th at 4 p.m., 7th at 5 p.m.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

December 11, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of November 13, 2023 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of November 2023 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of November 2023 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of November 2023 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of November 2023 School Transportation Report.
6. Approve Open Enrollments 24-24, 24-25, and 24-26.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued Discussion Regarding Potential School District FY2025 Opt-Out.
3. Routine Review of District COVID-19 Return to Learn Plan
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Consider change of date for January 8, 2024 school board meeting.
2. 2024-2025 School Calendar
3. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(2) student issue and SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel.
4. Approve hiring Eli Lich, student custodian, at \$11.75/hour.

ADJOURN

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

December 12, 2023, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Open Bids for Expo Roof
5. Dave Lunzman, Sheriff & Jon Lemke, Chief Deputy Sheriff
 - a. Open Bids for Body Camera and In Car Camera Systems
6. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for Northern Electric
 - b. Department Update
7. Authorize signing of the Employee Union Contract
8. Approve & authorize signing the Joint Cooperative Agreement with NECOG for 2024
9. Discuss PPE Pilot program with Human Resources & Emergency Management
10. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2023
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Landfill Tonnage Report for November
 - e. Claim Assignment
 - f. Uncollectible Taxes for 2021 & 2022
11. Other Business
12. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
13. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

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Local volunteers have worked to put up lights and decorations at the Columbia City Park. The community held its second annual community Christmas party. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



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The Pollan family won the Columbia lighting contest. The winners were announced Saturday night at the Columbia Christmas Party. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



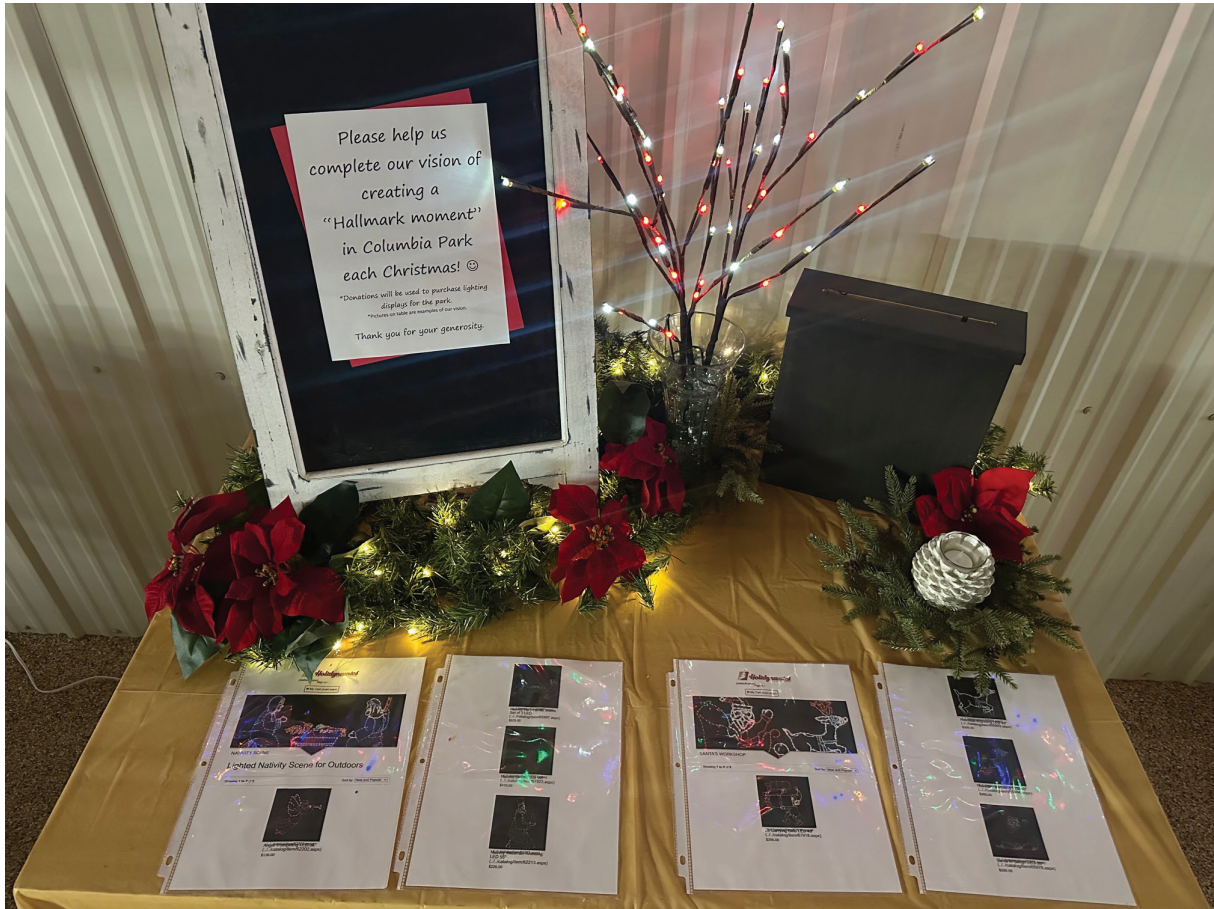
The Improving Community Appearance committee held a lighting contest again this year. Erica Raba (left), representing the committee, presents a trophy to Mrs. Pollan for the winning contest. Other prizes were also awarded. The second place winner was Emily and Colin Eichler and third place went to Cole and Jordan Kampa. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



One of the trees decorated in the Columbia City Park. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Columbia residents are looking to the future for more decorations in the City Park, This was one of the displays at the Christmas Party held Saturday.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



A good crowd was on hand for the second annual Christmas celebration held Saturday night at the Columbia Legion. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Rides were given the children during the Columbia celebration. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



This was the second Columbia community Christmas party. Last year they had the first party, but it was a four-hour event. It was decided to reduce it down to two hours this year, right over supper hour. "When it came to kids, four hours was too long," said Cheryl Kampa.

The community will be alternating the Halloween Party and Christmas Party. "Having the two parties are too close together. Halloween at the end of October and Christmas at the beginning of December," Kampa said. She said that next year they will have a Halloween party only with the following year the Christmas party.

With last year being the first Christmas party, they hired a lot. "It was the first event and we wanted it big," Kampa said. This year they bought a Santa suit for someone local and Mr. and Mrs. Claus made an appearance at the event.

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Hudson Eichler ran the Santa Duck Race.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Anna Bisbee, Miss Wolf Pack's Teen, helped with the kids games at the Columbia Christmas Party. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



The craft table was a popular spot as Emily Eichler kept everyone busy. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Lots of Christmas goodies were on hand for the event. Cheryl Kampa (left) was keeping things filled up and was visiting with Lorie Gilchrist (right). (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Marty Weismantel was being his food from the servers, Julie Milbrandt Lillis and Doris Dennert with others helping out as well. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The Kosel house was overwhelmed with Angel Tree gifts. Tina will not be going through them all, organizing them by households and then they will be delivered. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The movie, "Elf" was shown Saturday at the Wage Memorial Library. The event was well received with pizza being served to the movie goers. (Photo courtesy of Wage Memorial Facebook Page)

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A 100th Birthday Party was held Saturday at St. John's Lutheran Church for Elda Stange. In the top left photo, Mayor Scott Hanlon presented a proclamation on behalf of the City of Groton. In the top right, Jim Rose is reading a proclamation from Governor Kristi Noem. In the bottom right, the Mayor holds the governor's proclamation in front of the banner for Elda Stange. (Photos by April Abeln)



Winter Gear Distribution

Groton Dacotah Bank employees and Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. volunteers worked together Friday afternoon organizing Winter gear for the Winter Gear Distribution day that was held Saturday at the Groton Community Center.

Stop by Saturday and check out the selection of Winter gear on hand and see if there's anything you may



Scarfs

Pat Miller, Karyn Babcock, Elizabeth Barajas, April Abeln, Nancy Larsen, Diane Warrington.

(Photo courtesy April Abeln)



Karla Davidson, Jeanna Cutler, Heidi Locke. (Photo

courtesy April Abeln)

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Emma Schinkel assisted with Santa Day in Groton on Saturday. She was keeping the toy bucket filled and refilling the cookie trays. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Ethan Meyer gives Santa a hug during Santa Day in Groton on Saturday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Sage is giving Santa the look during Santa Day at Professional Management Services on Saturday. Photos were taken by Groton Photography.

Names Released in Davison County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: 397th Ave and Interstate 90, 2 miles south of Mt. Vernon, SD

When: 10:53 a.m., Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Driver 1: Steven Leroy Groseth, 63, Corsica, SD, No injuries

Vehicle 1: 2014 Caterpillar Highway Maintainer

Driver 2: Calvin John Boluyt, 24, Corsica, SD, Fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2011 Chrysler 200

Davison County, S.D.- A 24-year-old man died Wednesday morning in a two vehicle crash in Davison County.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2014 Caterpillar highway maintainer driven by Steven Leroy Groseth, 63, of Corsica, SD, was driving northbound on 397th Avenue. A 2011 Chrysler 200 was traveling southbound on 397th Ave at the I-90 overpass.

The Caterpillar was drifting into the ditch but overcorrected crossing the center line into the path of Chrysler 200. The vehicles collided in the southbound lane of the roadway. The driver of the Chrysler, Calvin John Boluyt, of Corsica, SD, was pronounced deceased at the scene. He was not wearing a seat belt. The driver of the Caterpillar was not injured.

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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NSU Men's Basketball

Efficiency the Key in Northern State's Win over Bemidji State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team secured a home sweep from Wachs Arena on Saturday afternoon downing Bemidji State. The Wolves shot 50.9% from the floor and 56.0% from the 3-point line in the win, draining 14 from beyond the arc.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 84, BSU 68

Records: NSU 5-5 (3-1 NSIC), BSU 6-4 (2-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 2471

HOW IT HAPPENED

After a few traded buckets to kick off the first, Northern led the contest from the 12:24 mark and did not look back

The Wolves scored 41 points in the first, holding a 14-point lead at the half, and 43 in the second

NSU recorded a game high 16 assists, 14 made 3-pointers, nine steals, and four blocks

Defensively they forced 21 Beaver turnovers, resulting in 21 points for the Wolves

Northern added 2- points in the paint, eight points off the bench, and five points off six offensive boards

It was another night of career highs for NSU as Josh Dilling dropped 33 points and matched his season high of eight assists

Dilling went 5-of-5 from beyond the arc, 4-of-4 from the foul line, and 12-of-17 from the field

Augustin Reede tallied a season high 19 points, shooting 50.0% from the 3-point line, 100.0% from the foul line, and 55.6% from field goal range

Jackson Moni and Trey Longstreet rounded out the double figure scorers for the Wolves with 13 and 11 points respectively, while Moni grabbed his second straight double-double with ten rebounds

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Josh Dilling: 33 points, 70.6 field goal%, 8 assists, 5 rebounds, 2 steals

Augustin Reede: 19 points, 2 rebounds, 1 steal

Jackson Moni: 13 points, 10 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 blocks

Trey Longstreet: 11 points, 80.0 field goal%, 2 assists, 2 steals

UP NEXT

Northern State will close out the first half of 2023-24 next Thursday and Saturday at Minot State and Minnesota Crookston. Start times are set for 5:30 p.m. on December 14 against the Beavers and 1 p.m. on December 16 versus the Golden Eagles.

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NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Sweep the Weekend Defeating the Beavers

Aberdeen, S.D. – A team effort led the Northern State women's basketball team to take down Bemidji State Saturday night, 81-61. The Wolves notched a season-high of 30 points off the bench and 54 points in the paint.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 81, BSU 61

Records: NSU 8-2 (4-0 NSIC), BSU 2-5 (0-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 2283

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State notched 26 points in the first quarter, 21 in the second, 15 in the third, and 19 in the fourth; notching the largest scoring margin this season with 20 points

The Wolves shot well in the contest with a 50.8 field goal percentage, 21.4 percentage from the 3-point arc, and 77.8 percentage from the foul line

Northern State notched two season-highs with 30 points off the bench and 54 points in the paint along with grabbing 34 rebounds, 18 assists, and 14 steals in the win

Brylie Schultz led the Wolves bench with 11 points and made 83.3% of shots from the floor

The Wolves handled the ball well only turning over the ball ten times and scored 26 points off turnovers

Madelyn Bragg led the NSU offense with 20 points, seven rebounds, three blocks, and two steals along with shooting 50.0 percent from the floor

Rianna Fillipi was second on the team with 19 points, nine assists, and six steals

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 20 points, 7 rebounds, 3 blocks

Rianna Fillipi: 19 points, 58.3 field goal %, 9 assists, 6 steals

Brylie Schultz: 11 points, 4 rebounds, 83.3 field goal %

Deontee Smith: 10 points, 4 rebounds, 3 steals

UP NEXT

Northern State is back in action to face off against Minot State and Minnesota Crookston to end the first half of the season. Tip-off times are set for 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 14 from Minot, N.D. against the Beavers and 3 p.m. on Saturday, December 16 from Crookston, Minn. against the Golden Eagles.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'Let it speak for us': Legislator plans to pursue South Dakota flag redesign

High school student inspires closer look through lens of 'vexillology'

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 10, 2023 7:00 AM

South Dakota needs a new flag, says Brandon Valley High School student Ryan Schultz.

Schultz, who is passionate about flag design and vexillology (the study of flags), is leading the charge, pushing for legislation that would establish a redesign committee.

"I think having a good flag can unify us as a people," Schultz said. In his hometown of Brandon and around the Sioux Falls area it's rare to see the South Dakota flag flown aside from governmental buildings.

U.S. flags and Sioux Falls flags are the most popular in the area. Even University of Nebraska flags are flown more commonly than the South Dakota flag.

That's proof, he said: If South Dakotans don't care enough to fly their state flag in their front yard, wear it on merchandise or learn its history and symbolism, then a revamp is needed.

Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, was inspired by Schultz's suggestion and is considering introducing legislation in January. The bill is still being drafted, but would likely create a commission made up of legislators, governor-appointed members, tribal leaders and South Dakotans with expertise in history, art and tourism to help pick the new flag.

"Our state flag serves as an important symbol of the state," Nesiba said in an emailed statement. "A new design has the potential to raise awareness and in the process boost tourism, and to attract college and university students, entrepreneurs and workers."

Ultimately, the new state flag would be approved or rejected by the state Legislature and South Dakota governor, Nesiba said.

South Dakota flag's 114-year history

State Historical Society Executive Director Ben Jones flies the state flag outside his Sioux Falls home. He sees more state flags in Pierre than the rest of the state.

"I don't see it as much, certainly compared to Texas," Jones said. "If it doesn't mean much to people today, my own view is it should. It has a history that's interesting."

The state flag has been changed twice in its 114-year history.

South Dakota did not have a state flag for its first 20 years as a state. It wasn't until Seth Bullock, the first sheriff of Deadwood and a U.S. marshal at the time, introduced the idea to his state senator in the early 1900s. Bullock was inspired by a Spanish-American War veterans' group to create one, Jones said.



The state flag of South Dakota flies over the South Dakota Mines campus on Dec. 8, 2023, in Rapid City. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Ryan Schultz is a senior at Brandon Valley High School. (Courtesy of Ryan Schultz)

The senator, Earnest May of Deadwood, introduced a bill to establish a flag designed by Ida Anding of the State Historical Society. The flag featured a sun on an azure background with "South Dakota" and "The Sunshine State" in an arc above and below the sun.

On the back was printed the state seal featuring hills, the Missouri River, a farmer, a mine and cattle to represent the state's agriculture, diverse industry and natural resources. The state seal also includes the state motto, "Under God the people rule," which Jones said has seen some controversy.

"Sometimes the meaning of those things, some people take that in ways it's not intended," Jones said. "If it was understood in the manner of Thomas Jefferson and then the state founders meant it, as a secular reminder of where our rights come from, even the deist Jefferson thought they were created by 'the creator.' I think that's important politically because if the government didn't give you your rights, the creator did, then the government can't take them away. I think that's a key part that's in our flag that isn't in other state flags."

The intricate seal was placed in the center of the azure background, all with a fringe of gold trimmed around the edge of the flag. The use of the state seal on the flag followed a Civil War-era trend among other state flags at the time.

This was the official state flag until 1963, when the two sides of the flag were combined. It was expensive to manufacture flags with different emblems on each side, and there were few South Dakota state flags in existence. The Legislature created a "Special State Flag Account" in 1966 through the South Dakota treasurer to sell flags "at cost" to the public and directed the state to keep a supply of South Dakota flags on hand to "meet the demand" from the public and organizations.

The flag changed again in 1992 to read "The Mount Rushmore State," when legislators changed the state's nickname during Governor George S. Mickelson's administration. Florida had also claimed "The Sunshine State" nickname in 1970, and the move aligned with Mickelson's focus on strengthening South Dakota's tourism industry — especially in the Black Hills, Jones said.

Yankton lawmaker Bernie Hunhoff broached the topic of modernizing South Dakota's flag in 2012, though the legislation quickly failed.

The description of the official state flag of South Dakota is outlined in state law, along with the official pledge to the state flag. It commonly flies over state buildings and schools across South Dakota, as well as the Ellsworth Air Force Base and National Guard installations.

"You can broaden your perspective and understanding when you understand why the flag is the way it is," Jones said. "You can see that the sentiments it was meant to express still apply to you."

South Dakota flag: 'an objective failure'

But South Dakota's flag fails the "good flag test," Schultz argues.

The North American Vexillological Association released guidelines for creating flags in 2006, and highlighted South Dakota as a "Bad Flag." According to these guidelines — which can be controversial in the vexillology world — flags should:

Be simple enough for a child to draw it from memory.

Use meaningful symbolism through imagery, colors and patterns.

Use a limited color palette.

Refrain from lettering or seals.

Be distinctive from other flags.



Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, talks with other legislators on the House floor after Gov. Kristi Noem's budget address on Dec. 5, 2023. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight

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The main reasons South Dakota fails the test is because it uses an intricate seal that can't be seen clearly from a distance or when the flag is waving several different directions in the wind, and because it uses lettering, which can be unreadable if the words appear backward on the flag while being flown.

Michael Green, an Indiana-based graphic designer, vexillographer and owner of Flags for Good, believes it would benefit South Dakota to redesign its flag. He compares flag design to branding and marketing.

"Branding is all about creating symbols of belonging and identity," Green said. "If you look at a city or state creating a new flag, it's about creating symbols — something you want to fly or a brand you want to wear on your chest, assign to your identity and help express yourself, which is like Nike or Adidas brands."

Just like a company, states can rebrand or refine their image too, he said.

Utah recently redesigned its state flag, Minnesota is in the process of redesigning its flag this year and Mississippi redesigned its flag in 2021. Other states considering simplifying their flags include Maine, Michigan and Illinois.

Minnesota's six finalist flag designs, submitted by the public and selected by a committee, have received backlash and strong critiques online. Public input is currently being accepted on the state's website, and the commission will choose the new flag design on Dec. 12.

Examples of impactful state flags include Texas, Alaska and New Mexico. Even though California breaks the "good flag" rule, it's memorable and something its residents take pride in.

"The South Dakota flag is an objective failure in every use: People aren't using it to show how proud they are of South Dakota. Non-South Dakotans couldn't pick it out of a group of other state flags from a distance," Green said. "So redesign it. You have nothing to lose, but you have everything to gain."

Is a flag redesign worth it?

Flags don't have to follow the "good flag, bad flag" rules, said Scot Guenter, a professor of American studies at San Jose State University and an academic vexillologist — though he does consider them practical guidelines.

What matters is not just that the flag is "pretty" but that the flag is meaningful and connected to the group identity of the people the flag represents.

"If South Dakotans don't feel connected to the flag then it doesn't really matter and it should be easy to change it," Guenter said. "Flags are very important symbols of identity. Even though we live in the world of the internet, flags are used everywhere on the internet to express your identity. They'll continue to be important symbols."

However, Schultz isn't hopeful that Nesiba's bill will pass in its first year. He expects it'll take years and a larger movement to grow among South Dakotans before the state will see the same benefits as he does.

A new flag design "could be an opportunity for South Dakota," Guenter added.

"If those early changes came for financial reasons or budget saving reasons, that could be a time for South Dakotans to say, 'Let it speak for us,'" he 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.

State says e-commerce system for hunting licenses, park reservations needs 'a lot of improvements'

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - DECEMBER 9, 2023 1:00 PM

A state Department of Game, Fish and Parks official acknowledged ongoing problems recently with an e-commerce system launched last year to process purchases of hunting and fishing licenses, camping reservations and other transactions.

The state has paid at least \$7.45 million to the Florida-based vendor that manages the system, according to the state's financial transparency website OpenSD.

"As we look forward into 2024, we still have a lot of improvements we need to make for it to be working to the level and functioning the way that we want it," said Keith Fisk, licensing program administrator with

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As the November 2023 sun sets west of Mitchell, a deer hunter sits along a barbed-wire fence in hopes of spotting a buck. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

fielded many complaints about the system.

"We talk to hundreds of customers a week, and I don't want people to think those comments go unheard," he said. "It may not be developed or tweaked the exact way the person wants, but that feedback is important."

Fisk said part of the difficulty stems from the intricate and situational nature of hunting and fishing regulations in the state. He said the rules pose a challenge in creating a user-friendly interface.

"We have a lot of complex rules," he said.

In January 2021, the department signed a seven-year contract with Brandt Information Services of Tallahassee, Florida, to develop and run the Go Outdoors system. The contract can be terminated with a 90-day notice after three years of implementation. The data remains the property of the state, but Brandt has limited rights to it. The contract has an optional three-year renewal.

Payment from the state to Brandt is made based on itemized invoices, per transaction through the system. This ranges from \$1 for an online camping reservation to \$6 per call to a call center.

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.

the department.

He presented an update on the status of the Go Outdoors system to the Game, Fish & Parks Commission on Thursday in Fort Pierre. The department launched the system in January 2022. The system processed \$37 million worth of transactions in fiscal year 2023.

"I would say there's a suite of items that need to be addressed," Fisk said.

In particular, Fisk pointed out seven periods this year when the system couldn't process transactions. He said the system went down in June on the last night deer hunters could purchase a license for a particular season. Fisk said fixing that is a top priority for 2024.

"Hopefully, we go down from seven to zero," he said.

Fisk said the department has

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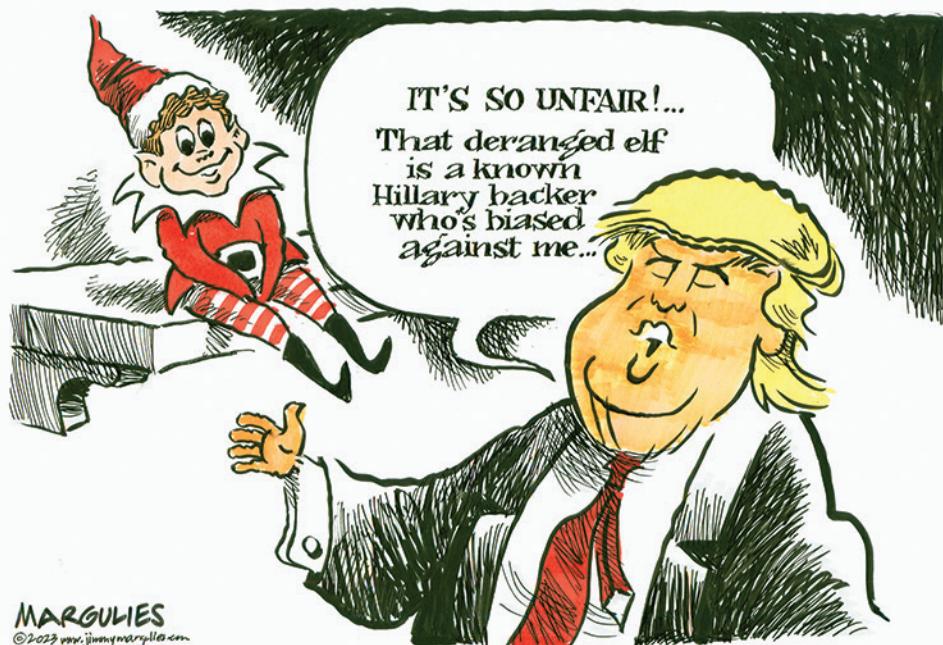
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

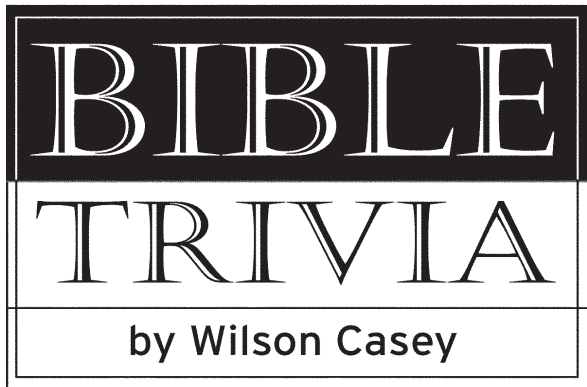


But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

— MICAHA 5:2 —

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1. Is the book of Bethlehem (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Where did the angel Gabriel appear to Mary saying, "Blessed art thou among women"? *Nazareth, Tyre, Ninevah, Gazi*

3. With perhaps two different biblical answers, who was the father of Joseph? *Jacob/Heli, Gideon/Ishmael, Solomon/Nahum, Samuel/Pilate*

4. Which Old Testament prophet predicted Jesus would be born in Bethlehem? *Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum*

5. For the journey to Bethlehem, how did Mary and Joseph travel? *Bible not specific, Cart, Rode donkey, Small raft*

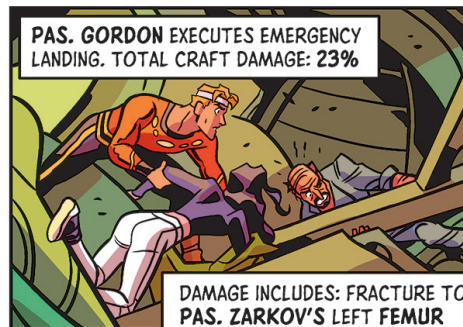
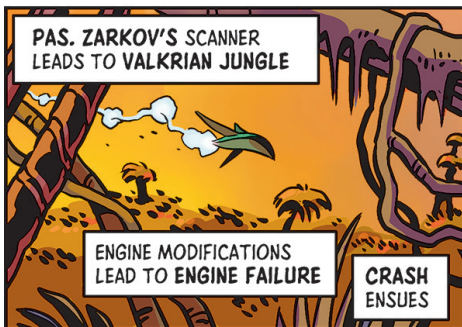
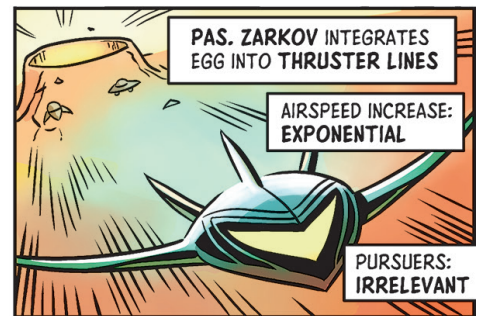
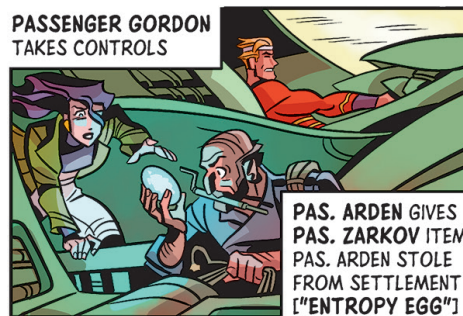
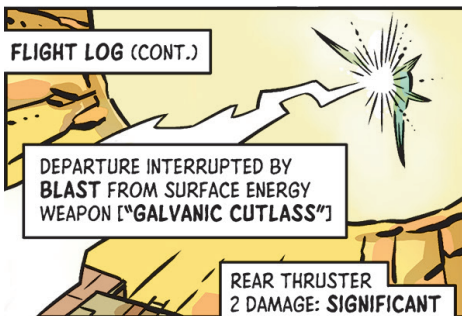
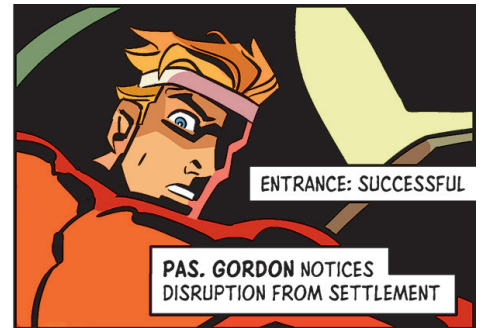
6. Which of these wasn't a gift from the wise men (Magi)? *Silver, Myrrh, Gold, Frankincense*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Nazareth, 3) Jacob/Heli (Matthew 1:16, Luke 3:23), 4) Micah, 5) Bible not specific, 6) Silver

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.

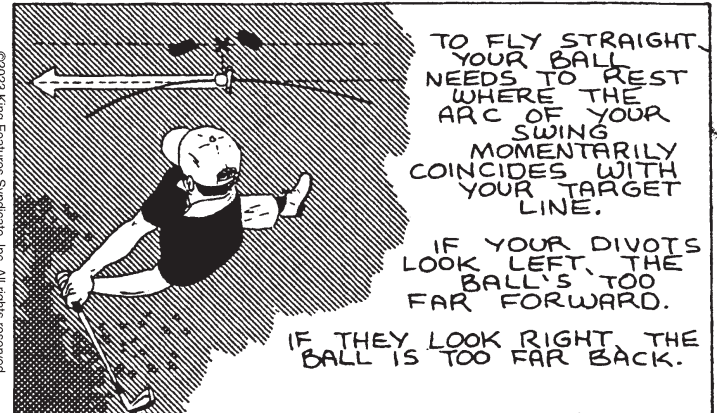
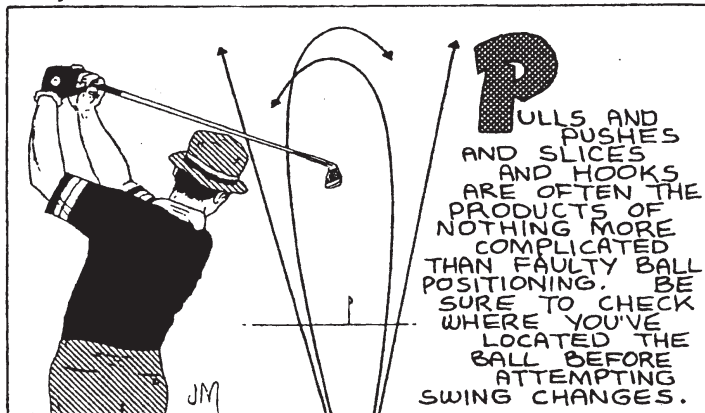
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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





Ampullary Cancer Treatment Can Include Chemo Prior to Surgery

DEAR DR. ROACH: My husband was diagnosed with ampullary cancer. He has a tumor the size of a marble. We are told this is an aggressive cancer. My concern is that they are giving him chemotherapy before the Whipple surgery. Is this standard practice? — *P.T.*

ANSWER: The ampulla of Vater is an opening in the duodenum (the first segment of the small intestine), where the common bile duct releases bile and pancreatic enzymes to aid digestion. A cancer of the ampulla can originate from the pancreas, bile duct or duodenum, and these can all be aggressive cancers.

The standard approach in people with the possibility to be cured is called a pancreaticoduodenectomy, otherwise known as the Whipple procedure. Although this is a complex surgery that used to have a high mortality rate, the risk of death from the procedure in specialized centers is now about 1%.

Most people are familiar with getting chemotherapy after surgery to help remove any cancer cells that remain, a technique called “adjuvant therapy.” However, giving chemotherapy before surgery (“neoadjuvant chemotherapy”) has increasingly been used in people with ampullary cancer. The idea is to shrink the tumor to make it easier for the surgeon to remove completely. Chemotherapy may also kill any cancer cells that have already spread.

The decision of when to use chemotherapy depends on the individual’s situation, so I can’t tell you which would

be better in your husband’s case, as I lack both the details of his tumor and the expertise. I can confirm that giving chemotherapy prior to surgery is being used in regards to ampullary cancer.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 22. I had an electrocardiogram (EKG) last year, which indicated an incomplete right bundle branch block and early repolarization of the ventricles.

Are these two related to each other? Are they serious to any extent, since I don’t have any symptoms? How can my heart rate be normal if the ventricles repolarize early? — *B.A.N.*

ANSWER: Both early repolarization and an incomplete right bundle branch block are common findings in young people who are getting EKGs, usually as part of a school physical and often as an evaluation for athletes. Depolarization of the heart muscle is seen on the surface electrocardiogram and corresponds to the contraction of the ventricle (called the QRS waves). The muscle cells must then “repolarize” — that is, restore their electrical potential to get ready for the next contraction.

Early repolarization is a normal variant where the ventricle gets electrically ready for the next beat faster than average. In fact, one way to be sure that the EKG finding really does signify early repolarization is to put the person on a treadmill to raise their heart rate. The early repolarization will then go away, since faster repolarization is appropriate for a quicker heartbeat.

About 15% of young athletes with early repolarization will also have an incomplete right bundle branch block, which represents slowing of the electrical impulses within the ventricles and a widening of the QRS complex.

Fortunately, these findings almost never represent serious disease in people without any symptoms.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Mark Wahlberg, left, and Michelle Monaghan star in "The Family Plan."

Courtesy of AppleTV+

"Candy Cane Lane" (PG) -- In this holiday film starring Eddie Murphy and Tracee Ellis Ross, a group of neighbors face off to see whose home has the best Christmas decorations. Chris (Murphy) will stop at nothing to win, so while he's out shopping for decor, he can't help but take Pepper (Jillian Bell), an elfish shop owner, up on her offer to use magic to pull off the victory. Little does Chris know that he signed his life away for Pepper's spell, and if his family doesn't get Pepper to reverse her spell, he'll get turned into a Christmas trinket for the rest of his life. Nick Offerman ("The Last of Us") and D.C. Young Fly ("Almost Christmas") also star in this Christmas comedy fit for the whole family, out now. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Family Plan" (PG-13) -- Out on streaming Dec. 15, this action-comedy is a film that's suitable for parents to view with kids who are on the older side. Mark Wahlberg (who claims to be contemplating retirement but has three upcoming films on his roster) stars as Dan, an ordinary family man who keeps his assassin past under wraps from his wife and children. After his enemy tracks his whereabouts and attempts to kill him while he's on a grocery store run, Dan convinces his family to go on a "family road trip" to Las Vegas so that he can confront the man who's hunting him. Michelle Monaghan ("Mission: Impossible -- Fallout") and Said Taghmaoui ("John Wick: Chapter 3") co-star. (Apple TV+)

"Pain Hustlers" (R) -- David Yates, director of the last four "Harry Potter" films and the "Fantastic Beasts" franchise, moved away from his usual fantasy genre to make a crime drama, and it suited him well. Made up of a witty cast with Emily Blunt, Chris Evans and Andy Garcia, "Pain Hustlers," out now, follows single mother Liza Drake (Blunt). After struggling and being forced to move into a motel with her daughter, Liza takes up an offer to work at a small pharmaceutical company to get a doctor to prescribe the drug Lonafen. The ever-resourceful Liza knows she can pull it off, but will she be able to shove down the ugly truth behind this highly addictive drug just for a paycheck? (Netflix)

"The Retirement Plan" (R) -- After a life of crime, a retired assassin named Matt (Nicolas Cage) lives a comfortable life as a beach bum in the Cayman Islands. But when his estranged granddaughter, Sarah, shows up on his sandy doorstep, his sweet retirement comes to an abrupt pause. Sent by her mother, Ashley, with an important hard drive on her person, Sarah is forced to remain under Matt's protection while her parents try to outrun the criminals who so desperately want to get their hands on the hard drive. A booked-and-busy Ron Perlman supplies entertaining moments, and Ashley Greene Khoury, who has mainly been in smaller films since the "Twilight" franchise, is a welcome sight to see. Out on Dec. 15. (Hulu)

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1. Who sang the theme song for the TV series "Secret Agent Man" in the 1960s?
2. What was the Hully Gully?
3. Who released "Blue Suede Shoes" before Elvis Presley did?
4. Name Patti LaBelle's first No. 1 single.
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Late at night I'm still listening, Don't waste my time chasing sleep."

Answers

1. Johnny Rivers. The show was the American version of the British "Danger Man" series.
2. A dance that started in Florida in 1959. It was a line dance with the steps being called out. The dance has been seen several times, including in "The Blues Brothers" film and a "Roseanne" episode.
3. Carl Perkins, who both wrote and released the song in 1956. His version went to No. 1 on the charts. Presley's did not even hit the Top 10.
4. "If Only You Knew," in 1983, on the R&B charts. It only hit No. 46 on the Hot 100 chart.
5. "Pilot of the Airwaves," by Charlie Dore in 1979. This was the final song played in 1990 by Radio Caroline, an unlicensed, illegal radio station that broadcast from the open seas. It was named for Caroline Kennedy, daughter of President John F. Kennedy.

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

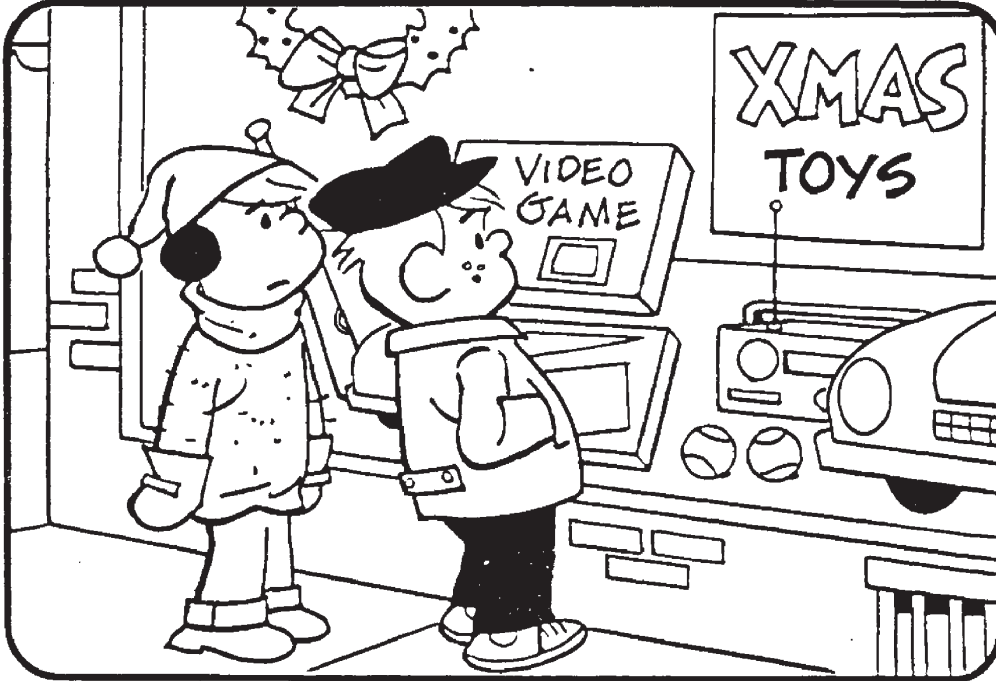
Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



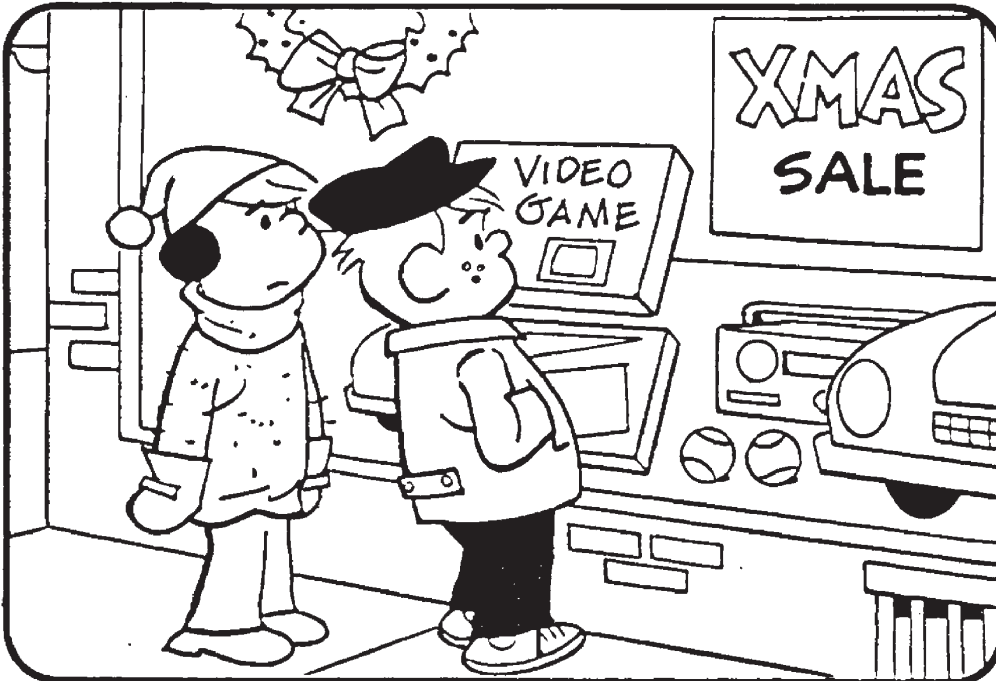
"Deck the halls with more cameras."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Tassel is shorter. 2. Curts are missing. 3. Baseball bat is missing. 4. Arm is moved. 5. Sign is different. 6. Antenna is missing.

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* My personal holiday rule is simple: When in doubt, leave it out. There is so much to do, and we want to cover it all, but my best memories of holidays involve the people who I spend time with, not the place setting or the exact perfect gift. Happy Holidays, JoAnn

* Commit to spending one or two unscheduled nights per week during holiday break, just hanging out with your kids. You can enjoy the toys they might have gotten for Christmas, read, play games or just relax in each other's company. They will return to school (and you to work) less stressed. -- E.G. in Massachusetts

* Try this chef's trick for a juicy bird: After seasoning, cover the bird with cheesecloth or muslin secured with string. Baste over the cloth every 15 minutes. In the last

20 minutes, remove the cloth so that the skin can crisp.

* P.S.G. from South Carolina writes: Delegate table tasks that are age-appropriate to your children for any holiday gatherings that you host. Place setting, condiment delivery, refilling water glasses at scheduled intervals, etc. Children like to have a job, and they are better behaved when they have a focus and make a contribution.

* Plan now for leftovers: Have small plastic containers and zip-top bags in case your guests or family would like to take some home. This is an especially smart thing to do if you are looking to eat healthier. Send Grandma home with a turkey plate and a big slice of chocolate cake! It's better to share.

* Wondering what wine to serve at your party? Order a case of mixed wines. You might get a hit on your hands! -- C.C. in Oregon

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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 **TIGER**

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 North —
- 5 Green prefix
- 8 Oodles
- 12 Writer Kingsley
- 13 As well
- 14 Capri, e.g.
- 15 Souvenir seller
- 17 Move like a butterfly
- 18 Tours season
- 19 Snaky fish
- 20 Ceases
- 21 Solidify
- 22 Twitch
- 23 Shroud city
- 26 He can hold his head high
- 30 "Dream on!"
- 31 Zero-star review
- 32 Santa's runway
- 33 Old English Sheepdog feature
- 35 Skilled
- 36 Tramcar contents
- 37 "— the season ..."
- 38 Poker ploy
- 41 Fish propeller
- 42 Spa sounds
- 45 Protracted
- 46 Decorative paper
- 48 "There!"
- 49 Santa's help-

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33				34				35				
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- er
- 9 Capital on a fjord
- 10 Radar image
- 11 Collections
- 16 Beheld
- 20 — Lancelot
- 21 Eloquent person's talent
- 22 Can metal
- 23 Indent key
- 24 GI entertainers
- 25 Tease
- 26 Cowboy's sweetie
- 27 Nemesis
- 28 Dandy guy
- 29 Newt
- 31 Bakery pur-
- chase
- 34 Canine cry
- 35 "— Misbehavin' "
- 37 Squabbles
- 38 Diner orders
- 39 Cash advance
- 40 Loosen
- 41 Motion picture
- 42 Folksinger Guthrie
- 43 Saintly ring
- 44 Bridge
- 46 "My word!"
- 47 Pallid

DOWN

- 1 Leaf
- 2 Skip
- 3 Biography
- 4 Ballpark fig.
- 5 Lucy's pal
- 6 "Neato!"
- 7 "Alley —"
- 8 Prepaid stocking stuffers

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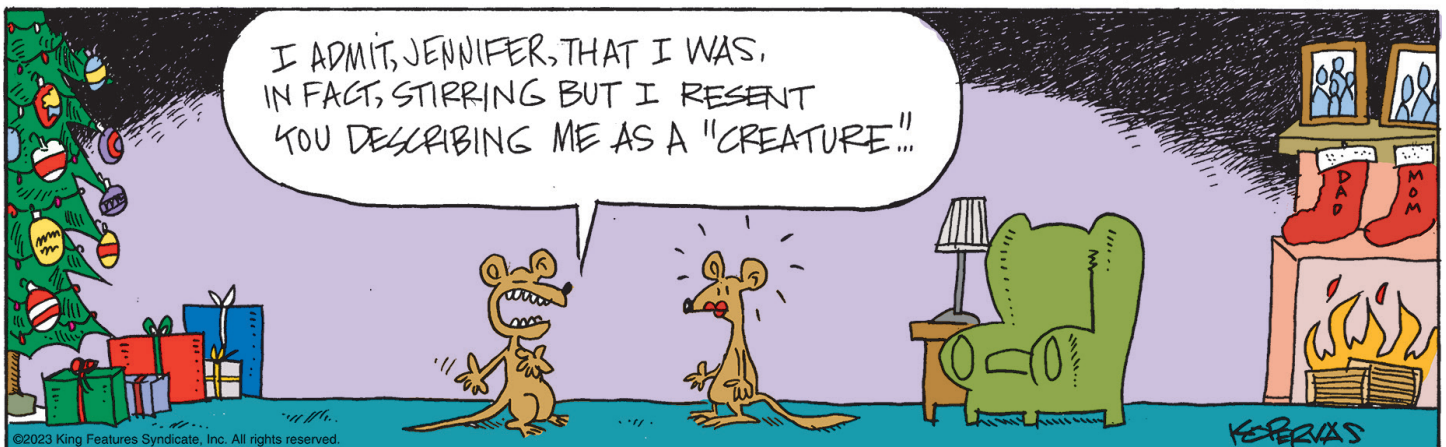
— King Crossword — Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

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A	M	I	S		T	O	O		I	S	L	E
G	I	F	T	S	H	O	P		F	L	I	T
E	T	E		E	E	L		S	T	O	P	S
			G	E	L		T	I	C			
T	U	R	I	N		G	I	R	A	F	F	E
A	S	I	F		P	A	N		R	O	O	F
B	O	B	T	A	I	L		A	D	E	P	T
			O	R	E		T	I	S			
B	L	U	F	F		F	I	N		A	H	S
L	O	N	G		G	I	F	T	W	R	A	P
T	A	D	A		E	L	F		A	L	L	A
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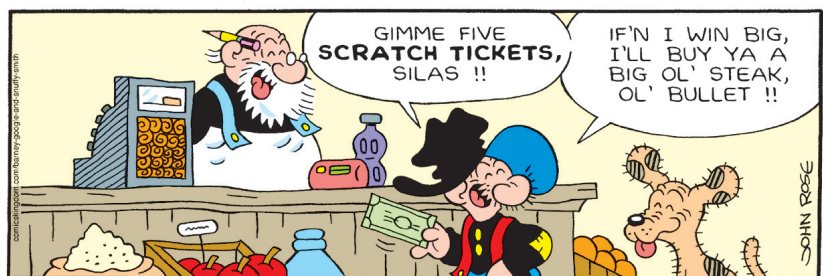
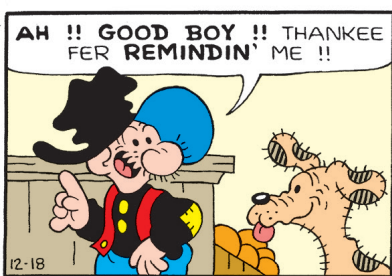
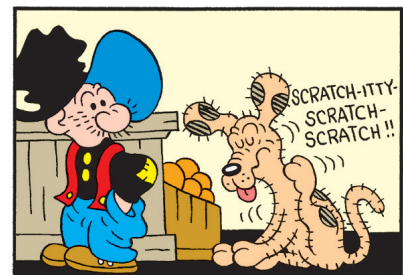
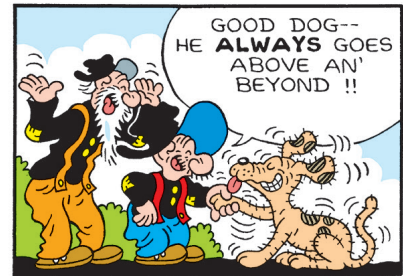
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



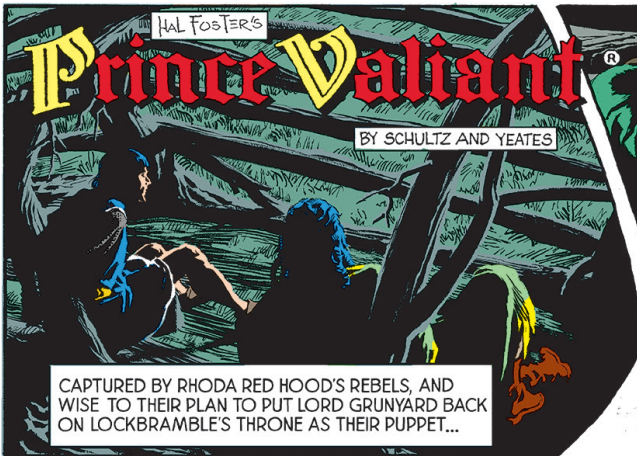
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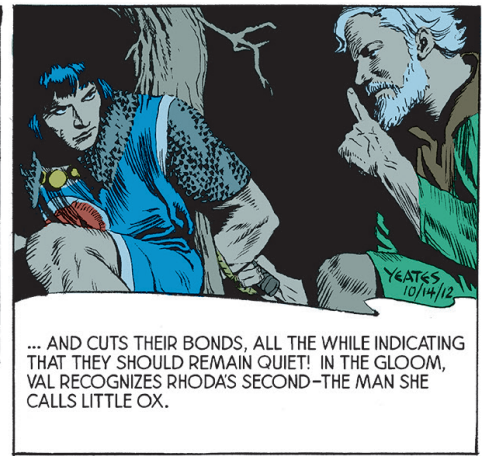
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CAPTURED BY RHODA RED HOOD'S REBELS, AND WISE TO THEIR PLAN TO PUT LORD GRUNYARD BACK ON LOCKBRAMBLE'S THRONE AS THEIR PUPPET...



...VAL AND GAWAIN AWAIT THEIR FATE. SUDDENLY A GREAT, SILENT FIGURE WIELDING A LONG, GLEAMING KNIFE SLIPS INSIDE...



... AND CUTS THEIR BONDS, ALL THE WHILE INDICATING THAT THEY SHOULD REMAIN QUIET! IN THE GLOOM, VAL RECOGNIZES RHODA'S SECOND-THE MAN SHE CALLS LITTLE OX.



ONCE FREED, THE REBEL HANDS THE KNIGHTS THEIR WEAPONS AND WHISPERS: "NOW KNOCK ME FLAT AND BIND ME- MAKE IT LOOK CONVINCING, THEN GO- AND DON'T FORGET WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED HERE!"

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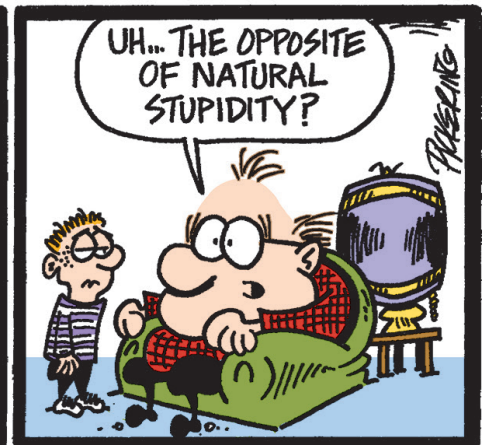
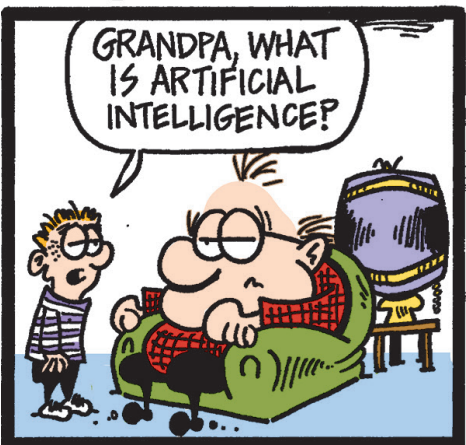
THEY FOLLOW LITTLE OX'S PLAN AND ARE ABOUT TO DISAPPEAR INTO THE DARK FOREST, WHEN GAWAIN SUDDENLY STOPS VAL: "YOU KNOW I'M NOT ONE TO TAKE A CLEAN ESCAPE FOR GRANTED, MY FRIEND, BUT THIS RHODA HAS GOTTEN UNDER MY SKIN. I'M NOT GOING- I WANT TO HELP HER SEE THIS THING THROUGH!"

NEXT:
Change of plans

3949

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Getting Educated About Scams

There is a movement online among the children of seniors to instruct us about scams we might come across. All sorts of advice is being handed out to them about how to approach us with these scam facts, mostly falling in the "gentle" category to be sure we're not offended by being told we could become a victim of a scam.

I can see where this could go. Amongst the advice about possible financial scams there could be "suggestions" that we perhaps turn the management of our money over to others. Or perhaps it would mean someone else would balance our checkbook each month to verify just where our money is going.

I don't think so.

The way around this -- should these types of discussions come to your house via well-meaning others -- is to be one step ahead and be very well versed in the typical scams that are aimed at seniors.

In a banking scam, you know not to click any email links or give any information over the phone. You hang up and call the bank directly to ask if they called you.

In the charity scams, you'll be asked to give money over the phone. Don't do it. If you want to give, send a check directly to the charity.

In the grandparent scam, a fake grandchild will call and say he's in trouble and needs bail money. No, you'll simply hang up.

No, the IRS will never call and insist you make a payment with gift cards.

In the romance scam where a fake online love interest suddenly needs cash, you won't hand over a single dime. Period.

Go here to read about the various scams: www.aarp.org. Put "Fraud Resource Center" in the search box to get the details on the 70 scams listed. Know what you're talking about when others come to you to "educate" you about scams.

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1. Name the Army quarterback who scored the first touchdown ever shown on instant replay during the CBS broadcast of the Army vs. Navy game in December 1963.

2. What NHL team bought out the contract of goaltender Rick DiPietro in 2013 and agreed to pay him \$1.5 million annually for the next 16 years?

3. Name the Argentinian tennis player who won the 2009 U.S. Open men's singles title.

4. Broadcaster Paul Eells was the radio and TV voice of what college's athletic programs from 1978-2006?

5. What actor portrayed Indiana Hoosiers basketball coach Bob Knight in the 2002 made-for-TV movie "A Season on the Brink"?

6. What Notre Dame Fighting Irish quarterback was selected by the Carolina Panthers in the second round of the 2010 NFL Draft?

7. CBS Sports chairman Sean McManus is the son of what legendary sportscaster?



by Ryan A. Berenz

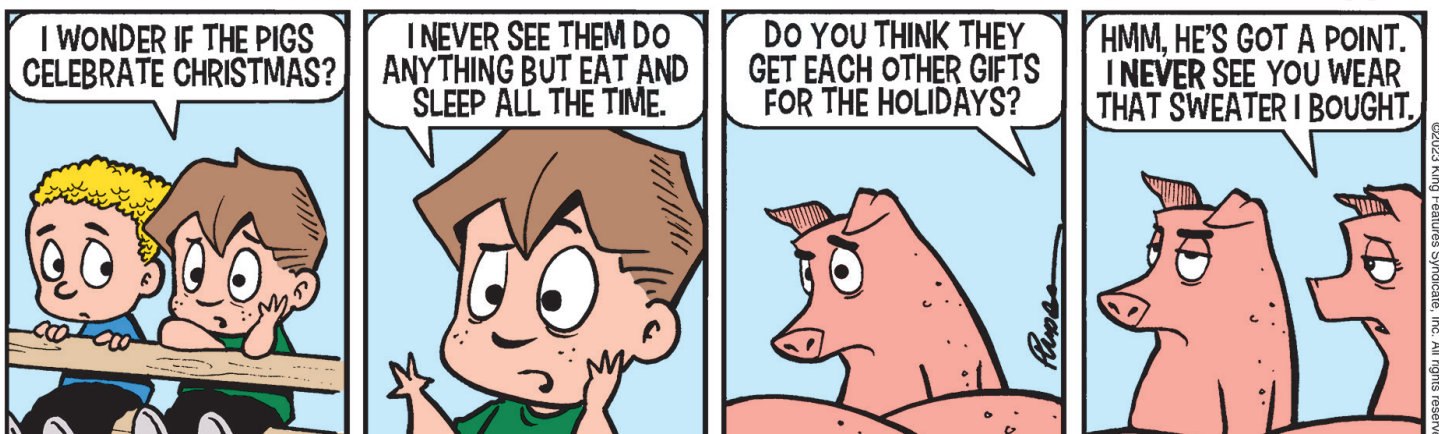
Answers

1. Carl "Rollie" Stichweh.
2. The New York Islanders.
3. Juan Martin del Potro.
4. The University of Arkansas Razorbacks.
5. Brian Dennehy.
6. Jimmy Clausen.
7. Jim McKay.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Houseguests vs. Pets: Holiday Edition

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My brother is staying with us through the holiday season while he figures out his life. However, he insists on keeping the feeding bowls full for my two dogs, Buster and Charlie. I've spoken to him several times already, asking him not to do it. Buster is overweight and on a prescribed diet. What can I do to stop this? -- Darlene in Phoenix, Arizona

DEAR DARLENE: It's really strange, and annoying, that your brother can't seem to follow your request. I'm not sure what's going on, so I won't judge the situation. However, if you want him to stay, then for

your dogs' sake, you'll have to take extra steps to stop this.

Move the dog food to a cabinet or storage bin that you can lock. Take out just the amount of food for that day and portion it out for your dogs' scheduled feeding times. Then remind your brother that the way you feed your dogs is non-negotiable.

DEAR PAWS: I'm 11 years old and my cousins are staying with us for Christmas. They want to walk my dog, Reed, all the time. But that's my job, and Reed is my dog. How can I get them to stop? -- Carlos in Dallas, Texas

DEAR CARLOS: Talk to your parents about your frustration. Are your cousins not sharing the lead during walks? Or are they mistreating your dog? If it's a sharing situation, the adults should help negotiate a fair plan for walking Reed. If they're mistreating him, your parents need to know and put a stop to it.

Holiday visits can be annoying for you and your pets, but being diplomatic while holding firm to certain rules, like diet and training schedule, is helpful. Best of luck.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Sweden has a ski-through McDonald's.

* The world's most expensive perfume, Clive Christian No. 1 Passant Guardant, will set you back a cool \$143,000 for a 30 ml bottle. Of course, it does come in a flask studded with 2,000 diamonds.

* A 2018 psychology study found that millionaires who earned their wealth are moderately happier than those who inherited it.

* George Washington moved his slaves in and out of Pennsylvania every six months to avoid their taking advantage of a law whereby slaves residing in the

state for longer periods could claim their freedom.

* One billion hours of video are watched on YouTube every day.

* When Peter Benchley had trouble coming up with a title for his novel "Jaws," his dad suggested "What's That Noshin' on My Leg."

* Bored with your limited supply of cuss words? Try learning Latin, which contains about 800 obscenities to English's approximately 20 (depending on how we define the latter).

* In 1924, half of the world's cars were made by Ford.

* Folks who have difficulty recalling someone else's name shortly after they've met can blame it on the "next-in-line-effect," or having too much anxiety about themselves and what they'll say next to focus on the name of someone to whom they were just introduced.

* A cyberchondriac is someone who scours the internet looking for details about their illnesses.

* Actor Frankie Muniz, who starred as the titular character in the TV series "Malcolm in the Middle," doesn't recall his time on the show, due to multiple concussions and TIAs (transient ischemic attacks).

* Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote "The Gambler" to pay off his gambling debts.

Thought for the Day: "Don't confuse your path with your destination. Just because it's stormy now doesn't mean you aren't headed for sunshine later. Don't lose faith." -- Trent Shelton

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The Garden Bug



Pliny the Elder once wrote how the Druids held nothing more sacred than finding mistletoe growing on an oak tree. They prepared a banquet beneath the tree, while chanting. A priest dressed in white

climbed the tree and cut the mistletoe off with a golden sickle, catching it in his garments. Two large white bulls were then killed as they asked their gods to accept their offering, and to impart fertility to any person or animal that ate the mistletoe berries. - Brenda Weaver

Source: thegardenstrust.blog

"Druids Cutting Mistletoe on the Sixth Day of the Moon" by Henri Motte (1890)



by Freddy Groves

VA Help to Avoid Foreclosures

Veterans with VA-backed mortgages who are in danger of facing foreclosure just got help from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA is asking mortgage servicers to do two things:

- Pause foreclosures through May 31, 2024, of VA-guaranteed loans, and

- Extend the COVID-19 Refund Modification program through May 31, 2024.

During the first step, veterans and the VA will work with those mortgage services to work out solutions.

For the second step, they are going to extend the COVID-19 Refund Modification program so veterans can obtain a zero-interest loan with deferred payments via the VA. Those loans will cover any missed payments and change the loan to come up with affordable payments during the extension period.

During this extension, the VA is going to launch the VA Servicing Purchase (VASP) program. In that program the VA will purchase from mortgage servicers any defaulted VA loans, change the loans and put them in a VA-owned portfolio.

The goal, of course, is to keep veterans in their homes.

Meanwhile, if you're having trouble making mortgage payments, call 877-827-3702 to talk to a loan tech. There are a number of ways they can help you, including loan modification, repayment plans and getting more time to catch up on missed payments.

Or go to the VA Housing Assistance website (www.va.gov/housing-assistance). On that page, click on "Learn more about how to get help to avoid foreclosure." Read the whole page. You'll see information on being careful of offers to help you with your back payments (it might not be genuine), getting counseling help and the six ways you can avoid foreclosure. Note the part about whether you would have to pay back your loan depending on when you closed on the loan (before or after Jan. 1, 1990).

At the bottom of that page note the advisory from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau about how to spot a foreclosure scam. Getting caught up in one of those is the last thing you need while trying to deal with a potential foreclosure.

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Wishing Well®

5	8	6	4	3	6	5	4	5	4	5	7	3
N	H	F	D	B	R	I	I	G	S	H	Y	E
4	6	7	5	8	3	6	7	6	8	2	3	6
P	I	O	T	E	P	E	U	N	A	B	E	D
7	6	8	3	4	8	4	7	4	8	5	6	5
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8	5	6	2	5	8	5	2	5	7	3	8	5
H	M	I	E	E	I	F	C	U	V	S	G	N
3	7	2	7	6	7	8	7	6	8	7	8	3
I	E	A	O	S	P	H	T	I	L	I	I	S
7	8	2	8	4	6	3	7	4	7	4	2	3
O	G	U	H	L	T	T	N	L	S	U	T	E
2	4	2	4	8	4	3	2	4	8	2	3	8
I	S	O	I	T	O	N	U	N	E	S	T	D

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: Which famous highway that stretches across the United States is sometimes known as the Will Rogers Highway?

2. MUSIC: Which country did the pop group ABBA come from?

3. TELEVISION: What article made Frosty the Snowman come to life in the popular TV special?

4. FOOD & DRINK: What is colcannon?

5. U.S. STATES: Which state is home to the Volcanoes National Park?

6. MOVIES: What is the name of the acapella group that Anna Kendrick joins on "Pitch Perfect"?

7. INVENTIONS: Who invented the Barbie doll in 1959?

8. MATH: How many tablespoons are in 1 cup?

9. LITERATURE: What is the title of the sequel to "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl?

10. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which elected president is the only one to fail to gain his party's nomination for a second term?

Answers

1. Route 66.
2. Sweden.
3. A magic hat.
4. Mashed potatoes and cabbage.
5. Hawaii.
6. The Barden Bellas.
7. Ruth Handler.
8. 16.
9. "Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator."
10. Franklin Pierce.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Let's Talk about the "Big Three"

I recently presented my budget to the South Dakota State Legislature. It's a budget that prioritizes people, not programs. It shows what can be done with smart, conservative fiscal policies. And it focuses on the core responsibilities of state government.

South Dakota has reaped the benefits of conservative policies. Our economy has continued to grow, but that doesn't mean that we haven't felt the effects of the record-high inflation brought on by federal policies. This year, as we face a more "normal" budget year, I am encouraging the legislature to do exactly what families across America are doing every single day – stick to a tight budget.

National inflation has continued to rise over the past year. State law requires that we increase funding to our K-12 schools at inflation or 3%, whichever is lower. We typically provide the same increase to our healthcare providers and state employees – together, they make the "Big Three." Well, this year, I am recommending that we go above and beyond the legal requirement. I am proposing that we provide a 4% increase for education, healthcare providers, and state employees.

We are only going to be able to accomplish this increase if we make sure we have our priorities straight. Well, I know where my priorities lie – and it's with the people of South Dakota.

There's a reason why the "Big Three" is the "Big Three." They are the ones who give back to our communities across the state. They are the ones putting in the hard work to make our state the best that it can be. And they are the ones that are creating a better South Dakota for our kids and our grandkids.

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. And we can retain great teachers by paying them what they deserve.

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

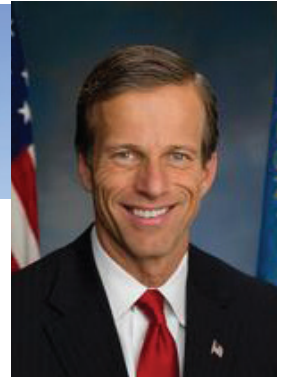
The 4% increase for our providers is an important step to promote good health for South Dakotans at every age and state of life. This is an increase that doesn't pick winner and losers. Inflation is impacting all of our providers, so we should provide them all with the relief they so desperately need.

Some of our kids will want to join careers in our state workforce. We need to support 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 budget proposal gives a 4% raise to state employees so that we can continue to attract and retain the best and brightest.

We have the opportunity to show the world what is possible with good, conservative policies – policies that prioritize our kids and our grandkids.

I do not go to work every day for myself. I go to work to serve the people that make this state great. They inspire me. And I pray that we deliver a budget that they can be proud of – a budget that puts them first.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



"Bidenomics" Puts the American Dream Out of Reach

Persistently higher prices have wreaked havoc on hardworking South Dakotans. A typical South Dakota family has to spend \$11,849 more per year just to maintain the same standard of living they enjoyed just three short years ago when President Biden took office. Just keeping pace with the constant price hikes that have come to characterize the Biden economy has proved difficult for many Americans, and the increase in the cost of living has made it difficult to get ahead.

One recent news story noted, "Since early 2020, prices have risen about as much as they had in the full 10 years preceding the health emergency." In other words, Americans have experienced 10 years of price increases packed into just four years, and the lion's share of these price hikes has occurred during the Biden administration. There has been no relief from higher prices at the grocery store, growing electricity bills, higher rents, and expensive car repairs. Unfortunately, at this point it's clear that today's high prices are here to stay.

Inflation didn't come out of nowhere; it's the result of too many federal dollars chasing too few goods and services. And that's exactly the situation the Biden administration and Democrats helped create in 2021 when they passed a massive, partisan \$1.9 trillion spending bill. This reckless bill flooded the economy with unnecessary government money, and the economy overheated as a result. Almost three years removed from this misguided spending, we're still dealing with the inflation crisis that President Biden and Democrats' spending helped create.

The economic pain caused by inflation has left Americans cutting back on their spending, taking on more debt, and falling behind on their bills. A majority of voters say they are worse off financially in the Biden economy. Yet President Biden has taken to attempting to sell a supposed record of economic accomplishment under the banner of "Bidenomics." In a recent speech, he declared that "Bidenomics is just another way of saying 'the American Dream.'" But for Americans struggling to keep their heads above water, "Bidenomics" has proved to be more of a nightmare.

By one key measure, owning your own home, the American dream is increasingly out of reach for many Americans. The higher interest rates that the Federal Reserve was forced to put in place to help rein in the Biden inflation crisis has meant more expensive mortgages, which, combined with higher home prices, has eroded prospective homebuyers' purchasing power. According to one analysis, the average monthly mortgage payment on a typical home is about twice what it was in late 2020. High inflation has unfortunately made the American dream a dream deferred for too many.

It's been a challenging few years for the American people. Amid higher prices, it's been difficult for many working families to catch a break. And I'm afraid the effects of "Bidenomics" will continue to compound and further strain families' already-stretched budgets.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



The Big Three

BIG Update

The Environmental Protection Agency's proposed emission standards would essentially require two-thirds of all new vehicles to be electric by 2032. The Biden Administration is pushing its green agenda and forcing America to further rely on China for batteries.

This emission mandate will force consumers to buy electric vehicles, which are more expensive, have more issues, and are less reliable than automobiles with internal combustion engines. Electric vehicles are not practical for many South Dakotans who want to have options when it comes to choosing a vehicle.

The Biden Administration hasn't built a single EV charging station nationwide since President Biden took office. Implementation of this policy would be faulty and impractical. This week, House Republicans passed the CARS Act to block this overreaching mandate and protect consumer choice.

BIG Idea

The National Park Service (NPS) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) create Air Tour Management Plans for commercial air tours over national parks. The recently proposed plan for Mount Rushmore and the Badlands is the most restrictive plan in the nation.

This week, I met with Mark Schlaefli from Rushmore Helicopters and asked him questions when he testified in the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation. We discussed ways to improve the consultation process between the industry, FAA, and NPS.

BIG News

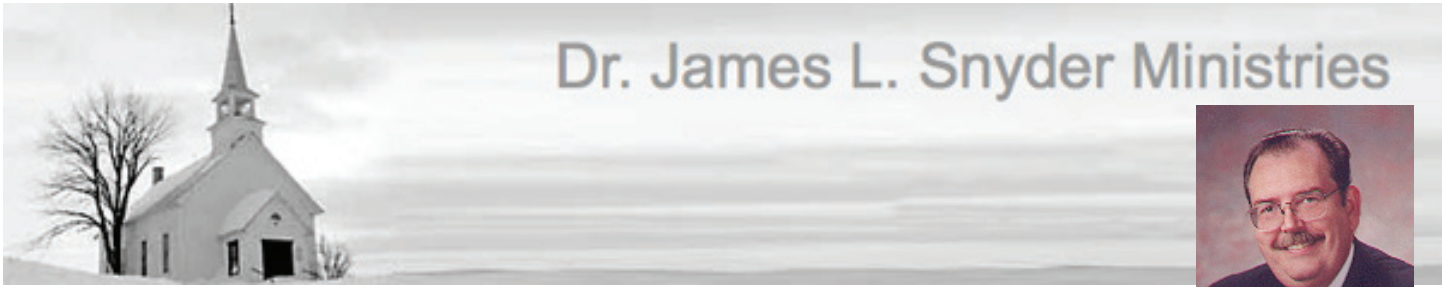
I met up with leaders from South Dakota's tribes at the White House Tribal Nations Summit this week. Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Chairman Garret Renville, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Chairman Ryman LeBeau, Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Chairwoman Janet Alkire were there to hear from the Administration on policies, priorities, and issues facing Indian country.

Earlier this week, I called on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies to hold field hearings to learn about the challenges faced by tribal law enforcement in the Great Plains.

Tribal law enforcement agencies are facing a lack of resources, not enough officers, and slow response times. Many tribes have issued States of Emergency on their reservations because of increased crime rates and insufficient law enforcement.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



From Roast Turkey to Reinder

Nothing is more confusing than being in the middle of two holidays. I have just finished Thanksgiving, and now Christmas is before me. Each year, it gets more difficult to adjust to the next holiday. It's hard for me to keep up.

For months, the focus was on that roast turkey for Thanksgiving. And boy, was it a delicious roast turkey. I have a hard time comparing this year's roast turkey to last year's because I always love the one I'm eating at the time. And I cannot go back in time to last year's turkey. That turkey has been digested a long time ago.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I were sitting in the living room, resting from all the activity during the season and watching TV. I think she outdid herself this year because everything seemed to be perfect. Everybody in the family complimented her on the Thanksgiving dinner.

It will be challenging for her to outdo the Thanksgiving dinner at the Christmas dinner. But I know she's up for the challenge.

I began complimenting her on this year's roast turkey and telling her how much I loved it. I wasn't lying because I did like the turkey this year. Not only the turkey we had on Thanksgiving Day but also all the leftover turkey we had the following week. Nothing is better than leftovers, as far as I'm concerned.

We had enough leftovers at Thanksgiving dinner to serve dinner every day for the next week. I ain't complaining.

Sitting in the living room, I looked at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and asked, "Are you planning to make roast reindeer for Christmas?"

She just scowled at me and did not answer. I wasn't going to give up.

"After all," I said, "your roast turkey this year was absolutely supreme. The best you've ever done. I bet you could do a great job roasting a reindeer this year."

Looking at me, she said, "Do you want to get off Santa's naughty list this year?"

Where did that come from?

I did not know what to say because I did not know if she was joking or what. Being on Santa's naughty list in our house is a very dangerous position. For some reason, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has a connection with Santa Claus. I'm not sure what that connection is, and I'm not in a position where I can ask.

I was quiet for a few minutes, then cleared my throat, and looking at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, I asked, "How did I get on Santa's naughty list this year?"

Staring at me, she said, "Do you really want me to tell you?"

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There is nothing like being between a turkey and a reindeer during the holiday season to wreck your nerves.

The question that burned in my heart was, what did I do to get on Santa's naughty list? I knew I would be in more trouble if I asked her to tell me. So, I thought about another angle.

"Can you tell me," I asked as soberly as possible, "how I can get off Santa's naughty list?"

She stared at the TV for a moment and did not seem to hear what I was saying. I briefly thought, should I repeat myself? In the past, repeating myself has gotten me into more trouble than it was worth.

Finally, she turned, looked at me for a few moments and then said, "Do you really want to know how to get off of Santa's naughty list?"

Oh boy. What's coming next?

If I don't know how I got on Santa's naughty list, how in the world am I going to figure out how to get off?

Looking at her, I smiled gently and said, "If getting off Santa's naughty list makes you happy, then that's exactly what I want to do." I finished with a big smile on my face.

"Well," she said rather thoughtfully, "maybe if this week you take me thrift store shopping I might be able to think about it and figure it out for you."

That caught me by surprise. That would be the last thing in the world that I would ever want to do. Spending a whole day going from one thrift store to another is not my idea of having fun.

"And," she said, "if in our thrift store shopping we find a reindeer, you can buy it, and I will roast it for you."

I never know if she is joking or setting me up. I had to think about that for some time, not knowing the proper answer.

Finally, I sighed deeply and said, "OK, my dear, I'll be glad to take you thrift store shopping anytime this week. And, I'll be glad to purchase that reindeer when you find it." I tried to smile back at her, but it was very difficult to find an appropriate smile in my inventory.

"Ha, ha, ha," she laughed very heartily.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"Oh my dear," she laughed, "you just got off of Santa's naughty list. Congratulations."

Later that day, as I was considering this, I was reminded of what Amos said, "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

Sometimes, life is better when two people agree. It may be difficult to come to an agreement, but the rewards are worth the effort.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What sort of environmental toll are the major military conflicts going on around the world now taking?

-- J.D., Salem, NH

No one questions the fact that war is horrible, and it is no less so for the environment. And recent major conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East couldn't come at a worse time politically as international negotiators try to broker a deal to rein in carbon emissions against the backdrop of two active wars.

In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, environmental damage has been widespread. An August 2023 study by Chinese and German researchers found an "abrupt exacerbation in air quality over Europe after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war." Levels of both particulate matter and nitrogen oxide have spiked about 10 percent each—and ground-level ozone surged by almost eight percent—in regions where fighting has occurred. The researchers blame ongoing explosions and fires as the main drivers of this predicament. Due to the war, Ukraine has experienced a 45-fold increase in the total area of forest fires across the country. The result has been the release of hundreds of millions of tons of noxious pollution in various forms that not only foul the air but also contaminate soils and groundwater across the region.

Meanwhile, the more recent Hamas/Israel conflict is wreaking havoc on the environment in the Middle East. Israel's campaign to eradicate Hamas following the initial October 7 attack has turned much of Gaza into an apocalyptic destruction zone where polluted air and water now joins mass casualties and lack of food and supplies in making life extremely difficult for millions of Palestinians.

"These environmental impacts exacerbate the toll of death and injury directly caused by acts of war, but the environmental death toll will continue for decades due to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases and cancer caused by exposure to elevated levels of pollution," United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment David R. Boyd tells TRT World.

Besides damaging the environment and increasing our global carbon footprint, these recent conflicts are also taking a toll on longer term prospects for hammering out a binding agreement for the nations of the world to work together in reining in carbon emissions. CNN reports that world leaders attending the long-awaited November 2023 Abu Dhabi follow-up to 2015's Paris Climate Agreement were spending more time meeting behind closed doors trying to broker diplomatic solutions to military conflicts than hammering out carbon emissions reduction plans. Jordan's King Abdullah II told gathered delegates that "we cannot talk about climate change in isolation from the humanitarian tragedies unfolding around us," adding that "the massive destruction of war" makes environmental threats like water scarcity and food insecurity even more severe. Meanwhile, Iranian negotiators left the climate talks because its sworn enemy Israel had delegates present.

Environmentalists advocates around the world are keeping their fingers crossed that the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine don't derail international cooperation on environmental issues altogether.



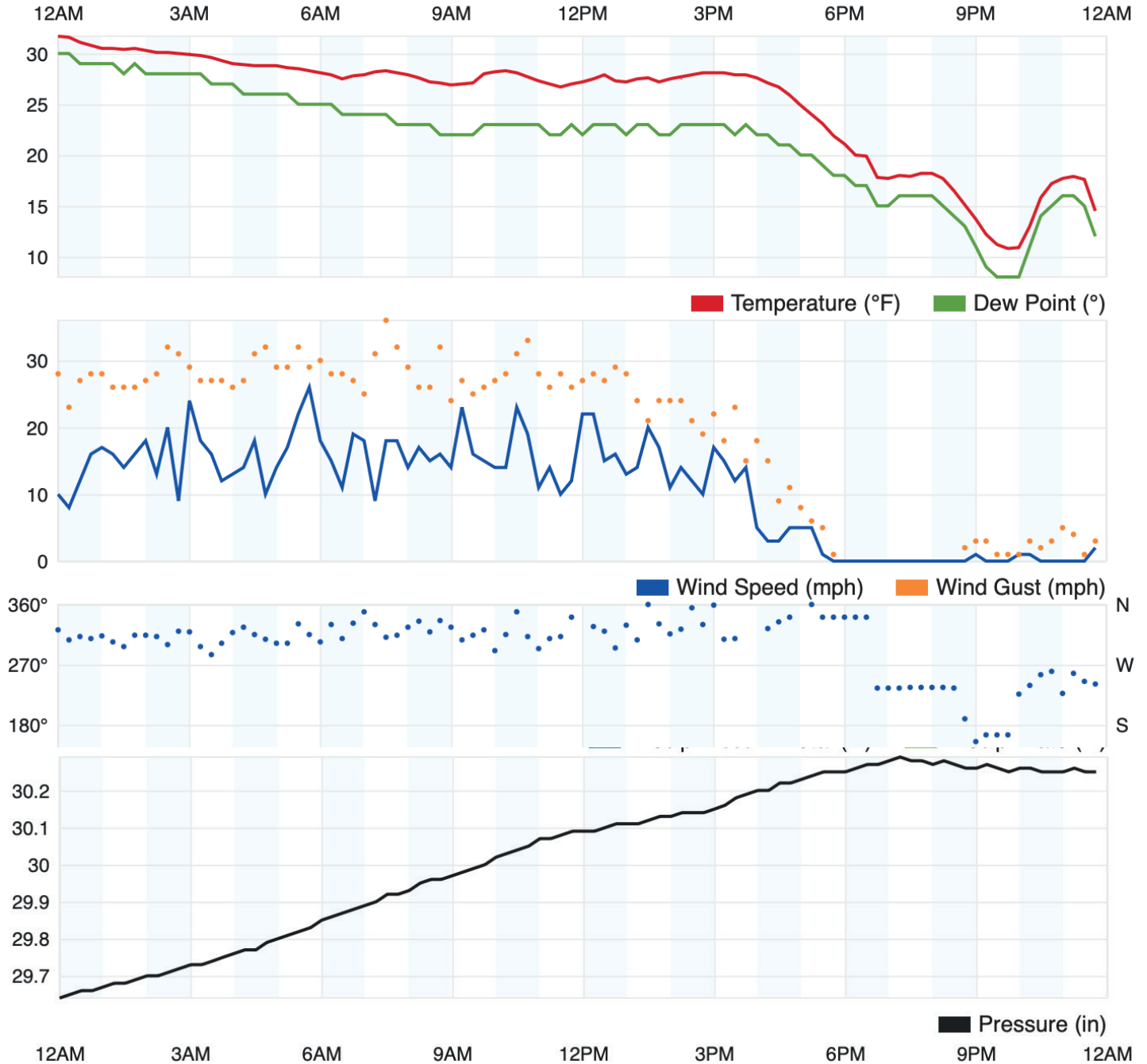
In Chernihiv, Ukraine, environmental destruction is just one of the side effects of war. Credit:

Oleksandr Ratushniak / UNDP Ukraine.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sun Dec 10	Mon Dec 11	Tue Dec 12	Wed Dec 13	Thu Dec 14	Fri Dec 15	Sat Dec 16
32°F	36°F	27°F	38°F	47°F	38°F	42°F
20°F	14°F	15°F	29°F	28°F	23°F	27°F
SSW	SSW	W	S	S	NNW	SW
5 MPH	8 MPH	7 MPH	11 MPH	18 MPH	13 MPH	14 MPH



A Dry Seven Day Forecast, Warming After Tuesday

December 10, 2023
5:37 AM

	Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)						
	12/10 Sun	12/11 Mon	12/12 Tue	12/13 Wed	12/14 Thu	12/15 Fri	12/16 Sat
Aberdeen	35	38	29	42	50	40	43
Britton	31	35	25	37	45	37	39
Brookings	34	40	30	41	48	42	41
Chamberlain	41	45	35	48	55	43	47
Clark	32	35	26	38	46	38	38
Eagle Butte	38	42	32	44	49	38	44
Ellendale	33	36	28	40	47	38	41
Eureka	36	36	27	40	46	37	41
Gettysburg	37	39	30	44	50	38	43
Huron	38	43	33	45	53	43	44
Kennebec	40	46	35	47	54	42	47
McIntosh	36	36	29	41	41	35	42
Milbank	34	40	29	42	50	41	43
Miller	38	42	32	45	53	40	45
Mobridge	39	41	32	44	49	40	43
Murdo	40	46	35	47	53	40	47
Pierre	41	46	36	49	55	42	48
Redfield	37	41	32	44	52	40	44
Sisseton	32	37	27	41	48	39	41
Watertown	32	37	27	39	47	40	41
Webster	31	33	24	36	44	37	38
Wheaton	31	37	26	40	49	40	41



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The forecast calls for dry conditions over the next 7 days. A cold front's passage Monday evening will make for rather chilly conditions on Tuesday. But, after Tuesday, temperatures are forecast to rebound back to above normal.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 11 °F at 9:35 PM

Wind: 36 mph at 7:22 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 51 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1979

Record Low: -29 in 1972

Average High: 31

Average Low: 10

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.20

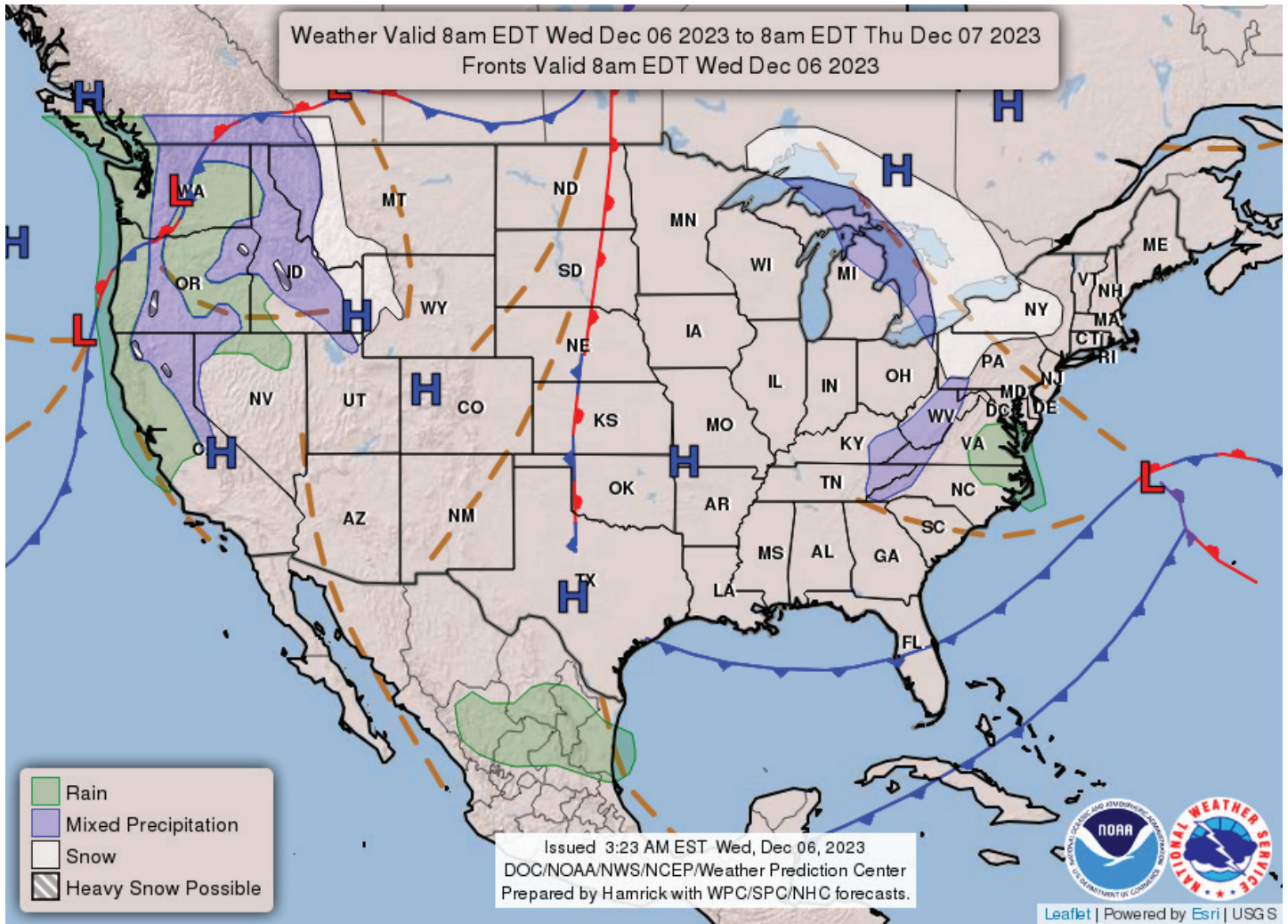
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.41

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:50:52 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00:21 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 10, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across parts of Lyman and Jones Counties on the 10th and 11th. Some amounts included 6 inches at Kennebec and Okaton and 8 inches at Murdo.

December 10, 1699: A severe ice storm hit Boston, Massachusetts causing much damage to orchards.

1699 - A severe ice storm hit Boston, MA, causing much damage to orchards. (The Weather Channel)

1946 - The temperature at New York City soared to 70 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1949 - The barometric pressure at Las Vegas, NV, reached a record low reading of 29.17 inches (987.8 millibars). (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought high winds to the eastern slopes of the Northern and Central Rockies. Winds gusted to 97 mph at Mines Peak CO. In Wyoming, up to a foot of snow blanketed the Teton Village Ski Resort, northwest of Jackson. Strong chinook winds in the Central High Plains Region, gusting to 61 mph at Scottsbluff NE, warmed temperatures to near 70 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls produced heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Totals in northeastern Ohio ranged up to 14 inches at Harpersfield, and totals in western New York State ranged up to 14 inches at Sodus. In the snowbelt of Upper Michigan, the Ontonogon area reported two feet of snow in two days. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Heavy snow fell across the northern and central mountains of Colorado, with 24 inches reported at Steamboat Springs. Six to twelve inches of snow fell in the Denver and Boulder area delaying plane flights and snarling traffic. Heavy snow also spread across the Central Plains into the Mississippi Valley. Winner SD received 11 inches of snow, and more than ten inches of snow was reported north of Sioux City IA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - A slow-moving Nor'easter storm batters the northeast U.S. coast killing 19 people.

2002: A shower of tiny fish rained down on Korona, a village in the mountains of northern Greece. A Greek television reported a waterspout caused the incident on Lake Doirani.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE PROMISE OF PEACE

A professor stood before his class and boasted, "The Bible is false. It cannot be believed. It says, 'Peace and goodwill toward men.' History cannot account for a time when there were no wars!"

Disturbed, Arthur went to his pastor and related the incident. Calmly, his pastor said, "Art, that's not what the angels said. They said, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth among men with whom He is pleased.'"

Politicians speak of peace through treaties and boundaries, threats and sanctions, wars and rumors of wars. But that is not the peace that God speaks of in His Word. His Word speaks of a peace that comes through salvation and surrender to the Prince of Peace. It is a peace that comes from the new heart that He implants within us. It is a peace that Christians enjoy when we open the door to our hearts and allow Him to come in and rule our lives.

The peace that Scripture speaks of will never come from a non-peaceful source. It is a peace that comes through the risen Christ and has its source in God Himself.

We cannot find peace in a turbulent, war-torn world until we make peace with God through Jesus Christ. Only when we go to Him in humility and with faith, trust, and surrender, repent and ask for His forgiveness will He grant us His peace.

Prayer: We pray, Father for Your peace – a peace that comes from the God of all comfort Who gives us His peace that assures us of His presence in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/05/2023 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Fall Dinner, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
11/11/2023 Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
11/26/2023 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
12/02/2023 Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.08.23

21 26 53 66 70 13

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

3 7 17 36 48 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,750,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

1 6 19 28 48 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 51 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

4 7 8 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$87,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

8 14 23 29 37 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

5 25 26 40 60 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$477,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 54, Rapid City Stevens 50
Alcester-Hudson 60, Menno 32
Alliance, Neb. 53, Hot Springs 26
Andes Central-Dakota Christian 44, Platte-Geddes 29
Campbell County, Wyo. 62, St. Thomas More 33
Chamberlain 48, Todd County 43
Corsica/Stickney 48, Colome 11
Crow Creek Tribal School 59, Little Wound 54
Elk Point-Jefferson 69, Madison 45
Faith 48, Kadoka Area 42
Garretson 55, Chester 51
Great Plains Lutheran 66, Northland Lutheran, Wis. 22
Hanson 59, Ethan 56
Harding County 68, Lead-Deadwood 20
Highmore-Harrold 40, Jones County 16
Hitchcock-Tulare 53, Ipswich 40
Lennox 52, Milbank 39
Leola-Frederick High School 41, Langford 37
Lower Brule 60, Marty Indian 54
McCook Central-Montrose 51, Parker 34
Newell 60, Bison 40
Pierre T F Riggs High School 51, Rapid City Central 39
Ponca, Neb. 43, Irene-Wakonda 28
Rapid City Christian 62, Douglas 31
Red Cloud 78, Hill City 51
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 64, Sunshine Bible Academy 14
Santee, Neb. 64, Flandreau Indian 41
Sioux Falls Jefferson 49, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 22
Sioux Valley 58, Clark-Willow Lake 44
Sisseton 64, Mobridge-Pollock 50
Wall 60, Edgemont 19
Warner 61, Webster 36
Gillette Early Bird Tournament=
Buffalo, Wyo. 62, St. Thomas More 33

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 64, Menno 39
Chester 55, Garretson 34
Estelline-Hendricks 63, Sioux Falls Lutheran 33
Faith 78, Kadoka Area 45
Great Plains Lutheran 72, Northland Lutheran, Wis. 36
Harding County 66, Lead-Deadwood 52
Hot Springs 79, Alliance, Neb. 53

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Ipswich 57, Hitchcock-Tulare 48
Jones County 44, Highmore-Harrold 40
Leola-Frederick High School 58, Langford 28
Little Wound 77, Crow Creek Tribal School 50
Lower Brule 76, Marty Indian 41
Madison 66, Elk Point-Jefferson 59
Milbank 63, Lennox 54
Mobridge-Pollock 60, Sisseton 33
Parker 54, McCook Central-Montrose 51
Pierre T F Riggs High School 53, Rapid City Central 43
Platte-Geddes 64, Andes Central-Dakota Christian 29
Ponca, Neb. 53, Irene-Wakonda 19
Rapid City Christian 87, Douglas 43
Rapid City Stevens 54, Aberdeen Central 39
Red Cloud 66, Hill City 63
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 65, Sunshine Bible Academy 29
Santee, Neb. 95, Flandreau Indian 28
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 47, Sioux Falls Jefferson 38
Sioux Valley 69, Clark-Willow Lake 36
St. Thomas More 59, Campbell County, Wyo. 56
Todd County 58, Chamberlain 56
Wall 77, Edgemont 17
Webster 58, Warner 56
Gillette Early Bird Tournament=
St. Thomas More 59, Buffalo, Wyo. 56

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

Thiounne helps South Dakota secure 78-73 victory over Cal State Bakersfield

By The Associated Press undefined

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Lahat Thiounne had 23 points in South Dakota's 78-73 win against CSU Bakersfield on Saturday night.

Thiounne also contributed 10 rebounds for the Coyotes (7-3). Bostyn Holt added 15 points while going 4 of 11 and 6 of 9 from the free throw line, and they also had seven assists. Paul Bruns shot 4 for 10 (2 for 8 from 3-point range) and 2 of 4 from the free throw line to finish with 12 points.

Fidelis Okereke finished with 16 points, seven rebounds and two steals for the Roadrunners (4-5). CSU Bakersfield also got 16 points from Ugnius Jarusevicius. Kaleb Higgins also recorded 13 points and six assists.

South Dakota State knocks off Wichita State 79-69

By The Associated Press undefined

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Zeke Mayo's 25 points helped South Dakota State defeat Wichita State 79-69 on Saturday night.

Mayo had six rebounds and seven assists for the Jackrabbits (5-5). Kalen Garry scored 22 points while shooting 8 for 12, including 5 for 8 from beyond the arc, and added seven rebounds. Charlie Easley finished with 11 points.

Colby Rogers led the Shockers (7-3) in scoring, finishing with 21 points and four assists. Wichita State also got 18 points, six rebounds, four assists and two steals from Harlond Beverly. Xavier Bell also put up 11 points and four assists.

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North Dakota State rolls into FCS semifinals with 45-17 win over South Dakota

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Cam Miller had a touchdown by pass and run, Cole Payton rushed for two scores and North Dakota State rolled over South Dakota 45-17 on Saturday in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs.

The Bison (11-3), who have won nine of the past 11 FCS championships, will travel to second-seeded Montana for a semifinal matchup.

The third-seeded Coyotes (10-3) won 24-19 at NDSU in September to snap a six-game losing streak to the Bison but were down 21-0 after the first quarter Saturday following an 82-yard punt return by Jayden Price. Miller ran 9 yards to cap NDSU's opening 75-yard drive and running quarterback Payton rushed for a 43-yard score.

Miller added a 4-yard TD pass to finish an 81-yard drive and Payton ran 17 yards for a 35-3 halftime lead.

Miller was 13-of-15 passing for 210 yards, Payton had 65 yards on six carries and TaMerik Williams added 58 yards rushing and another TD.

Aidan Bouman was 13-of-22 passing for 199 yards and a TD to Javion Phelps before Bouman was knocked out of the game early in the fourth quarter. Bouman was intercepted twice by Cole Wisniewski and Sam Jung added another pick off backup Jarrett Synek.

NDSU outgained South Dakota 416-298 and held the Coyotes to 52 yards rushing.

Davis' 66-yard TD helps No. 1 South Dakota State beat the win, Villanova 23-12 in FCS quarterfinals

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Isaiah Davis ran for 192 yards, including a 66-yard touchdown run, and top-seeded South Dakota State, the defending national champions, defeated eighth-seeded Villanova 23-12 on Saturday in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs.

That touchdown early in the fourth quarter was the only offensive score by either team going into the wind, which gusted up to 45 miles an hour.

The Jackrabbits (13-0), who won their 27th-straight game, are home against the winner of No. 4 Idaho and No. 5 Albany in the semifinals next weekend.

The only other touchdown going into the wind was Matthew Durrance's punt block, scoop and score covering 45 yards in the second quarter that gave South Dakota State a 10-6 lead.

The Wildcats (10-3) had taken the lead on a 25-yard run by Jalen Jackson, but missed the extra point. Matthew Mercurio kicked a field goal late in the second quarter to pull them within 10-9.

South Dakota State got a key touchdown midway through the third quarter on a Mark Gronowski pass to Jaxon Jahnke that covered 20 yards.

Villanova got another field goal early in the fourth quarter, but on the next possession, Davis burst through the stacked line for the game-sealing touchdown.

Gronowski was 11 of 19 for 101 yards and the Jackrabbits ran for 242 yards.

Connor Watkins completing 6 of 18 for 74 yards with an interception. Villanova had 219 total yards.

The only three meetings between the schools have come in the playoffs with the Jackrabbits winning all three.

Brazil's Lula takes heat on oil plans at UN climate talks, a turnaround after hero status last year

By PETER PRENGAMAN and FABIANO MAISONNAVE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Fresh off election victory, a year ago Brazilian President-elect Inacio Lula da Silva was the star of the annual U.N. climate talks.

Lula promised to crack down on deforestation and turn Brazil into an environmental leader, a complete turnaround after President Jair Bolsonaro rolled back regulations and encouraged land-grabbing in the Amazon.

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"Lula! Lula! Lula!" many onlookers screamed during Lula's many events at COP27 in Egypt.

What a difference a year makes.

Just as Lula addressed world leaders at COP28 in Dubai, it was announced that Brazil would join OPEC+, a group of big oil-exporting countries, including Russia. At one event during the conference, Lula tried to explain the decision by saying that, once on the inside, the South American nation would push other oil-producing countries to transition to green energy—a curious explanation given that state-run oil company Petrobras is focused on further oil exploration. Lula later clarified that Brazil would be an OPEC observer, not a full member.

In his speech to world leaders, Lula implored delegates to go beyond "eloquent but empty words." In a subsequent session with Environment Minister Marina Silva, Lula teared up when he talked about the need to protect forests.

Instead of chants of adulation, Brazil received a Fossil of the Day award from Climate Action Network International, a non-award given to countries whose actions support fossil fuels, the main cause of climate change.

Natalie Unterstell, president of Talanoa, a Brazilian think tank focused on climate, said Lula's approach to the environment was focused on curbing deforestation, Brazil's largest source of carbon emissions, which his administration has managed to slow by half since taking office in January. That approach served him well during his first terms, between 2003 and 2010, but that is no longer enough, she said.

"Lula can't be a climate leader without a real energy transition policy," she said. "It's time for him to update his programming software."

Lula has had a long and complicated relationship with oil. When huge reserves were discovered off Brazilian shores in 2006, Lula said: "This discovery ... proves that God is Brazilian." Indeed, as Brazil became a major oil-producer over the next decade, the money helped Lula, and then successor President Dilma Rousseff, fund major social programs that lifted tens of millions of people from poverty.

Today, Brazil is the world's ninth largest producer, with 3% of global output, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Oil has become so important that it's now Brazil's second export product after soy, producing 3.67 million barrels a day. By far, China is the country's largest buyer.

At a climate conference focused on reducing planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, which oil and gas products let off when burned, environmentalists have been quick to note the contradiction.

Meanwhile, Petrobras is doubling down on oil. On Dec. 13, a day after the climate conference is scheduled to end, the country is going to allow companies to bid on 33 areas with blocks for oil exploration, according to Brazil's National Agency of Oil, Natural Gas and Biofuels, including some in the Amazon rainforest. It's part of a push to offer more than 900 blocks in December.

In a written response to the AP, the National Agency of Oil, Natural Gas and Biofuels declined to comment on demands for energy transition, arguing that, as a regulatory agency, it "does not create public policies but rather implements the policies formulated by the government."

The increased exploration, which eventually leads to more production, threatens to cancel out or even surpass gains from Brazil's efforts to stop net deforestation by 2030, according to the Greenhouse Gas Emission Estimation System, an initiative by the Climate Observatory, a network of environmental nonprofit groups.

"The damage (of the exploration) goes against any positioning of Brazil as a climate leader," said David Tsai, projects coordinator at the Institute for Energy and the Environment, which is part of Climate Observatory.

While Lula fumbled during the few days he spent at COP28, his Colombian counterpart, leftist Gustavo Petro, seemed to be taking the mantle of environmental leadership in Latin America. In contrast to Brazil's alignment with OPEC, Petro joined an alliance of nations supporting a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty. "This is not economic suicide," he said in Dubai. "It's about preventing humanity's self-destruction."

The leaders' differing visions were on display in August during the Amazonian summit in Belem. Lula and other leaders vetoed Petro's proposal to ban oil production in the world's largest rainforest. Similar to the ongoing climate talks, oil was the most contentious topic during the meeting held in Belem. At the time,

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Lula faced protests by Indigenous groups and environmentalists against Petrobras' plans to explore for oil near the mouth of the Amazon River.

Petrobras did not respond to AP's written request for comment on its plans for the mouth of Amazon and on energy transition. Lula's office also did not respond to a request for comment.

Environmentalists say they hope Lula can be convinced to change policies by 2025, when Brazil is expected to host COP30 in Belem. Whatever the next years bring, at the moment the administration is marching ahead.

"We will not be ashamed of Petrobras," Brazil's minister of mines and energy, Alexandre Silveira told daily newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo in an interview this week. "We will not be ashamed of also having the potential of fossil fuels in Brazil. They need to be explored because Brazil is a country in which social injustices are prevalent."

Heavy fighting across Gaza as Israel presses ahead with renewed US military and diplomatic support

By NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Heavy fighting raged overnight and into Sunday across Gaza, including in the devastated north, as Israel pressed ahead with its offensive after the U.S. blocked the latest international push for a cease-fire and rushed more munitions to its close ally.

Israel has faced rising international outrage and calls for a permanent cease-fire after the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians. Nearly 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where U.N. agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support to the offensive once again in recent days, by vetoing United Nations Security Council efforts to end the fighting that enjoyed wide international support, and by pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked U.S. President Joe Biden for the "important ammunition for the continuation of the war," and for supporting Israel at the Security Council.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel's goal of crushing Hamas' military and governing abilities, and returning all the hostages captured in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Hamas and other Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and capturing around 240, over 100 of whom were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month.

Netanyahu's office said Sunday that Hamas still has 117 hostages, as well as the remains of 20 people killed in captivity or during the Oct. 7 attack. The militants hope to exchange them for large numbers of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

In response to the attack, Israel launched an air and ground war that has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, and forced some 1.9 million people to flee their homes. With only a trickle of aid allowed in, and delivery rendered impossible in much of the territory, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked a rarely-used power last week to call for a cease-fire, said "we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system."

"The situation is fast deteriorating into a catastrophe with potentially irreversible implications for the Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region," he told a forum in Qatar.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV late Saturday that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning all the hostages.

"The evaluation that this can't be measured in weeks is correct, and I'm not sure it can be measured in months," he said.

FIGHTING AND ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

Israeli forces continue to face heavy resistance, even in northern Gaza, where entire neighborhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have been operating for over six weeks.

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Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear with their hands in the air. Several held assault rifles above their heads, and one man could be seen slowly walking forward and placing a gun on the ground before returning to the group.

Other videos in recent days have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded. Men from a separate group of detainees who were released on Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water.

Israeli media have portrayed the mass detentions as a sign that Hamas is surrendering in the north.

But residents said there was still heavy fighting underway in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah and the Jabaliya refugee camp, a dense urban area housing Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

"They are attacking anything that moves," said Hamza Abu Fatouh, a resident of Shijaiyah. He said the dead and wounded were left in the streets as ambulances could no longer reach the area, where Israeli snipers and tanks had positioned themselves among the abandoned buildings.

"The resistance also fights back," he added, saying gunbattles had raged late Saturday.

Israel ordered the evacuation of the northern third of the territory, including Gaza City, early in the war, but tens of thousands of people have remained there, fearing that the south would be no safer or that they would never be allowed to return to their homes.

NO SAFE PLACES

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,700, the majority women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties, saying the militants put civilians in danger by fighting in dense, residential neighborhoods. The military says 97 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive. Palestinians militants have also continued firing rockets into Israel.

Israel says it has provided detailed instructions for civilians to evacuate to safer areas, even as it continues to strike what it says are militant targets in all parts of the territory. Thousands have fled to the southern town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt in recent days — one of the last areas where aid agencies are able to deliver food and water.

Israel has designated a narrow patch of barren southern coastline, Muwasi, as a safe zone. But Palestinians there face overcrowded conditions with scant shelter and no toilets.

The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned Sunday that as displaced people pack into smaller areas without adequate food, water, shelter and sanitation, it creates "ideal conditions for disease to spread."

The war has raised tensions across the region, with Lebanon's Hezbollah trading fire with Israel along the border and other Iran-backed militant groups targeting the U.S. in Syria and Iraq.

France said one of its warships in the Red Sea shot down two drones that had approached it from Yemen, where Iran-backed Houthi rebels have vowed to halt Israeli shipping through the key waterway.

Hanegbi said Israel has called on its Western allies to address the threat and would give them "some time" to organize a response. But he said if the threats persist, "we will act to remove this blockade."

Philippines says Chinese coast guard used water cannons against its vessels for a second day

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Chinese coast guard targeted Philippine vessels with water cannon blasts Sunday and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, just a day after similar hostilities at another contested shoal, Philippine officials said.

The Philippines and its treaty ally, the United States, immediately condemned the latest confrontation near the Second Thomas Shoal, where two Philippine navy-operated supply boats and two Philippine coast

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guard escort ships had sailed to deliver food and other supplies to Filipino forces in a long-marooned navy ship that serves as a territorial outpost.

"We condemn, once again, China's latest unprovoked acts of coercion and dangerous maneuvers against a legitimate and routine Philippine rotation and resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal that has put the lives of our people at risk," a Philippine government task force that deals with the territorial disputes said in a statement, using the Filipino name for the shoal.

The Chinese coast guard's high-pressure water cannon blasts disabled and severely damaged the engines of the Philippine supply boat M/L Kalayaan, which had to be towed back to the western Philippine province of Palawan, Philippine officials said, adding the action seriously endangered the lives of the crew.

One of two Philippine coast guard escort ships, the BRP Cabra, sustained damage to its mast due to the water cannon blast. Another supply boat was rammed by a Chinese coast guard ship but still managed to maneuver away and deliver supplies to Filipino marines at Second Thomas Shoal, they said.

Drone video footage and photographs issued by the Philippine coast guard show two Chinese coast guard ships separately blasting water cannons at close range at BRP Cabra and a smaller supply boat.

"The systematic and consistent manner in which the People's Republic of China carries out these illegal and irresponsible actions puts into question and significant doubt the sincerity of its calls for peaceful dialogue," it said. "We demand that China demonstrate that it is a responsible and trustworthy member of the international community."

The Chinese coast guard said it had "implemented controls in accordance with laws and regulations." The statement gave no details about the measures taken but said the Philippines action "seriously infringed on China's sovereignty."

It also claimed a Philippine vessel ignored warnings and in violation of international navigation regulations made a sharp turn in an "unprofessional and dangerous manner" and intentionally collided with a Chinese coast guard ship, causing "scratching."

"The responsibility lies entirely with the Philippine side," the coast guard said.

Coast guard spokesperson Gan Yu described China's actions as "reasonable, legal and professional," and said such operations would continue unabated.

"We sternly warn the Philippines to immediately cease its infringing actions ... and strictly control its provocations on the front line so as not to drop a stone on its own foot," Gan was quoted as saying on the coast guard's website.

China's actions were strongly condemned by foreign diplomats in the Philippines, including the ambassadors from treaty partner the U.S., the European Union and Japan.

"The U.S. stands with the Philippines and partners in vehemently condemning the PRC's repeated illegal and dangerous actions against vessels," U.S. Ambassador MaryKay L. Carlson posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

China's ships, which have surrounded the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal for years, have blocked Philippine coast guard and supply boats in a yearslong effort to take control of the hotly disputed atoll claimed by both nations.

China has rejected all international condemnation and attempts at legal intervention, including a 2016 ruling by a U.N.-backed arbitration tribunal that invalidated China's claims, leaving them without any legal basis. China insists it has a legal right to "defend its sovereignty" in keeping with its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, one of the world's most crucial waterways for shipping and other maritime activities.

On Saturday, the Chinese coast guard and accompanying ships also trained water cannons at three Philippine fisheries vessels to prevent them from approaching Scarborough Shoal in the disputed waters off the northwestern Philippines.

That caused "significant damage" to the communication and navigation equipment of one of the three Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessel, Philippine officials said. They added that suspected militia vessels accompanying Chinese coast guard ships used a long-range acoustic device that could impair hearing, causing "severe temporary discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew."

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In other high seas clashes this year, Chinese coast guard ships used a military-grade laser that caused Filipino crewmen temporary blindness and engaged in dangerous blocking and shadowing maneuvers that caused minor collisions, Philippines officials say.

More tensions loom.

"The Philippines will not be deterred from exercising our legal rights over our maritime zones," the Philippine government task force said.

A flotilla of 40 civilian fishing boats, backed by Philippine coast guard escort ships, initially was en route Sunday to Second Thomas Shoal but decided to proceed first to two Philippine-occupied islets in the South China Sea to deliver Christmas food packs.

From there, organizers will reassess before the flotilla proceeds with a plan to sail along the vicinity of the Second Thomas Shoal, said one of the organizers, Rafaela David, who denounced the latest Chinese action.

Elon Musk restores X account of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones

By The Associated Press undefined

Elon Musk has restored the X account of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, pointing to a poll on the social media platform formerly known as Twitter that came out in favor of the Infowars host who repeatedly called the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting a hoax.

It poses new uncertainty for advertisers, who have fled X over concerns about hate speech appearing alongside their ads, and is the latest divisive public personality to get back their banned account.

Musk posted a poll on Saturday asking if Jones should be reinstated, with the results showing 70% of those who responded in favor. Early Sunday, Musk tweeted, "The people have spoken and so it shall be."

A few hours later, Jones' posts were visible again and he retweeted a post about his video game. He and his Infowars show had been permanently banned in 2018 for abusive behavior.

Musk, who has described himself as a free speech absolutist, said the move was about protecting those rights. In response to a user who posted that "permanent account bans are antithetical to free speech," Musk wrote, "I find it hard to disagree with this point."

The billionaire Tesla CEO also tweeted it's likely that Community Notes — X's crowd-sourced fact-checking service — "will respond rapidly to any AJ post that needs correction."

It is a major turnaround for Musk, who previously said he wouldn't let Jones back on the platform despite repeated calls to do so. Last year, Musk pointed to the death of his first-born child and tweeted, "I have no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame."

Jones repeatedly has said on his show that the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, that killed 20 children and six educators never happened and was staged in an effort to tighten gun laws.

Relatives of many of the victims sued Jones in Connecticut and Texas, winning nearly \$1.5 billion in judgments against him. In October, a judge ruled that Jones could not use bankruptcy protection to avoid paying more than \$1.1 billion of that debt.

Relatives of the school shooting victims testified at the trials about being harassed and threatened by Jones' believers, who sent threats and even confronted the grieving families in person, accusing them of being "crisis actors" whose children never existed.

Jones is appealing the judgments, saying he didn't get fair trials and his speech was protected by the First Amendment.

Restoring Jones' account comes as Musk has seen a slew of big brands, including Disney and IBM, stop advertising on X after a report by liberal advocacy group Media Matters said ads were appearing alongside pro-Nazi content and white nationalist posts.

They also were scared away after Musk himself endorsed an antisemitic conspiracy theory in response to a post on X. The Tesla CEO later apologized and visited Israel, where he toured a kibbutz attacked by Hamas militants and held talks with top Israeli leaders.

But he also has said advertisers are engaging in "blackmail" and, using a profanity, essentially told them

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to go away.

"Don't advertise," Musk said in an on-stage interview late last month at The New York Times DealBook Summit.

After buying Twitter last year, Musk said he was granting "amnesty" for suspended accounts and has since reinstated former President Donald Trump; Ye, the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, following two suspensions over antisemitic posts last year; and far-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who was kicked off the platform for violating its COVID-19 misinformation policies.

Trump, who was banned for encouraging the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection, has his own social media site, Truth Social, and has only tweeted once since being allowed back on X.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy heads to Argentina in bid to win support from developing nations

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is heading to Buenos Aires to witness the swearing-in on Sunday of Argentina's new president, Javier Milei, Zelenskyy's office said.

It is the Ukrainian leader's first-ever trip to Latin America as Kyiv continues to court support among developing nations for its 21-month-old fight against Russia's invading forces.

A political outsider who has railed against what he calls entrenched official corruption in Argentina and promised to uproot the political establishment, Milei ran on a pro-Western foreign policy platform, repeatedly expressing distrust of Moscow and Beijing.

Zelenskyy phoned Milei shortly after the Argentinian's electoral victory, thanking him for his "clear support for Ukraine" which he described in social media posts as "well-noticed and appreciated by Ukrainians."

In its readout of the call published shortly later, Milei's office said he had offered to host a summit between Ukraine and Latin American states, a potential boon to Kyiv's monthslong effort to strengthen its relationships with countries of the global south.

Zelenskyy and other senior Ukrainian officials have repeatedly presented Ukraine's war against Russia as resistance against colonial aggression, hoping to win support from Asian, African and Latin American states that in the past struggled to free themselves from foreign domination, sometimes turning to Moscow for support against Western powers.

According to Zelenskyy's official website, he broke his journey to Argentina to meet with the prime minister of the West African country of Cape Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, thanking him for his support for Kyiv's diplomatic initiatives and discussing efforts to boost Ukrainian grain exports to Africa. It was not immediately clear where the meeting took place.

Zelenskyy expressed his appreciation for Cape Verde's backing of U.N. resolutions supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory before peace talks can begin.

The African country previously supported U.N. documents condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

According to Zelenskyy's website, he and Correia e Silva also discussed Kyiv's efforts to expand a corridor for grain exports in the Black Sea that has seen over 7 million metric tons of Ukrainian produce shipped out since its inception, months after Moscow pulled out of a U.N.-brokered deal to facilitate shipments of Ukrainian and Russian food and fertilizer to countries in need, as well as a proposal to establish transport and storage hubs for Ukrainian grain in Africa.

In other developments:

— Russian shelling over the past 24 hours killed two elderly women and wounded two more civilians in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov reported on Sunday morning. In a Telegram update, Syniehubov said that both women died in the same attack in the province's east, parts of which run close to the front line and have seen intense fighting in recent weeks.

In the Kherson region in the south, Russian shelling on Saturday and overnight killed one civilian and

wounded four others, local Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram on Sunday.

China is hardening against dissent, rights groups say as they mark International Human Rights Day

By SYLVIA HUI and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — When her husband fled China in 2019 to escape a police crackdown on dissidents, Lu Lina thought she and their young son could soon join him in safety abroad.

She did not know that she would be forced to move house, that her 8-year-old son would be effectively kicked out of school and that border police would block her from leaving the country over the next three years. In the end, the couple had to resort to filing for divorce in China to get around the exit ban.

"After my husband left, police gave our lives so much trouble," Lu said from Los Angeles, where the family eventually reunited and settled late last year. "Every time the border guards would stop me, take away my phone, my wallet and all my things. They gave no explanation."

Lu's husband, Liu Sifang, a musician and former teacher, was among a number of Chinese activists and rights lawyers who were either arrested, forced into hiding or self-exiled after attending an informal get-together in 2019 to discuss human rights.

Rights groups say the punishment of Liu's family highlights Beijing's increasingly harsh crackdown on dissent both within China and beyond. As the groups mark the 75th anniversary of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Sunday, they fear that the situation in the world's second most populous country is getting worse, not better.

Western governments are failing to press China hard enough, the rights groups say, and a more powerful China under President Xi Jinping has become more impervious to international pressure.

"If you look at independent activism around the time that Xi came to power, relative to what you can see now, what's disturbingly clear is that Xi's leadership sought to obliterate civil society and to silence dissent, not just inside the country but globally, to ensure that anybody who criticizes him and the regime has to think twice," said Sophie Richardson, a longtime China observer and former China director at Human Rights Watch.

A new report by the Rome-based rights group Safeguard Defenders, published Sunday to mark International Human Rights Day, alleges that China's government has stepped up its use of "collective punishment" against the loved ones of human rights advocates in recent years.

"Under Xi Jinping, China is increasingly unwilling to allow political targets to leave the country, slapping them and their families with exit bans, and using transnational repression methods to control the ones who make it out," according to the report.

The report, based on interviews with more than a dozen rights activists and compiled media reports, said it identified at least 50 such cases from 2015 to 2022, including the detention, home eviction, harassment or violent assault of activists' family members.

This year's International Human Rights Day — marking 75 years since the United Nations adopted the global foundational document for protecting the rights of every individual everywhere — comes just days after EU leaders visited China for a fresh round of talks.

While the summit focused on trade and the Ukraine war, the EU said that the bloc also expressed its "deep concerns" about the rights situation in China. Both sides said they welcomed the resumption of their human rights dialogue earlier this year.

Wang Lutong, head of European affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said Beijing was willing to continue the dialogue — though he also warned that "human rights should not be used as a stick to beat China."

Last week, Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated China's longstanding defense against international criticism of its human rights record. Beijing opposes "any attempt to force one's own values and model upon others," he told a symposium.

"We must reject any attempt to interfere in other countries' internal affairs or contain their development under the pretext of human rights," he said. "China has ... opened a new path for human rights develop-

ment that adapts to the changing times and suits our national conditions.”

Richardson, the China rights expert, said the EU-China rights dialogue falls far short of accomplishing real outcomes for dissidents.

“It’s what the political establishment prefers because it doesn’t upset Beijing too much,” she said. “It’s the deliverable that people can point at and say, ‘we did that.’”

In April, Chinese police detained Yu Wensheng, a human rights lawyer, and his wife Xu Yan as they were on their way to the European Union office in Beijing to meet with the EU ambassador.

The couple is facing charges of subversion of state power and “picking quarrels and stirring up troubles” — though they haven’t received any legal documents outlining the charges, according to Bao Longjun, a legal advocate familiar with the case.

Such vague charges are commonly leveled against rights activists in China, and rights groups have noted an increase this year in cases like Yu’s. He and his wife remain in detention.

Other Chinese rights advocates, such as disbarred human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang, continue to face harassment from authorities even after they have been released from prison.

Liu, the dissident who fled to the United States, described how tough it was being separated from his wife and son for three years. The couple has now remarried in the U.S.

“Those law-enforcement officials, they used such cruel methods to retaliate against me because I managed to get out,” he said. “They are showing people like us that this is what we can do to you and your family.”

Anthony Davis leads Lakers to NBA In-Season Tournament title, 123-109 over Pacers

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — As Commissioner Adam Silver prepared to hand LeBron James the MVP trophy of the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament, he cautioned that “it doesn’t come with a franchise.”

James bent over in laughter, but he has been serious about wanting to own an NBA expansion team in Las Vegas.

For now, he’ll more than settle for the individual honor and tournament championship after scoring 24 points and adding 11 rebounds Saturday night to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the final.

“My enthusiasm about being here post-career, bringing a team here has not changed,” James said. “The fans are amazing here. They have everything already: WNBA team, they have a baseball team (Athletics) coming in soon, NFL team, hockey team, F1 (Formula One) was just here. This is a place that loves great attractions, and I think the NBA will be another great addition to this city.”

As well as James played Saturday, the star was teammate Anthony Davis, who had 41 points and 20 rebounds — numbers that would have been season highs if they counted. This is the only game in the tournament that doesn’t figure in the standings or statistics.

Davis also shot 16 of 24, had five assists and blocked four shots.

“They’re a hell of a one-two punch,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said about James and Davis. “That one or two could be either one of them on any given night. At the end of the day, they know how to take it to the next level when everything is on the line.”

Los Angeles is the first In-Season Tournament champion because the two headliners received plenty of help.

Austin Reaves scored 28 points, D’Angelo Russell added 13 points and Cam Reddish set the tone defensively by limiting the damage by Indiana’s Tyrese Haliburton, who emerged as one of the faces of this tournament.

He had 20 points and 11 assists against the Lakers, often passing to a teammate rather than trying to force the action.

“(Reddish) didn’t score a lot (nine points), but I felt like he was one of the best players on the court with

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the way he defended and really changed the game on that end of the floor," Reaves said.

Also for the Pacers, Bennedict Mathurin scored 20 points and Aaron Nesmith had 15.

In addition to taking home a trophy, Lakers players on standard contracts each made \$500,000 and the Pacers received \$200,000 apiece. Players on two-way deals take home half those amounts.

The tournament and the title game had a combination of a NBA playoff and one-and-done NCAA Tournament kind of atmosphere, and the Pacers and Lakers played as if their seasons were on the line.

Los Angeles making it Las Vegas where it was essentially the home team before a sellout crowd played Sunday like it had been here before. The situation was different for the Pacers, who are still trying to prove they are a championship-level team.

"We just got outplayed tonight from the start of the game to the end of the game," Haliburton said. "Just didn't do the job on loose balls, didn't rebound, didn't get enough stops when needed. They just outplayed us, and it's frustrating. It's funny because everybody says this has the NCAA Tournament feel, but after a game like that you're sitting in the locker room going, 'Most of us ain't graduating.' We play on Monday."

The Lakers led most of the game, though Indiana kept in striking distance until Los Angeles went on a 15-3 run late in the fourth quarter to turn in a 100-96 lead into a 115-99 advantage.

"Our guys got a real taste of what the elevated stage is all about," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said. "It's so important to have this experience, to feel the intensity, to feel the glare and the glow and to find out what it means to be totally together in an effort to conquer it. We conquered a lot of challenges along the way. This one tonight was a little too steep."

CELEBRITY SIGHTINGS

Among those in attendance were basketball Hall of Famers Julius Erving and Shaquille O'Neal, football Hall of Famers Tim Brown and Shannon Sharpe, former tennis star Steffi Graf, former boxing champion Floyd Mayweather Jr., chef Bobby Flay and rapper Flavor Flav. Members of the two-time champion Las Vegas Aces, including WNBA Finals MVP A'ja Wilson, also watched.

UP NEXT

Pacers: At Detroit on Monday night to open a four-game road swing.

Lakers: At Dallas on Tuesday night to begin a three-game Texas trip.

New US aid for Ukraine by year-end seems increasingly out of reach as GOP ties it to border security

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deal to provide further U.S. assistance to Ukraine by year-end appears to be increasingly out of reach for President Joe Biden. The impasse is deepening in Congress despite dire warnings from the White House about the consequences of inaction as Republicans insist on pairing the aid with changes to America's immigration and border policies.

After the Democratic president said this past week he was willing to "make significant compromises on the border," Republicans quickly revived demands that they had earlier set aside, hardening their positions and attempting to shift the negotiations to the right, according to a person familiar with the talks who was not authorized to publicly discuss them and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The latest proposal, from the lead GOP negotiator, Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., came during a meeting with a core group of senators before they left Washington on Thursday afternoon. It could force the White House to consider ideas that many Democrats will seriously oppose, throwing new obstacles in the difficult negotiations.

Biden is facing the prospect of a cornerstone of his foreign policy — repelling Russian President Vladimir Putin from overtaking Ukraine — crumbling as U.S. support for funding the war wanes, especially among Republicans. The White House says a failure to approve more aid by year's end could have catastrophic consequences for Ukraine and its ability to fight.

To preserve U.S. backing, the Biden administration has quietly engaged in Senate talks on border policy in recent weeks, providing assistance to the small group of senators trying to reach a deal and commu-

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nicating what policy changes it would find acceptable.

The president is trying to satisfy GOP demands to reduce the historic number of migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border while alleviating Democrats' fears that legal immigration will be choked off with drastic measures.

As talks sputtered to a restart this past week, Democrats warned Republicans that time for a deal was running short. Congress is scheduled to depart Washington in mid-December for a holiday break.

"Republicans need to show they are serious about reaching a compromise, not just throwing on the floor basically Donald Trump's border policies," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Thursday before Republicans made their counteroffer.

But the new Republican proposal dug in on policy changes that had led Democrats to step back from the negotiations, according to the person familiar with the talks. The GOP offer calls for ending the humanitarian parole program that's now in place for existing classes of migrants — Ukrainians, Afghans, Cubans, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans and Haitians. That idea had been all but dashed before.

Additionally, those groups of migrants would not be allowed to be paroled again if the terms of their stay expire before their cases are adjudicated in immigration proceedings.

GOP senators proposed monitoring systems such as ankle bracelets for people, including children, who are detained at the border and are awaiting parole. Republicans want to ban people from applying for asylum if they have transited through a different country where they could have sought asylum instead. GOP lawmakers also want to revive executive powers that would allow a president to shut down entries for wide-ranging reasons.

Further, after migrant encounters at the border recently hit historic numbers, the GOP proposal would set new guidelines requiring the border to be essentially shut down if illegal crossings reach a certain limit.

Lankford declined to discuss specifics after the Thursday meeting, but said he was trying to "negotiate in good faith." He said the historic number of migrants at the border could not be ignored. The sheer number of people arriving at the border has swamped the asylum system, he said, making it impossible for authorities to adequately screen the people they allow in.

"Do you want large numbers of undocumented individuals and unscreened individuals without work permits, without access to the rest of the economy?" Lankford said.

The lead Democratic negotiator, Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, did not quickly respond to the GOP proposal.

Senators had made some progress in the talks before Thursday, finding general agreement on raising the initial standard for migrants to enter the asylum system — part of what's called the credible fear system. The administration has communicated that it is amenable to that change and that it could agree to expand expedited removal to deport immigrants before they have a hearing with an immigration judge, according to two people briefed on the private negotiations who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Immigration advocates and progressives in Congress have been alarmed by the direction of the talks, especially because they have not featured changes aimed at expanding legal immigration.

Robyn Barnard, director of refugee advocacy with Human Rights First, called the current state of negotiations an "absolute crisis moment." She warned that broadening the fast-track deportation authority could lead to a mass rounding up of immigrants around the country and compared it to the situation during the Trump administration. "Communities across the country would be living in fear," she said.

But Republican senators, sensing that Biden, who is campaigning for a second term, wants to address the historic number of people coming to the border, have taken an aggressive stance and tried to draw the president directly into negotiations.

"The White House is going to have to engage particularly if Senate Democrats are unwilling to do what we are suggesting be done," said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., at a news conference Thursday.

The White House has so far declined to take a leading role in negotiations. "Democrats have said that they want to compromise. Have that conversation," said White House press secretary Karine-Jean Pierre.

After every GOP senator this past week voted not to move ahead with legislation that would provide

tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance for Ukraine, many in the chamber were left in a dour mood. Even those who held out hope for a deal acknowledged it would be difficult to push a package through the Senate at this late stage.

Even if senators reach a deal, the obstacles to passage in the House are considerable. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has signaled he will fight for sweeping changes to immigration policy that go beyond what is being discussed in the Senate. Also, broad support from House Democrats is far from guaranteed, as progressives and Hispanic lawmakers have raised alarm at curtailing access to asylum.

"Trading Ukrainian lives for the lives of asylum seekers is morally bankrupt and irresponsible," Rep. Delia Ramirez, D-Ill., posted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, as part of a coordinated campaign by Hispanic Democrats.

The unwieldy nature of the issue left even Lankford, who was one of the few senators optimistic that a deal could be reached this year, acknowledging the difficulty of finding an agreement in the coming days.

"There's just a whole lot of politics that have been bound up in this," he said as he departed the Capitol for the week. "Thirty years it hasn't been resolved because it's incredibly complicated."

Shohei Ohtani agrees to record \$700 million, 10-year contract with Dodgers

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Shohei Ohtani has set a financial record to go along with his singular on-field performance, getting \$700 million to make a 30-mile move up Interstate 5 to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

His agent, Nez Balelo, issued a midafternoon news release Saturday announcing the 10-year contract, ending months of speculation that began even before Ohtani became a free agent on Nov. 2. In recent days, media and fans had tracked private plane movements and alleged sightings like detectives in attempts to discern the intentions of the two-time AL MVP with the Angels.

"This is a unique, historic contract for a unique, historic player," Balelo said. "He is excited to begin this partnership, and he structured his contract to reflect a true commitment from both sides to long-term success."

Ohtani's total was 64% higher than baseball's previous record, a \$426.5 million, 12-year deal for Angels outfielder Mike Trout that began in 2019.

His \$70 million average salary is 62% above the previous high of \$43,333,333, shared by pitchers Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander with deals they struck with the New York Mets. Ohtani's average salary nearly doubles the roughly \$42.3 million he earned with the Angels. It also exceeds the entire payrolls of Baltimore and Oakland this year.

His agreement includes unprecedented deferred money that will lower the amount it counts toward the Dodgers' luxury tax payroll, a person familiar with the agreement told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the details were not announced.

"He structured his contract to reflect a true commitment from both sides to long-term success," Balelo said. "Shohei and I want to thank all the organizations that reached out to us for their interest and respect, especially the wonderful people we got to know even better as this process unfolded."

This is perhaps the largest contract in sports history, topping highs believed to be set by soccer stars Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé.

There was no immediate comment by the Dodgers. Ohtani has not spoken with reporters since Aug. 9.

"I apologize for taking so long to come to a decision," Ohtani said in an English-language statement on Instagram. "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved with the Angels organization and the fans who have supported me over the past six years, as well as to everyone involved with each team that was part of this negotiation process."

"And to all Dodgers fans, I pledge to always do what's best for the team and always continue to give it my all to be the best version of myself," he continued. "Until the last day of my playing career, I want to

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continue to strive forward not only for the Dodgers but for the baseball world.”

Ohtani joins a lineup that also includes 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts and 2020 NL MVP Freddie Freeman. The Dodgers won the NL West this year for the 10th time in 11 seasons before they were swept by Arizona in the Division Series in October.

Los Angeles begins the 2024 season in Seoul, South Korea, against San Diego on March 20-21.

Ohtani's decision came six years and one day after he first agreed to his deal with Angels.

Ohtani has redefined modern baseball since he chose the Angels as his first major league team. Nobody has come close to matching his achievements at the plate and on the mound, becoming one of the majors' elite players in both roles when healthy. Along the way, he has become one of the most marketable athletes in the world, a force when it comes to ticket sales, TV ratings and sponsorship revenue.

He was a unanimous AL MVP in 2021 and 2023 — he finished second in 2022 — winning this year despite injuring his elbow in late August and an oblique muscle in early September.

Ahead of his 30th birthday on July 5, he has a .274 average with 171 homers, 437 RBIs and 86 stolen bases along with a 39-19 record with a 3.01 ERA and 608 strikeouts in 481 2/3 innings. Ohtani has 34.7 Wins Above Replacement (WAR), per Baseball Reference.

The Halos are a perennial also-ran, both in the AL standings and in the Los Angeles market, but they won Ohtani's services in late 2017 partly by promising him the freedom to train and to play however he wanted. Ohtani immediately dazzled the entire sport in 2018, batting .285 with 22 homers and 61 RBIs as a designated hitter and going 4-2 with a 3.31 ERA and 63 strikeouts.

Ohtani won the AL Rookie of the Year award in 2018 despite making just one pitching appearance after early June due to an injured elbow ligament that required Tommy John surgery following the season. Ohtani made just two mound appearances in the next two years while continuing to play as the Angels' DH.

When his arm was finally healthy in 2021, Ohtani put together a season for the ages.

He won the AL MVP award with 46 homers and 100 RBIs at the plate while going 9-2 with a 3.18 ERA on the mound. He improved as a pitcher in 2022, going 15-9 with a 2.33 ERA and a 1.01 WHIP while still driving in 95 runs at the plate, but finished behind Aaron Judge in the MVP voting after the Yankees star hit an AL record 62 homers.

After winning the MVP award in the World Baseball Classic last March while leading Japan to victory — he struck out Trout to end the tournament — Ohtani maintained his two-way magnificence this year, hitting 44 homers with a career-high 1.066 OPS while going 10-5 with a 3.14 ERA before tearing his elbow ligament again on Aug. 23. He didn't hit after Sept. 3 because of the strained right oblique.

Along with his elbow injuries, Ohtani's transcendent success has come with another significant damper: He has never made the playoffs or even played on a winning team in the majors. Owner Arte Moreno's Angels haven't won more than 80 games or finished higher than third in the AL West during his tenure alongside Trout, a three-time AL MVP, and a perennially disappointing cast of supporting players.

Ohtani earned \$42,269,259 in his six seasons with the Angels. After receiving a signing bonus of \$2,315,000 with his initial deal, he had salaries of \$545,000, \$650,000, \$259,259 (in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season), \$3 million, \$5.5 million and \$30 million.

6 dead, nearly 2 dozen injured after severe storms tear through central Tennessee

KIMBERLEE KRUESI undefined

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Severe storms that tore through central Tennessee killed six people Saturday and sent about two dozen to the hospital as homes and businesses were damaged in multiple cities.

Three people, including a child, were killed after an apparent tornado struck Montgomery County north of Nashville near the Kentucky state line, county officials said in a news release. And the Nashville Emergency Operation Center said in a post on a social media account that three people were killed by severe storms in a neighborhood just north of downtown. Meanwhile, another 23 people were treated for injuries at hospitals in Montgomery County.

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Photos posted by the Clarksville fire department on social media showed damaged houses with debris strewn in the lawns, a tractor trailer flipped on its side on a highway and insulation ripped out of building walls.

"This is devastating news and our hearts are broken for the families of those who lost loved ones," said Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts in a statement. "The city stands ready to help them in their time of grief."

The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department identified the victims killed north of downtown as Joseph Dalton, 37; Floridema Gabriel Perez, 31, and her son, Anthony Elmer Mendez, 2. Dalton was inside his mobile home when the storm tossed it on top of Perez's residence. Two other children, one in each home, were taken to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries, the department said in a statement.

No further information about the other three deaths was immediately available Saturday night.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said in a statement that a tornado touched down around 2 p.m. A shelter was set up at a local high school.

Residents were asked to stay at home while first responders evaluated the situation. In a briefing shared on social media, Pitts said there was extensive damage.

"So please, if you need help, call 911 and help will be on the way immediately. But if you can, please stay home. Do not get out on the roads. Our first responders need time and space," he said.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said he and his wife, Maria, were praying for all Tennesseans who had been affected by the storms.

"We mourn the lives lost and ask that everyone continue to follow guidance from local and state officials," Lee said in a statement.

Shanika Washington said that as soon as she heard the storm sirens going off in her Clarksville neighborhood, she took her children, ages 5 and 10, to a windowless bathroom in the basement of her townhouse.

"The lights were flickering, so I knew it was somewhere close in the vicinity," she said. "I just kept praying to God as it was going on. It was very terrifying and scary."

During their 20 harrowing minutes in the bathroom, Washington hovered over her children as a protective shield.

"The back door absolutely did fly open, and you just heard a bunch of wind," she said. "The blinds and stuff were like shaking really bad. I could tell that we were dead smack in the middle of a storm."

When she came out of the bathroom, she looked out of a window and saw the destruction: Debris swept onto cars that had their windows broken out. Shutters ripped from homes. Some roofs were ripped off townhouses. Air conditioning units and backyard grills were tossed like toys, and wooden dividers between townhouses were missing.

Because the power in the area was out, Washington took her children to a hotel for the night.

"I'm still shaken up a little bit, so I probably won't get much sleep tonight," Washington said. "I'm still trying to just kind of like process it all."

Allie Phillips, who lives in Clarksville, said she was grabbing lunch when she began receiving notifications that a tornado was quickly approaching her neighborhood.

"It was excruciating watching the live stream and not knowing if my house was still there," she said. "When we finally decided to leave, the road to my home was shut down because so many power lines were on the road and we had to take a detour."

Phillips said her home survived with minimal damage – noting that her daughter's toys were banged up and that a neighbor's dog kennel hit the back of her home – but she was saddened to see that her neighbor's house was missing a roof and a home up the block had all but completely disappeared.

The National Weather Service issued multiple tornado warnings in Tennessee, and said it planned to survey an area where an apparent tornado hit in Kentucky.

More than 80,000 electricity customers were without power in Tennessee on Saturday night, according to PowerOutage.us.

The storm came nearly two years to the day after the National Weather Service recorded 41 tornadoes through a handful of states, including 16 in Tennessee and eight in Kentucky. A total of 81 people died in Kentucky alone.

Smugglers are bringing migrants to a remote Arizona border crossing, overwhelming US agents

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

LUKEVILLE, Ariz. (AP) — Gerston Miranda and his wife were among thousands of migrants recently arriving at this remote area on Arizona's southern border with Mexico, squeezing into the United States through a gap in the wall and walking overnight about 14 miles (23 kilometers) with two school-aged daughters to surrender to Border Patrol agents.

"There is no security in my country," said the 28-year-old from Ecuador, who lost work when his employer closed due to extortion by criminals. "Without security you cannot work. You cannot live."

A shift in smuggling routes has brought an influx of migrants here from countries as diverse as Senegal, Bangladesh and China, prompting the Border Patrol to seek help from other federal agencies and drawing scrutiny to an issue critical in next year's presidential elections.

With hundreds of migrants crossing daily in the area, the U.S. government on Monday indefinitely shut down the nearby international crossing between Lukeville, Arizona, and Sonoyta, Mexico, to free Customs and Border Protection officers assigned to the port of entry to help with transportation and other support. The agency also has partially closed a few other border ports of entry in recent months, including a pedestrian crossing in San Diego and a bridge in Eagle Pass, Texas.

Critics of the move, including Arizona Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs; the state's two U.S. senators, the governor of Mexico's Sonora state and the leadership of the nearby Tohono O'odham Nation, said it could harm trade and tourism. Hobbs urged President Joe Biden to reassign the 243 National Guard members already in the Tucson sector to help reopen the Lukeville crossing.

The morning after it was closed, about a dozen Border Patrol agents in olive green uniforms watched over some 400 migrants who had spent the night by the towering wall of steel bollards, wrapped in shiny Mylar blankets they later discarded among saguaro cactus and Palo Verde trees.

Three or four times as many CBP field operations officers in navy blue uniforms helped the migrants into white vans for a short drive to a canopied field intake center. From there, agents took migrants for processing to the Border Patrol's Ajo station, a half-hour north, or to other locations such as Tucson.

U.S. authorities have been so short-handed in Arizona that they have used charter flights to transfer some migrants from Tucson to three Texas border cities for processing, according Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that analyzes flight data.

Federal air marshals who provide security on commercial flights, and even Federal Protective Service officers who guard U.S. government buildings, are being diverted to the border, officials have said, without saying exactly where they are going.

"We are seeing a lot of different kinds of uniforms down here," humanitarian aid worker Tom Wingo said in Lukeville.

Nonprofit groups worry about the migrants' well-being.

"This is a humanitarian crisis that's happening in our own backyard," said Dora Rodriguez, chairperson of the Tucson nonprofit Humane Borders, which keeps water tanks on the border for migrants. "There are hundreds of people, including infants and children, who are stranded in remote areas of the desert for days."

The Lukeville area's popularity as a place to cross the border from Mexico into the U.S. emerged in recent months. It's one of the most striking examples of migrants shifting to a remote area, putting the Border Patrol on its heels. In 2019, Antelope Wells, New Mexico, became a popular spot. This year also has seen hundreds of migrants camping in the mountains of Jacumba Hot Springs, California, waiting for agents to process them.

Because Lukeville is so remote, Border Patrol staffing is light, so traffickers in the region controlled by Mexico's Sinaloa cartel steer people there. The arrivals last week included 41-year-old Luiz Velazquez, his wife and their three children from Zacatecas, a Mexican state plagued by drug cartel violence.

Heat-related illness was a major concern several months ago when daytime temperatures climbed into

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the triple digits. The worry now is overnight temperatures in the 40s, in a place where the closest hospitals and nonprofit migrant shelters are nearly two hours away.

Chris Clem, a retired Yuma, Arizona, sector chief, said it is part of smugglers' strategy to stretch agents as thinly as possible, forcing highway checkpoints to close and other resources to be diverted for processing migrants. The remoteness creates "enormous strain" on the Border Patrol, he said.

Art Del Cueto, a Tucson-based vice president with the National Border Patrol Council, said the union wants stricter measures to deter migrants from coming. He said it's not so much a matter of too few agents, but one of too many migrants.

Heading into next year's presidential elections, the border is a top issue for voters, especially Republicans, and immigration issues could be a liability for Biden, a Democrat, as he runs for reelection.

A national AP-NORC poll conducted in November found about half of U.S. adults say increasing security at the U.S.-Mexico border should be a "high priority" for the federal government, with 3 in 10 calling it a "moderate priority." Republicans were more likely than Democrats to call it a high priority.

Biden's approach to immigration combines new legal pathways to enter the country with more restrictions on asylum for those who cross the border illegally. Former President Donald Trump, the GOP front-runner for the 2024 nomination, has promised even tougher hardline immigration policies in a second term.

Additional funding for border security has been held up in Congress over a package to provide additional aid to Israel and Ukraine in their wars against Hamas and Russia.

John Modlin, the Border Patrol's Tucson sector chief, said Friday that the agency made 18,900 arrests for illegal crossings the previous week in the sector that includes most of Arizona's border with Mexico. That translates to a daily average of 2,700 arrests, well above October's daily average of less than 1,800 and barely 700 in December 2022.

The 2020 census listed Lukeville's population as 35, but the mobile home park where many residents lived now appears abandoned, with boarded up buildings and a scattering of old manufactured homes. A previously busy service station and store that sold ice and snacks to travelers was closed indefinitely on Monday.

The Lukeville border crossing is also popular among U.S. residents driving from Arizona to the popular resort of Puerto Peñasco, or Rocky Point. Nicknamed "Arizona's beach," it is about 62 miles (100 kilometers) south of the border on the northern shores of the Sea of Cortez.

Americans who want to travel to Puerto Peñasco now must cross through Nogales, a three-hour drive to the east, or San Luis, a two-hour drive to the west.

Alfonso Durazo, the governor of Mexico's Sonora state has asked officials of both countries to "undertake all necessary efforts necessary to resume as soon as possible the extraordinary commercial, tourist and social relationship that have historically distinguished Sonora and Arizona."

"The solution is not to close border crossings," Durazo said.

Death of last surviving Alaskan taken by Japan during WWII rekindles memories of forgotten battle

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Gregory Golodoff spent most of his years on a quiet Alaska island, living an ordinary life, managing a co-op store, fishing for crab and serving as the village council president. But Golodoff's recent death at the age of 84 has reopened a chapter of American history and stirred up memories of a long-forgotten Japanese invasion that prompted the only World War II battle on North American soil.

Golodoff was the last survivor among 41 residents imprisoned in Japan after Japanese troops captured remote Attu Island during World War II. He was 3 when the island was taken. He died Nov. 17 in Anchorage, his family said. His sister, Elizabeth "Liz" Golodoff Kudrin, the second-to-last surviving Attuan, died in February at 82. Three of their siblings died in captivity.

"The eldest generation has passed away to the other side," said Helena Schmitz, the great-granddaughter

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of the last Attu chief, who died in Japan along with his son.

Attu is a desolate, mountainous slab of tundra, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) wide by 35 miles (56 kilometers) long, and sits between the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea on the volcanic Ring of Fire. It's the most westerly island in the Aleutian chain — closer to Russia than mainland Alaska — and was one of just a few U.S. territories, along with Guam, the Philippines and the nearby island of Kiska, taken by enemy forces during the war.

The American effort to reclaim Attu in 1943 amid frigid rain, dense fog and hurricane-force winds became known as World War II's "forgotten battle." About 2,500 Japanese soldiers perished, many in hand-to-hand combat or by suicide; 28 survived. Roughly 550 U.S. soldiers died. Initially trained and equipped to fight in the North African desert, many suffered from frostbite and exposure due to inadequate gear.

Even after the surviving captives were freed at the close of the war, they were not allowed to return to Attu because the U.S. military decided it would be too expensive to rebuild the community. Most were sent to the island of Atka, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) away.

With the loss of their homeland, the Attuans' language, Sakinam Tunuu, is now all but gone, spoken only by members of Schmitz's immediate family. The distinctive basket-weaving style of the island is practiced by just three or four weavers, and not all are of Attuan descent. Schmitz runs a nonprofit named Atux Forever to revive the cultural heritage.

Much of what is known about the Alaska Natives' time in Japan is chronicled in the book "Attu Boy," written by Golodoff's older brother, Nick, with assistance from his editor, Rachel Mason, a cultural anthropologist with the National Park Service in Anchorage.

Mason knew the three siblings. Gregory and Liz had little memory of Attu or Japan, and neither liked to talk about it, she said.

Nick Golodoff, who was 6 when he was captured, had a childlike innocence about his time as a prisoner, Mason noted. The cover of his book featured a photograph of him riding on the back of a Japanese soldier, both smiling.

That experience was far from typical. Of the Attu residents interned in Japan, 22 died from malnutrition, starvation or tuberculosis. Schmitz's great-grandfather, Mike Hodikoff, died with his son of food poisoning from eating rotten garbage while in Japanese captivity, the book noted.

Japanese soldiers landed on Attu Island on June 7, 1942, when residents were attending services at the Russian Orthodox church. Some ran for their rifles, but Hodikoff told them, "Do not shoot, maybe the Americans can save us yet," according to the book.

Instead, the village radio operator, Charles Foster Jones, was shot and killed before he could alert authorities, becoming the only U.S. civilian killed by the invading forces in North America, according to a tribute to Jones by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The other residents — all Alaska Natives except for Jones' wife, a white teacher from New Jersey named Etta Jones — were kept captive in their homes for three months before being told to pack up and bring what food they could for the journey to Japan.

They first went to Kiska, another Alaska island; one Attu resident died on the way. Stuffed in the cargo hold of a ship, the others embarked on a two-week voyage to Sapporo, the largest city on Japan's Hokkaido Island, where they were kept in four rooms in an abandoned dormitory. Only Etta Jones was separated from them and taken in a different boat to an internment facility in Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

One Japanese guard complained the Attuans ate better than the Japanese, but conditions worsened when the Alaskans ran out of the food they brought.

The Golodoffs' mother, Olean, and others were forced to work long hours in a clay mine. As their numbers dwindled, she also became the cook for the surviving POWs, though there was little to make. She was reduced to gathering orange peels off the street and cooking them on top of a heater, said George Kudrin, who married Olean's daughter Liz in Atka after he returned from the Vietnam War.

"I fed them to my children, and only then would they stop crying for a while," Olean once told an interviewer.

Her husband, Lawrence, and three of their seven children died in Japan. Nick Golodoff lived until 2013.

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Another son who survived captivity, John, died in 2009.

Kudrin said Olean didn't speak of her experiences in Japan, and his wife, Liz, was too young to remember anything.

"She always knew that she was part of the history of World War II and she always said, 'I am a survivor with my mama,'" he said.

American forces reclaimed Attu on May 30, 1943, after a brutal 19-day campaign. Much of the fighting was waged in dense fog amid winds of up to 120 mph (193 kph). Attu Island today is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and known more for being one of the top destinations in North America for groups dedicated to viewing birds, especially those from Asia.

Greg Golodoff's wife of 50 years, Pauline, said he never spoke with her about his experience in Japan or about being the last living resident of Attu.

"I tried to ask him, but he didn't want to talk about it," she said.

Military-themed brewery wants to open in a big Navy town. An ex-SEAL is getting in the way

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — A former U.S. Navy SEAL who says he shot Osama bin Laden is at the center of a much different fight in Virginia, where plans for a military-themed brewery are drawing opposition over his alleged racist and homophobic remarks.

Robert J. O'Neill has a small ownership stake in Armed Forces Brewing Company and has served as its brand ambassador. His recent social media complaint about a Navy sailor who performs as a drag queen and a police report alleging he used a racial slur are fueling efforts to stop the brewery from opening in military-friendly Norfolk.

The company, which markets itself with politically conservative ads, has dismissed claims of bigotry and toned down O'Neill's public-facing role. But last month, Norfolk's planning commission recommended the City Council deny permits for the planned taproom and distribution center, which would be only a few miles (kilometers) from the nation's largest Navy base.

The nonbinding 4-to-2 vote came after nearly 800 public comments were filed, many of which opposed the venture. The brewery also failed to get the support of the local neighborhood association, which serves the largely Black community of Park Place.

The City Council could vote as soon as Tuesday on the brewery's conditional use permits. The company has warned it will sue if the application is rejected.

In a letter to Norfolk's attorney, brewery lawyer Tim Anderson said the planning commission's vote was based on the owners' political views.

"What is 100% clear to me is that if my client was an activist brewery positively engaged in promoting LGBTQ ideas — the application would have sailed through planning," Anderson said.

In some ways, the matter resembles an inverse, if miniature, version of the uproar over Bud Light sending a commemorative can to transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney. Sales of the brand plunged amid a conservative backlash, although Bud Light's parent Anheuser-Busch also angered supporters of transgender rights who believed the company later abandoned Mulvaney.

Opponents say Armed Forces Brewing would be a glaringly bad fit for the city of about 230,000 people on the Chesapeake Bay. They argue its ownership doesn't reflect the diversity of the U.S. military, veterans or liberal-leaning Norfolk.

Robert Bracknell, an attorney and former Marine, said the company made no effort to win over surrounding neighborhoods while relying on conservative identity politics for its branding. Community opposition is not anti-military but "anti-intolerance and anti-hate," he said.

"These guys are not the Navy," said Bracknell, who lives less than 2 miles (3 kilometers) from the proposed taproom. "They're a really small sliver of a veteran community that doesn't represent the rest of us."

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Opponents cited O'Neill's August arrest in Frisco, Texas, in which police said he assaulted a hotel security officer while intoxicated and used a racial slur. O'Neill, who faces misdemeanor assault and public intoxication charges, later posted on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter: "I categorically deny ever using this horrible language recently reported."

In response to news that an active-duty sailor who moonlights as a drag queen was helping Navy recruitment efforts, O'Neill posted on X in May: "Alright. The U.S. Navy is now using an enlisted sailor Drag Queen as a recruiter. I'm done. China is going to destroy us. YOU GOT THIS NAVY. I can't believe I fought for this bull."

O'Neill, who is now a public speaker and podcaster, did not respond to a request for comment sent through his website, LinkedIn profile or Facebook page.

Brewery opponents also focused on shareholder and advisor Gretchen Smith. The Air Force veteran posted on X that Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer convicted of killing George Floyd, was innocent.

Another Smith post cited the "Great Reset," a conspiracy theory that the Anti-Defamation League said can have antisemitic overtones, although she voiced support for Israel in other posts.

The company's promotional videos also drew criticism. Some involve the firing of lots of guns. And a tongue-in-cheek ad for investors warned off anyone who has ever watched "The View" television show or loves "taking your 5-year-old child to drag shows."

In response to efforts to get comment from Smith, Armed Forces Brewing said she was out of the country. But the company said in an email: "Gretchen is disliked by the vocal minority because she holds political views that tens of millions of conservative Americans hold — and which she has the First Amendment right to express on her personal social media."

Planning commissioner Kim Sudderth voted against the brewery, citing reservations about antisemitism and violent hate speech.

"I'm genuinely concerned that you may not comply with city conditions and partner successfully with the community," Sudderth said at a meeting last month.

Alan Beal, Armed Forces Brewing's CEO, told the commission that O'Neill and Smith aren't part of daily operations. Although O'Neill still sits on its board, he is no longer the brewery's director of military services, Beal said, noting that O'Neill recently sought treatment in Mexico for post-traumatic stress.

"Despite the rumors that the opposition is spreading around town, no one is running around the brewing facility with AR-15s or guns and there's no barbed wire up on the fence," Beal told the commission last month. "The military is diverse. And yes, everyone is welcome at Armed Forces Brewing Company."

In a promotional video, Beal said the goal is to brew beer for the military community while employing veterans and supporting their causes.

Anderson, the brewery's attorney, told the planning commission that the business needs to open for people to realize it's not the "boogeyman."

"This is not going to be some place that's going to hold rallies against the LGBTQ community or anything distasteful," Anderson said. "Everything's going to calm down."

Jeff Ryder, president of Hampton Roads Pride, is skeptical. He said the community will continue raising concerns while trying to establish a relationship with the brewery.

"But they haven't really given me any indication they want that," Ryder said.

Cows in Rotterdam harbor, seedlings on rafts in India; are floating farms the future?

By MIKE CORDER and MELINA WALLING Associated Press

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — On the top deck of a three-tiered structure moored near downtown Rotterdam, brown and white cows graze on hay dropped from a conveyor belt above their heads and rinds of oranges salvaged from supermarket juice machines in the port city. Canopies overhead protect the cows from sun and collect rainwater they will eventually drink.

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Sometimes the Maas-Rijn-Ijssel cows — named for three Dutch rivers — walk over to a machine that automatically milks them, or they shuffle out of the way of a robot trundling past to mop up manure that will be turned into organic fertilizer.

“We call our cows upcycle ladies,” says Minke van Wingerden of the Floating Farm, which sells the milk, cheese and buttermilk produced by the cows in a small shop on dry land next to its harbor berth.

The Floating Farm, which has been operational since 2019 and bills itself as the world’s first such farm, isn’t on entirely new terrain. Efforts to put agriculture on or in the water are as old as the Aztecs, who built artificial islets to grow food long ago in what’s now Mexico.

But it’s an idea that is getting new attention as a way of tackling both food security and the challenges of climate change. And it doesn’t have to be as sophisticated as the Dutch farm, which came about after Van Wingerden’s husband, Peter, witnessed the food shortages that hit New York after Hurricane Sandy slammed the city in 2012.

In coastal and low-lying areas of India and Bangladesh, a non-government organization is reviving a traditional practice of creating floating rafts that can keep seedlings above monsoon flood waters that can drown crops.

The South Asian Forum for Environment, based in Kolkata, has made some technological improvements for what it calls “climate-resilient float farming.” The bamboo rafts are built larger and heavier to better withstand storms. Plastic covering and shade nets protect fragile plants, and solar-powered pumps collect rainwater to irrigate the seedlings. And the organization has partnered with local research institutes to supply farmers with the best possible climate-resilient seeds, and to pass on knowledge about pest control. Communications director Amrita Chatterjee said that can become more urgent when pests proliferate in times of extreme heat, like this summer, where the temperature reached 113 degrees Fahrenheit (45 degrees Celsius) in some locations.

Chatterjee said the rafts are “not a very conventional type of farming” and it takes patience to get used to them. But in a few years they’ve more than doubled, to 500, the number of floating farms operating in different villages. Vegetables like medicinal plants, spinach and chilies are among the items cultivated on the floating platforms, and farmers can also raise crabs to be fattened for market in floating boxes.

“Slowly, everyone is getting interested,” Chatterjee said.

With increasingly erratic monsoons, the rafts have helped with food security, Chatterjee said. They were also helpful when the Indian state of West Bengal was hit with a one-two punch of a cyclone followed by COVID-19 in 2020, she said.

Farmers using the rafts now are feeding themselves and selling a bit of surplus in local markets, Chatterjee said. Her group hopes that the idea can be scaled up to make it much more commercially viable.

Floating farms will clearly be scalable in the coming decades in Southeast Asia, but educating about the technology may be a hurdle to its adoption in some places, said Craig Jenkins, academy professor of sociology at Ohio State University.

Back in Rotterdam, the owners of the Floating Farm cite a number of reasons for putting farms on water. That includes urbanization putting more people in cities, making it sensible to bring food sources closer to them. They say the extreme weather spurred by climate change — heavy rainfall and flooding of cities and farmland — makes their approach climate-adaptive to feed those cities.

Jake Boswell, an associate professor of landscape architecture at Ohio State University, said the success of floating farms likely will vary by region. While much of the world’s population lives in coastal areas, only a subset of those communities also farm in flood- or storm-prone areas, he said. That might make it more cost-effective to invest in floating housing rather than floating farms to adapt to sea level rise, he said.

“The one in Rotterdam I think is an interesting demonstration,” he said. “I would find it hard to see it as a scalable project.”

Scaling up and contributing substantially to the sustainability of urban food systems is a challenge floating farms have in common with vertical farms, said Daniel Petrovics, a Ph.D candidate at the University of Amsterdam who has studied the scaling of several climate interventions, including in the energy and

agriculture sectors.

"You should consider things like, what is the local diet, what do people eat? Is this feeding into that? What kind of stakeholders benefit from it?" he said. "Is it that it helps alleviate food poverty in a city or is it just some kind of gimmick that's from, let's say, a corporation that's just looking for return on investment?"

The owners of the Dutch floating farm are already moving to expand beyond their cows.

They plan to add a second floating farm in the same harbor for vertical agriculture — growing vegetables indoors, under lights in stacks of growing beds, irrigated with water purified in part with heat from the cows' manure.

Minke Van Wingerden sees agriculture on water as a viable response to flooding and rising sea levels and a way of bringing food production closer to consumers, meaning a lower carbon footprint.

"When you have floating farms, you are climate adaptive," said Van Wingerden. "So you can keep on producing fresh, healthy food for the city."

LSU QB Jayden Daniels overcomes being out of playoff hunt to win Heisman Trophy with prolific season

BY RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jayden Daniels was too good to be overlooked.

LSU's dazzling dual-threat quarterback won the Heisman Trophy on Saturday night, becoming the first player since 2016 to win college football's most prestigious player of the year award as part of a team that did not play for a conference championship.

The fifth-year player, who transferred from Arizona State to LSU in 2022, received 503 first-place votes and 2,029 points after accounting for 50 touchdowns and nearly 5,000 total yards in just 12 regular-season games.

"This is a dream come true," Daniels started his acceptance speech.

Washington's Michael Penix Jr. was the runner-up with 292 first-place votes and 1,701 points and Oregon's Bo Nix was third (51, 885), putting transfer quarterbacks in each of the top three spots. Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. finished fourth (20, 352).

Wearing a sharp light gray suit, Daniels dropped his head for a moment when his name was called. He was the favorite to win the award, but said he felt relieved when it was official.

Still, he stayed composed throughout his speech when he thanked everyone from his offensive line to the groundskeepers at Tigers Stadium and cafeteria workers who help feed the team.

"I wasn't really like, emotional, like crying," Daniels said later at a news conference. "I guess it's kind of how I play on the field. I'm just enjoying the moment, just embracing everything, giving thanks to God."

Daniels, who turns 23 on Dec. 18, won AP Player of the Year earlier this week.

Daniels is the fifth quarterback in the last seven seasons to win the Heisman after transferring, joining former LSU star Joe Burrow in 2019 and USC's Caleb Williams last year.

"I want to thank all my teammates, from Arizona State to LSU," Daniels said. "You're my brothers. You work so hard every day, inspiring me to be my best."

He is also LSU's third Heisman winner overall, along with running back Billy Cannon in 1959.

Burrow led LSU to a national championship and Cannon's team came close, finishing No. 3 in the country.

Daniels' Tigers (9-3) slipped out of that race with two losses in the first six weeks, but he certainly wasn't to blame.

"I really wish I could have brought you back another championship," Daniels said as he thanked the LSU fans.

Week after week he fueled the best offense in the country with his passing (3,812 yards) and running (1,134). He leads the nation in total offense at 412 yards per game and is averaging an astounding 10.71 yards per play.

No. 13 LSU is set to face Wisconsin in the ReliaQuest Bowl on Jan. 1, though Daniels has not yet decided if he will play the final game of his college career. The next stop for the 6-foot-4, 210-pounder could be

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the NFL draft combine, with his stock on the rise but no guarantee to be a first-round pick.

Louisville's Lamar Jackson was the last and only player to win the Heisman on a team that lost three games and didn't play for a conference title during the nine previous years of the College Football Playoff.

Voters usually look to CFP contenders to find a Heisman winner these days, but Daniels could not be ignored.

LSU was eliminated from the Southeastern Conference race when it lost to Alabama in early November, despite 382 yards and three total touchdowns in three quarters by Daniels. A hard hit put him in concussion protocol and kept him out of final quarter.

"Your goals are to play for championships at LSU and when we did not have that opportunity after the Alabama game, you start to recalibrate. And certainly one of them was to rally behind what we considered was the best player in college football," coach Brian Kelly said. "Every player that is in our program knew that we had a special player that was having a special year."

While Daniels faded from the playoff picture, his performance continued to demand attention. Against Florida, he became the first major college football player with at least 350 yards passing and 200 rushing in a game, going for a total of 606 yards against the Gators.

His teammates goaded him into flashing a Heisman pose during the game in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Daniels said it was after that performance he started to believe winning the Heisman could become a reality.

Daniels' evolution this season has been a revelation. He became just the second SEC player, joining 2012 Heisman winner Johnny Manziel from Texas A&M, and eighth in major college football to pass for at least 3,500 and run for 1,000 in a season.

He began his career at Arizona State as a four-star recruit from Southern California under then-coach Herman Edwards. Daniels started all three seasons for the Sun Devils, proving capable but inconsistent. With the Sun Devils facing an NCAA investigation, Daniels left for LSU to play for Kelly.

"A transfer quarterback that comes in to your program has to win the locker room and you do it by your work ethic. You do it by being humble, you do it with your actions and he did that on a day-to-day basis," Kelly said.

Daniels led the Tigers to an SEC West title last year and when he decided to return for a fifth season of college football it was clear he could be part of the Heisman discussion.

He ended up dominating that conversation even though his team was out of the spotlight down the stretch. LSU ran an aggressive campaign to support its quarterback.

Daniels and the Tigers finished their season against Texas A&M on rivalry weekend, with Nix, Penix and Harrison playing high-stakes games with playoff implications.

Daniels was the leader in the clubhouse on championship weekend as Nix and Penix squared off in the Pac-12 title game.

Both played well in a dramatic game that decided on playoff spot, but — much like opposing defenses — neither could chase down Daniels.

Israel presses on with its Gaza offensive after US veto derails Security Council efforts to halt war

By WAFSA SHURFA and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's military pushed ahead with its punishing air and ground offensive in Gaza on Saturday, bolstered by a U.S. veto derailing U.N. Security Council efforts to end the war and word that an emergency sale of \$106 million worth of tank ammunition had been approved by Washington.

Unable to leave Gaza, a territory 25 miles (40 kilometers) long by about 7 miles (11 kilometers) wide, more than 2 million Palestinians faced more bombardment Saturday, even in areas that Israel had described as safe zones.

The sale of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition was announced a day after the U.S. vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire in Gaza, a measure that had wide

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international support. The U.S. said Secretary of State Antony Blinken determined that "an emergency exists" in the national interest requiring the immediate sale, meaning it bypasses congressional review. Such a determination is rare.

A day after Israel confirmed it was rounding up Palestinian men for interrogation, some men released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been treated badly, providing the first accounts of the conditions from the detentions.

Osama Oula said Israeli troops had pulled men out of a building in the Shujaiyah area of Gaza City, ordering them to the street in their underwear. Oula said Israeli forces bound him and others with zip ties, beat them for several days and gave them little water to drink.

Ahmad Nimr Salman showed his hands, marked and swollen from the zip ties, and said older men with diabetes or high blood pressure were ignored when they asked soldiers to remove their ties.

He said the troops asked, "Are you with Hamas?" We say 'no,' then they would slap us or kick us." He said his 17-year-old son Amjad is still held by the troops.

The group was released after five days and told to walk south. Ten freed detainees arrived at a hospital in Deir al-Balah on Saturday after flagging down an ambulance.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment when asked about the alleged abuse.

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,700, the majority women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Two hospitals in central and southern Gaza received the bodies of 133 people from Israeli bombings over the past 24 hours, the Health Ministry said midday Saturday.

Israel holds the Hamas militants responsible for civilian casualties, accusing them of using civilians as human shields, and says it has made considerable efforts with evacuation orders to get civilians out of harm's way. It says 97 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive after Hamas raided southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 240 hostages.

Hamas said Saturday that it continued its rocket fire into Israel.

In Gaza, residents reported airstrikes and shelling, including in the southern city of Rafah near the Egyptian border — one area where the Israeli army had told civilians to go. In a colorful classroom there, knee-high children's tables were strewn with rubble.

"We now live in the Gaza Strip and are governed by the American law of the jungle. America has killed human rights," said Rafah resident Abu Yasser al-Khatib.

In northern Gaza, Israel has been trying to secure the military's hold, despite heavy resistance from Hamas. The military said that it found weapons inside a school in Shujaiyah, a densely populated neighborhood of Gaza City, and that, in a separate incident, militants shot at troops from a U.N.-run school in the northern town of Beit Hanoun.

More than 2,500 Palestinians have been killed since the Dec. 1 collapse of a weeklong truce, about two-thirds of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The truce saw hostages and Palestinian prisoners released, but Israel says 137 hostages remain in Gaza.

On Saturday, a kibbutz that came under attack on Oct. 7 said 25-year-old hostage Sahar Baruch had died in captivity. His captors said Baruch was killed during a failed rescue mission by Israeli forces Friday. The Israeli military said Hamas killed him.

With no new cease-fire in sight and humanitarian aid reaching little of Gaza, residents reported severe food shortages. Nine of 10 people in northern Gaza reported spending at least one full day and night without food, according to a World Food Program assessment during the truce. Two of three people in the south said the same. The WFP called the situation "alarming."

"I am very hungry," said Mustafa al-Najjar, sheltering in a U.N.-run school in the devastated Jabaliya refugee camp in the north. "We are living on canned food and biscuits and this is not sufficient."

While adults can cope, "it's extremely difficult and painful when you see your young son or daughter crying because they are hungry," he said.

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Israelis who had been taken hostage also saw the food situation deteriorate, the recently freed Adina Moshe told a rally of thousands of people in Tel Aviv seeking the rapid return of all. "We ended up eating only rice," said Moshe, who was held for 49 days.

The rally speakers accused Israel's government of not doing enough to bring loved ones home. "How can I sleep at night? How can I protect my daughter?" asked Eli Albag, the father of 18-year-old hostage Liri Albag.

On Saturday, 100 trucks carrying unspecified aid entered Gaza through the Rafah crossing with Egypt, said Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority. That is still well below the daily average before the war.

Despite growing international pressure, President Joe Biden's administration remains opposed to an open-ended cease-fire, arguing it would enable Hamas to continue posing a threat to Israel.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has argued that "a cease-fire is handing a prize to Hamas."

Blinken continued to speak with counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and elsewhere amid open criticism of the U.S. stance.

"From now on, humanity won't think the U.S.A. supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a speech.

Protesters at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai called for a cease-fire, despite restrictions on demonstrations.

Amid concerns about a wider conflict, Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen threatened to prevent any ship heading to Israeli ports from passing through the Red Sea and Arabian Sea until food and medicine can enter Gaza freely. Spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said in a speech that all ships heading to Israel, no matter their nationality, will be a target.

The French navy said the frigate Languedoc in the Red Sea shot down two drones Saturday night coming "straight toward it" from a Houthi-held port city. The statement did not say whether the French navy assessed its frigate was the target of the drones.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group claimed responsibility for nine attacks on Saturday, saying one targeted an Israeli post near the town of Metula. The Israeli army said one of its fighter jets struck a Hezbollah operational command center in Lebanon. The U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon said the tower of one of its bases along the border with Israel was hit during the skirmishes, with no injuries.

In southern Gaza, thousands were on the run after what residents called a night of heavy gunfire and shelling.

Israel has designated a narrow patch of barren southern coastline, Muwasi, as a safe zone. But Palestinians described desperately overcrowded conditions with scant shelter and no toilets. They faced an overnight temperature of around 11 degrees Celsius (52 degrees Fahrenheit).

"I am sleeping on the sand. It's freezing," said Soad Qarmoot, who described herself as a cancer patient forced to leave her home in the northern town of Beit Lahiya.

As she spoke, her children huddled around a fire.

GOP presidential candidates share stories of family and faith. Offstage, their sharp edges reemerged

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa (AP) — A trio of Republican presidential candidates shared stories of family and faith before hundreds of voters in northwest Iowa on Saturday, having congenial individual conversations with their hosts not long after dueling at the campaign's latest fractious debate. But off the stage at a small Christian college in Sioux Center, the rivals' sharp edges reemerged.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy leaned on their families to drive home their origin stories, without other candidates interrupting, at the event held in a rural, conservative corner of a state that holds the leadoff contest on the election calendar in about a month.

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Later, DeSantis and Ramaswamy both went after Haley, a further sign that her opponents see her as a growing threat in the 2024 race where former President Donald Trump, who skipped the event, is the front-runner in polls of Republicans nationwide and Iowa, where the caucuses are set for Jan. 15.

After DeSantis' time with the moderators, U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra and his wife, Lynette, he returned to a recurring campaign theme: Haley's campaign is funded by liberal Democrats and Wall Street donors and she is "taking positions that are more palatable to those folks."

Ramaswamy told reporters that his criticisms of Haley at Wednesday night's debate were intended to illustrate the "deep ideological divide" in the Republican Party. He said he was unfairly being criticized himself for targeting Haley, the only woman in the race.

"It's part of a double standard that the people in this country are sick of when it comes to identity politics," he said. "The good news is — I'm not letting them get away with that."

Haley did not speak to the news media after her appearance.

Steve Rehder, 59, was relieved to hear from candidates without the "crossfire." He said he is deciding between supporting Haley or DeSantis, but "really likes" Haley and her debate performance.

"The way she had to stand while she was being attacked at the last debate. I know she just wanted to come unglued at the guy, but she stood there," said the livestock farmer from Hawarden.

On the stage before about 750 people, including many students from Dordt University, each candidate discussed faith, family and politics. Also appearing was pastor Ryan Binkley, who has not qualified for any debates.

DeSantis was accompanied by wife, Casey. Haley sat with her 25-year-old daughter, Rena. Ramaswamy brought his 3-year-old son, Karthik.

Feenstra said it was a unique chance for people to hear the candidates' principles and positions, unlike the debates that left little time for real answers from candidates because of infighting and bickering.

Feenstra said he may endorse in the race, but has not yet.

"I want them to make their own decision based on what they're hearing," he told reporters. "They can make that decision on their own without some politician telling them this is what has to happen."

The three candidates are making stops across Iowa all weekend as pressure mounts for an attention-grabbing performance in the caucuses.

As for the absent Trump, "I'd love to hear his stance on faith and family," Feenstra said. "I think that'd be very important to northwest Iowa and all of Iowa."

Rehder agreed, saying it was admirable for candidates to come to Sioux County and share their faith values. While Trump was the "right guy at the right time" and was a great president, Rehder said, "he needs to shut his mouth."

"I don't know how he would handle this kind of setting," Rehder said about the "faith and family" event. "But maybe he should be here so we could see that part."

Protests at UN climate talks, from cease-fire calls to detainees, see 'shocking level of censorship'

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Activists designated Saturday a day of protest at the COP28 summit in Dubai. But the rules of the game in the tightly controlled United Arab Emirates at the site supervised by the United Nations meant sharp restrictions on what demonstrators could say, where they could walk and what their signs could portray.

At times, the controls bordered on the absurd.

A small group of demonstrators protesting the detention of activists — one from Egypt and two from the UAE — was not allowed to hold up signs bearing their names. A late afternoon demonstration of around 500 people, the largest seen at the climate conference, couldn't go beyond the U.N.-governed Blue Zone in this autocratic nation. And their calls for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip couldn't name the parties involved.

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"It is a shocking level of censorship in a space that had been guaranteed to have basic freedoms protected like freedom of expression, assembly and association," Joey Shea, a researcher at Human Rights Watch focused on the Emirates, told The Associated Press after their restricted demonstration.

Pro-Palestinian protesters who were calling for a cease-fire and climate justice were told they could not say "from the river to the sea," a slogan prohibited by the U.N. over the days of COP28.

In the aftermath of a brutal Hamas attack on Israel in October and the subsequent Israeli bombing and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip, that phrase has been used at pro-Palestinian rallies to call for single state on the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. Some Jews hear a clear demand for Israel's destruction in the call.

Protesters got around rules banning national flags by instead wearing keffiyeh scarves and holding signs depicting watermelons to show their support for the Palestinians.

Protestor Dylan Hamilton of Scotland said it remained important for demonstrators to cry out their grievances, even if they sounded like a cacophony of concerns ranging from climate change, the war or Indigenous rights.

"It's essential to remind negotiators what they are negotiating about," Hamilton said. "It's trying to remind people to care about people you'll never meet."

Despite the restrictions, activists protesting for a cease-fire in Gaza called the action historic due to its size.

"I don't want to look back one day where a Palestinian can't remember what their history and their culture used to look like, because that's exactly what happened to us in Mexico," climate activist Isavela Lopez said. "I'm here to say to end with the colonial powers and with the white supremacy."

Many climate activists point to the same causes for today's climate crisis.

Typically, COP summits see mass demonstrations of tens of thousands of people outside of the Blue Zone. But given the UAE's rules, the only place where activists can protest is inside that U.N.-controlled space, which has its own tight restrictions on speech.

Just before the demonstration about the detained activists, organized by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, protesters had to fold over signs bearing the names of the detainees — even after they already had crossed out messages about them. The order came roughly 10 minutes before the protest was due to start from the U.N., which said it could not guarantee the security of the demonstration, Shea said.

While speaking during the protest, Shea also had to avoid naming the Emirates and Egypt as part of the U.N.'s rules.

"The absurdity of what happened at this action today speaks volumes," she said.

The Emirati government, in response to questions from the AP about the detainees protest, said it "does not comment on individual cases following judicial sentences."

"In the spirit of inclusivity, peaceful assemblies in designated areas have been and continue to be welcomed," the statement said. "We remain dedicated to fostering dialogue and understanding as we work together at COP28 to deliver impactful solutions for accelerating climate action."

Demonstrators carried signs bearing the image of Emirati activist Ahmed Mansoor and Egyptian pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah.

Mansoor, the recipient of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2015, repeatedly drew the ire of authorities in the United Arab Emirates by calling for a free press and democratic freedoms in the autocratic federation of seven sheikhdoms. He was targeted with Israeli spyware on his iPhone in 2016 likely deployed by the Emirati government ahead of his 2017 arrest and sentencing to 10 years in prison over his activism.

Abdel-Fattah, who rose to prominence during the 2011 pro-democracy Arab Spring uprisings, became a central focus of demonstrators during last year's COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, as he had stopped eating and drinking water to protest his detention. He has spent most of the past decade in prison because of his criticism of Egypt's rulers.

Since 2013, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's government has cracked down on dissidents and critics, jailing thousands, virtually banning protests and monitoring social media. El-Sissi has not released Abdel-Fattah despite him receiving British citizenship while imprisoned and interventions on his behalf

from world leaders, including U.S. President Joe Biden.

Demonstrators also held up the image of Mohamed al-Siddiq, another Emirati detained as part of the crackdown.

The detainees protest had been scheduled to take place days earlier, but negotiations with U.N. officials dragged on — likely due to the sensitivity of even mentioning the detainees' names in the country.

Meanwhile, protesters briefly staged a sit-in at OPEC's stand over a leaked letter reportedly calling on cartel member states to reject any attempt to include a phase-down of fossil fuels in any text at the summit.

"It's like having, you know, a convention on fighting the tobacco industry and having the tobacco industry present in a negotiation. That is not okay," campaigner Nicholas Haeringer said. "It's like having a fox in the henhouse. And to be honest with you guys, I think at some point we will run out of analogies before these guys run out of oil."

Liz Magill, U. Penn's president, and board chair resign as antisemitism testimony draws backlash

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The University of Pennsylvania's president has resigned amid pressure from donors and criticism over testimony at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

The chairman of the Ivy League school's board of trustees, Scott Bok, also resigned immediately during a trustees meeting Saturday evening, just hours after Bok announced Liz Magill's departure as president in just her second year.

Bok, a supporter of Magill's, defended her through several months of criticism over the university's handling of various perceived acts of antisemitism.

He called her a good person and talented leader who is not "the slightest bit antisemitic," but gave a legalistic and wooden response after being worn down by months of criticism and hours of questioning in the congressional hearing.

"Following that, it became clear that her position was no longer tenable, and she and I concurrently decided that it was time for her to exit," Bok said in a statement also announcing his resignation.

The university said Magill will remain a tenured faculty member at the university's Carey Law School. She has agreed to keep serving as Penn's leader until the university names an interim president.

Calls for Magill's firing exploded after Tuesday's testimony in a U.S. House committee on antisemitism on college campuses, where she appeared with the presidents of Harvard University and MIT.

Universities across the U.S. have been accused of failing to protect Jewish students amid rising fears of antisemitism worldwide and fallout from Israel's intensifying war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll.

The three presidents were called before the committee to answer those accusations. But their lawyerly answers drew renewed blowback from opponents, focused particularly on a line of questioning from Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., who repeatedly asked whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate Penn's code of conduct.

"If the speech turns into conduct it can be harassment, yes," Magill said. Pressed further, Magill told Stefanik, "It is a context-dependent decision, congresswoman."

Harvard President Claudine Gay and MIT President Sally Kornbluth gave similar responses to Stefanik, and Bok pointed that out.

Magill made a "very unfortunate misstep — consistent with that of two peer university leaders sitting alongside her — after five hours of aggressive questioning before a congressional committee," Bok said.

Still, criticism of Magill rained down from the White House, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, members of Congress and donors. One donor, Ross Stevens, threatened to withdraw a \$100 million gift because of the university's "stance on antisemitism on campus" unless Magill was replaced.

A day later, Magill addressed the criticism, saying in a video that she would consider a call for the geno-

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cide of Jewish people to be harassment or intimidation and that Penn's policies need to be "clarified and evaluated."

It did not quell criticism.

In a statement Saturday, Stefanik said Magill's "forced resignation" is the "bare minimum of what is required" and said Harvard and MIT should follow suit.

"One down. Two to go," Stefanik said, adding that "this is only the very beginning of addressing the pervasive rot of antisemitism that has destroyed the most 'prestigious' higher education institutions in America."

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa. said Magill's resignation allows Penn to "chart a new course in addressing antisemitism on campus."

Bok said he was asked to remain as chairman to help with the transition to a new president, but decided that now was the best time for him to leave.

Even before Tuesday's hearing, Magill had been under fire from some donors and alumni this fall. Some also had called for the resignation of Bok, who had defended Magill amid criticism over the university's handling of various perceived acts of antisemitism.

That included allowing a Palestinian literary arts festival to be held on its campus in September featuring speakers whose past statements about Israel had drawn accusations of antisemitism.

A former U.S. Supreme Court law clerk, Magill, 57, is the daughter of a retired federal judge and was dean of Stanford University's law school and a top administrator at the University of Virginia before Penn hired her as its ninth president last year.

Bok is chairman and CEO of investment bank Greenhill & Co.

Earlier Saturday, New York's governor called on the state's colleges and universities to swiftly address cases of antisemitism and what she described as any "calls for genocide" on campus.

In a letter to college and university presidents, Gov. Kathy Hochul said her administration would enforce violations of the state's Human Rights Law and refer any violations of federal civil rights law to U.S. officials.

Hochul said chancellors of the State University of New York and City University of New York systems confirmed to her "that calling for genocide of any group" or tolerating antisemitism violates codes of conduct on their campuses "and would lead to swift disciplinary action."

A popular chant at pro-Palestinian rallies at Penn and other universities has been falsely misrepresented in recent months as a call for "Jewish genocide."

Experts and advocates say the chant, "Israel, we charge you with genocide," is a typical refrain heard at pro-Palestinian rallies. Jewish and Palestinian supporters both acknowledge protesters aren't saying "We want Jewish genocide."

Technology built the cashless society. Advances are helping the unhoused so they're not left behind

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — John Littlejohn remembers the days when lots of people had a couple of dollars to spare to buy a copy of Street Sense, the local paper that covers issues related to the homeless and employs unhoused individuals as its vendors.

Today, he's finding fewer people are walking around with spare change. Even well-meaning individuals who want to help are likely to pat their pockets and apologize, he said.

"I would be out here for six or seven hours and wouldn't get more than \$12 to \$15," said Littlejohn, 62, who was homeless for 13 years. "People are like, 'I don't leave the house with cash.'"

But just as technological shifts helped create the problem, further advances are now helping charitable groups and advocates for the unhoused reach those most in danger of being left behind in a cashless society.

A special Street Sense phone app allows people to buy a copy electronically and have the profits go straight to him. Thanks to Social Security and his income from Street Sense and other side gigs, Littlejohn now has his own apartment.

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One of the larger shifts in Western society over the past two decades has been the decline of cash transactions. It started with more people using credit cards to pay for things as trivial as a cup of coffee. It accelerated as smartphone technology advanced to the point where cash-free payments became the norm for many.

This shift has been felt keenly in the realm of street-level charitable giving — from individual donations to panhandlers and street musicians to the red Salvation Army donation kettles outside grocery stores.

“Everybody just has cards or their phones now,” said Sylvester Harris, a 54-year-old Washington native who panhandles near Capital One Arena. “You can tell the ones who really do want to help you, but even they just don’t have cash anymore.”

The cashless world can be particularly daunting for the unhoused. While electronic payment apps such as PayPal or Venmo have become ubiquitous, many of these options require items beyond their reach — credit cards, bank accounts, identification documents or fixed mailing addresses.

Charities have struggled to adapt. The Salvation Army has created a system where donors can essentially tap their phones on the kettle and pay directly.

Michelle Wolfe, director of development for the Salvation Army in Washington, said the new system is only in place in 2% of the collection kettles in the greater Washington area, but it has already resulted in increased donations. The minimum cashless donation is now \$5, and donors routinely go as high as \$20, Wolfe said.

At Street Sense, similar advances were necessary to keep up with changing consumer habits. Around 2013, executive director Brian Camore said he started receiving “anecdotal reports left and right” from vendors saying people wanted to buy a copy but had no cash. Each vendor purchases the copies from Street Sense for 50 cents and sells them for \$2.

“We were losing sales and had to do something about it,” he said. “We recognized that the times were changing, and we had to change with them.”

Eventually he heard about an affiliate paper in Vancouver that had developed a cashless payment app and licensed the technology. Vendors can now redeem their profits at the Street Sense offices.

Thomas Ratliff, Street Sense’s director of vendor employment, deals directly with the paper’s approximately 100 sellers. He cited the COVID-19 pandemic as an extra factor making life difficult for his team.

For starters, it scared people away from using cash for fear that paper money exchanges would be an infection vector. But the most damaging part was the permanent reduction in the number of people working from downtown offices, cutting off Street Sense’s main customer base.

“Commuters have always been the best customers compared to tourists,” he said.

But without that steady stream of familiar commuters, Ratliff said his vendors have had to expand their territory. Instead of concentrating on the downtown business district, Street Sense vendors now often travel by Metro to places like Silver Spring, Maryland, to find commercial areas with steady foot traffic.

Ratliff now finds himself doing tech support for his vendors, helping them navigate the complexities of a modern online presence. Among the most common problems: “Changing emails, losing or forgetting passwords, losing your documents.”

Certain payment platforms like Venmo and Cash App are more unhoused-friendly because they do not require a bank account, just a phone number and email address. But even that can be daunting. Ratliff said many of his vendors often change cellphone numbers, and a steady phone number can be a key element in verifying your identity on these apps.

Others have taken the technology a step further, developing apps that aim to not only enable cashless donations to the homeless but also to steer them into support systems that can help get them off the streets. The Samaritan app takes a deeply personal approach by allowing donors to essentially help sponsor an unhoused person without using cash.

Currently operating in seven cities, including Los Angeles and Baltimore, the program distributes special cards to unhoused people containing a QR code that enables individuals to donate directly to someone’s account. The app itself contains dozens of mini-profiles of local unhoused individuals describing their situation and immediate needs. Donors can give money to fund specific needs, from groceries or a deposit

on an apartment to clothing suitable for a job interview.

"It's a lot harder to walk by someone when you know even 1% of their story," said Jon Kumar, the Samaritan app's founder. "It personalizes the person in need — their personality and the tangible specificity of their needs and goals."

Kumar licenses his app technology to charities, and recipients can redeem their donations by meeting with a case manager — which serves as a route to provide other services like counseling or drug rehab. In addition to the direct donations, recipients can also receive \$10 or \$20 bonuses for reaching certain benchmarks, such as meeting with a case manager, submitting a job application or even reaching out to an estranged family member.

"No one is going to pay their rent through street donations. But if our platform helps a person press into their housing search, their employment search, their pursuit of recovery, those types of things are a lot more impactful," Kumar said.

These efforts to transcend the cashless technology gap have seen their share of trial and error over the years. Wolfe said the Salvation Army originally tried out a system using a QR code that proved to be "too clunky and took too long."

Kumar's early efforts included an experiment with giving unhoused people Bluetooth beacon devices that enabled app users to see which beacon holders were in their area and donate to them. But the beacons needed regular battery changes, and the model was eventually abandoned.

None of these solutions is perfect, and plenty of people are still being left behind. Ratliff said many people simply don't have the temperament or personality for the job.

"You have to have nerve to sell a paper and reel in customers," he said. Others are disabled or frail and "not up for the physical stresses of selling out there."

Kumar, the Samaritan app developer, said many unhoused people "are not a great fit for this kind of intervention."

Some have deeper mental or emotional issues that make the level of structure required by the program impossible to navigate.

"Many of the people we're trying to serve are in need of more intensive, perhaps permanent support in terms of their mental health," he said. "Those folks, because of the polychronic nature of their challenges, they're constantly left behind."

A British Palestinian surgeon gave testimony to a UK war crimes unit after returning from Gaza

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A British Palestinian surgeon who spent weeks in the Gaza Strip during the current Israel-Hamas war as part of a Doctors Without Borders medical team said he has given testimony to a British war crimes investigation unit.

Ghassan Abu Sitta, a plastic surgeon specializing in conflict medicine, has volunteered with medical teams in multiple conflicts in Gaza, beginning as a medical student in the late 1980s during the the first Palestinian uprising. He has also worked in other conflict zones, including in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Abu Sitta crossed from Egypt into Gaza on Oct. 9, two days after the war began and remained in the besieged enclave for 43 days, working mainly in the al-Ahli and Shifa hospitals in northern Gaza.

The war was triggered by a deadly Hamas-led incursion on Oct. 7 into southern Israel in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Since then, Israel has launched a punishing air and ground campaign that has killed more than 17,700 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory.

Abu Sitta told The Associated Press in an interview during a visit to the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut on Saturday that the intensity of other conflicts he experienced and the war in Gaza is like "the difference between a flood and a tsunami." Apart from the staggering numbers of killed and injured, he

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said, the health system itself has been targeted and destroyed in Gaza.

"The worst thing was initially the running out of morphine and proper strong analgesics and then later on running out of anesthetic medication, which meant that you would have to do painful procedures with no anesthetic," Abu Sitta said.

He said that when he returned to the UK, he was asked by the war crimes unit at the Metropolitan Police to give evidence in a possible war crimes investigation, and did so.

The police had issued a call for people returning from Israel or the Palestinian territories who "have witnessed or been a victim of terrorism, war crimes or crimes against humanity" to come forward.

Abu Sitta said much of his testimony related to attacks on health facilities.

He was working in al-Ahli hospital in northern Gaza on Oct. 17 when a deadly blast struck the hospital's courtyard, which had become a shelter for displaced people, killing hundreds. Israeli authorities, along with U.S. and French intelligence agencies, have said the explosion was caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket.

Hamas maintained that it was an Israeli strike. Abu Sitta said many of the injuries he saw were more consistent with damage caused by an Israeli Hellfire missile which he said "disintegrates into shards of metal that cause amputations."

The international group Human Rights Watch said the fragmentation pattern around the impact crater lacked the pattern typical of the Hellfire missile or others used by Israel.

Abu Sitta said while in Gaza he also treated patients who had burn wounds consistent with white phosphorus shelling, which he had also seen during the 2009 war.

Phosphorus shells cause a "chemical burn that ... bursts into the deep structures of the body rather than a thermal burn, which starts at the outside and (covers a) much larger surface area," he said.

Human rights groups have alleged that Israeli forces have dropped shells containing white phosphorus on densely populated residential areas in Gaza and Lebanon during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. Israel maintains it uses the incendiaries only as a smokescreen and not to target civilians.

Abu Sitta, who rotated between al-Ahli and Shifa hospital, had left Shifa when Israeli forces encircled the hospital, eventually storming it in search of what they described as a Hamas command center. Israeli officials released visuals of an underground tunnel and rooms that they said were used by Hamas, but have not provided further evidence.

Abu Sitta, like other medical workers in the hospital, denied the allegations.

He said he had complete access to Shifa and there "was never, ever even any military presence." He said policemen whose job was to control the crowds in front of the emergency department only carried truncheons.

The physician said he hopes the UK war crimes investigation will lead to prosecutions, locally or internationally.

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, said after a visit to the West Bank and Israel last week that a probe by the court into possible crimes by both Hamas militants and Israeli forces is a priority for his office.

Polish truck drivers are blocking the border with Ukraine. It's hurting on the battlefield

By HANNA ARHIROVA, KARL RITTER and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press
KORCZOWA, Poland (AP) — Pickup trucks and tourniquets bound for Ukraine's battlefield are among items stuck in a mileslong line at the border with Poland. Components to build drones to fight off Russian forces are facing weeks of delays.

Ukrainian charities and companies supplying the war-torn country's military warn that problems are growing as Polish truck drivers show no sign of ending a border blockade that has stretched past a month. The Polish protesters argue that their livelihoods are at stake after the European Union relaxed some transport rules and Ukrainian truckers undercut their business.

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While drones will make it to the front line, they're delayed by two to three weeks, said Oleksandr Zadorozhnyi, operational director of the KOLO foundation, which helps the Ukrainian army with battlefield tech, including drones and communications equipment.

"This means that the Russian army will have the ability to kill Ukrainian soldiers and terrorize civilians for several weeks longer," he said.

Truck drivers in Poland have blocked access roads to border crossings since Nov. 6, creating lines that stretch for more than 30 kilometers (19 miles) and last up to three weeks in freezing temperatures. The protesters insist that they're not stopping military transports or humanitarian aid into Ukraine.

"This is very puzzling to me, even hard to believe because everybody knows — those who order, those who expedite and those who do the transport — that aid for the military passes through without having to wait at all," said Waldemar Jaszczur, a protest organizer.

The Polish truckers, meanwhile, say their Ukrainian counterparts are offering lower prices to haul everything from fish to luxury goods across the European Union since getting a temporary waiver on the 27-nation bloc's transport rules after Russia's invasion in 2022.

Despite Poland and other nearby countries being some of Ukraine's biggest supporters in the war, resentment has built from truckers and farmers who are losing business to lower-cost Ukrainian goods and services flowing into the world's biggest trading bloc. It underscores the challenges of integrating Ukraine into the EU if approved.

Now, the commercial clash is spilling over to the battlefield, the Ukrainian charities say.

About 200 pickup trucks needed to transport ammunition and evacuate the wounded from the front line are blocked at the border because "deliveries have practically stopped," said Ivan Poberzhniak, head of procurement and logistics for Come Back Alive, Ukraine's largest charitable organization providing the military with equipment.

The pickup trucks are easy targets for Russia, so it's impossible to deliver enough of them even normally, he said.

When drivers show documents to the Polish truckers saying the vehicles are for Ukraine's military, "it does not have a significant impact on the protesters," Poberzhniak said.

"We must understand that during wartime, supply is needed on a daily basis in all directions," he said.

Come Back Alive says 3,000 tourniquets also are stuck at the border. It's been able to deliver drones, generators and batteries from what it has in stock, "but that reserve is running out," Poberzhniak said.

The group is exploring alternative supply routes, he says, but there are few options, and the military's unfulfilled requests for equipment are building up.

The protesting truckers assert that not all deliveries declared as military aid are really that. They are urging the EU to reinstate the limits on the number of Ukrainian trucks that can enter the bloc.

Jaszczur, the organizer, said Ukrainian truckers have been doing unauthorized transport services across Europe. They are asking "glaringly low prices" — 35% lower than what Polish truckers charge — and are "driving us out of the market," he said.

The same thing is happening in other countries like Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, he said. Some Slovak truckers staged a protest of their own in recent days at the Ukrainian border.

Jaszczur says many Polish transport companies are going under because of the pressure from Ukrainian competition.

While there is no quick resolution in sight, a change of leadership in Warsaw offers hope.

The new government is expected to be in place in the next week and almost certainly will be led by the pro-EU centrist Donald Tusk. He has criticized the outgoing government's "inaction," offering hope to businesses hurt by the blockade but also to the protesters.

"We will look for solutions that should satisfy Polish transporters, but we will not tolerate any events that threaten Polish security. Who inspired or initiated them?" Tusk said Friday, stressing that Ukraine is a strategic point for Poland as it fights Russia's invasion.

Ukrainian truck driver Ivan Itchenko is one of those eagerly awaiting a resolution. He has been waiting in Poland for days with hundreds of others, trying to stay warm at a highway rest stop until he can bring

his load of salmon and herring to Ukrainian supermarkets.

"I clean the truck, clear the snow. Polish customs officers come and ask for documents three times a day," Itchenko said Thursday.

The 61-year-old hoped his turn to drive through the Korczowa-Krakovets crossing would come Saturday.

"I live in Chernihiv (region), near Russia. Every day there are attacks. Now I am stuck at the Polish border. What do they want?"

With temperatures falling, drivers are experiencing difficult conditions, choosing not to heat their trucks to save fuel and facing limited access to food and bathrooms, Ukrainian media say.

Polish and Ukrainian officials are negotiating with help from the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, but the protest has only expanded.

"We do not see any light in the tunnel, we do not see any authorities, any government or the EU Commission really giving attention to this," said Dariusz Matulewicz, head of the truckers' association in Szczecin, a city in western Poland.

Poland's outgoing government has "nothing against supporting Ukraine" but it "must not allow the aid activity to be done at the expense of Polish firms," deputy minister for infrastructure, Rafal Weber, said Monday in Brussels.

The EU has pressed Warsaw to find a way to end the blockade but stood by its deal with Kyiv. It's "beneficial to the European market, to Ukraine and to Moldova," said Adina Valean, EU transport commissioner who also threatened sanctions against Poland.

Ukrainian officials say the truckers' protest adds more stress to their economy and only serves Russia's interests.

Ukrainian exports have dropped by 40% through the four blocked border crossings, and the state budget has lost some 9.3 billion hryvnias (\$254 million) due to the shortfall in customs payments, said Danylo Hetmantsev, head of the finance and tax committee in Ukraine's parliament.

"Undoubtedly, this is a powerful blow to our economy and our exports," Hetmantsev said Tuesday on state TV.

'Shadows of children:' For the youngest hostages, life moves forward in whispers

By JULIA FRANKEL, ADAM GELLER and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

HERZLIYA, Israel (AP) — After seven weeks held hostage in the tunnels of Gaza, they are finally free to laugh and chat and play. But some of the children who have come back from captivity are still reluctant to raise their voices above a whisper.

In theory, they can eat what they want, sleep as much as they choose and set aside their fears. In practice, some have had to be convinced there's no longer a need to save a cherished bit of food in case there is none later.

At last, the 86 Israelis released during a short-lived truce between their government and Hamas are home. But the Oct. 7 attack by Palestinian militants on roughly 20 towns and villages left many of the children among them without permanent homes to go back to. Some of their parents are dead and others are still held hostage, foreshadowing the difficulty of days ahead.

And so, step by step, these children, the mothers and grandmothers who were held alongside them, and their families are testing the ground for a path to recovery. No one, including the physicians and psychologists who have been treating them, is sure how to get there or how long it might take.

"It's not easy in any way. I mean, they're back. They're free. But you can definitely see what they went through," said Yuval Haran, whose family is celebrating the reunion with his two nieces, their mother and grandmother, while yearning for the return of the girls' father, who remains a captive.

"We're trying to give them love, to give them hugs, to give them control back of their life," said Haran, visibly exhausted by the stress of the past two months, but every bit as busy now as he rushes to fix

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bicycles and set up bank accounts for those who have returned. "I think that's the most important thing, to give them the sense that they can decide now."

It was clear as soon as the youngest were helped from helicopters that captivity had been brutal.

"They looked like shadows of children," said Dr. Efrat Bron-Harlev of Schneider Children's Medical Center in suburban Tel Aviv, who helped treat more than two dozen former captives, most of them youngsters.

Some had not been allowed to bathe during the entirety of their captivity. Many had lost up to 15 percent of their total weight, but were reluctant to eat the food they were served.

Asked why, the answer came in whispers: "Because we have to keep it for later."

One 13-year-old girl recounted how she'd spent the entirety of captivity believing that her family had abandoned her, a message reinforced by her kidnappers, Bron-Harlev said.

"They told me that nobody cares for you anymore. Nobody's looking for you. Nobody wants you back. You can hear the bombs all around. All they want to do is kill you and us together," the girl told her doctors.

After enduring such an experience, "I don't think it's something that will leave you," said Dr. Yael Mozer-Glassberg, who treated 19 of the children released. "It's part of your life story from now on."

In the days since the hostages were freed, nearly all have been released from hospitals and rejoined their families, including some welcomed back by thousands of well-wishers.

Doctors and others charged with treating the former hostages spent weeks preparing for their return. But the realities of caring for so many who endured such extremes has stunned physicians, starting with the reluctance of many children to speak.

"Most of them talk about needing to be very quiet. At all times. Not to stand up. Not to talk. Of course, not to cry. Not to laugh. Just to be very, very quiet," said Bron-Harlev, the physician.

"What these children have gone through is simply unimaginable."

Despite that, at times now some appear to be thriving.

Noam Avigdori, 12, who was released with her mother, has spent the past week trading jokes with her father, meeting with friends, and has even ventured out to a store.

"When I say, 'Noam, do this, go do that,' she says, 'Dad, you know what happened to me.' And she knows that she can squeeze that lemon and ... she's enjoying it," her father, Hen Avigdori, said in an interview.

But there are also nights when his daughter wakes up screaming, Avigdori said this week at a separate news conference.

Nearly all those who have been freed have said little publicly about the conditions of their captivity. Their families say officials have told them not to disclose details of their individual treatment, for fear of putting those still being held in further jeopardy.

But interviews with their families, doctors and mental health professionals, and statements released by officials and others make clear that while all the hostages suffered, their experiences in captivity varied significantly.

Some were isolated from their fellow hostages. Others, like Noam Avigdori and her mother, Sharon, were held together with relatives, making it possible for the 12-year-old to act as something like an older sibling to the young cousins who were held with her.

"Everyone who was with a family member or with friends was in much better condition" when they were released, said Dani Lotan, a clinical psychologist at Scheider who treated some of the former hostages.

That varies, though, even within families.

In the weeks they were imprisoned, Danielle Aloni and her 5-year-old daughter, Emilia, established a close friendship with one of the imprisoned Thai farm workers, Nutthawaree Munkan. Last week, after all were released, the girl sang to a delighted Munkan when they were reunited in a video call, reciting the numbers she learned in Thai during captivity.

But Emilia's cousins, 3-year-old twins, are having a difficult time since their return.

In captivity, Sharon Aloni was held with her husband and one of the twin girls in a small room, together with eight or so others. The couple spent "10 agonizing days" believing their other daughter had been killed, when she was snatched away shortly after they were taken into Gaza, Aloni's brother, Moran Aloni

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told reporters.

That lasted until the day Sharon insisted to her husband that she could hear the cries of their missing daughter, Emma. Minutes later, a woman appeared without explanation to bring them the child, a joyous reunion that allowed mother and daughters to stay together throughout the remainder of their captivity. But a couple of days before they were released, the girls' father was taken away and his whereabouts remain unknown.

Now free, the girls wake up crying in the middle of the night, Moran Aloni said. Emma won't allow anyone to leave her side. They have gotten used to speaking up again, but their mother still whispers.

Many former hostages have recounted being given meager amounts of food. But the rations seemed to vary from group to group with little explanation, said Mozer-Glassberg, a senior physician at Schneider.

One family told doctors they were each given a biscuit with tea at 10 every morning and, from time to time, a single dried date. At 5 p.m. they were served rice. It wasn't enough, but day after day of worry left their appetites to wither.

One 15-year-old girl recounted not eating for days so she could give her share of the food to her 8-year-old sister.

Some of the 23 Thai hostages released recently told caregivers they were each given roughly a half liter (17 ounces) of water and then had to make it last for three days. Sometimes, they said, it was saltwater.

One group of former captives reported being allowed to bathe three times over seven weeks with buckets of cold water. But one child never bathed at all, doctors say.

"Many of them talk about feeling very hungry. Very, very hungry. Many of them talk about feeling very dirty, not being able to clean, not being able to go to the bathroom," Bron-Harlev said.

The process of recuperation from such prolonged trauma will be slow and piecemeal, doctors say. And while the adults may be better able to process what they have experienced, their recovery poses its own challenges.

Many, particularly the older and infirm, remain weak after losing nine kilos (20 pounds) or more because of the meager rations provided by their captors. When they speak, their families hear notes of resilience, but also of fragility.

Margalit Moses, a 78-year-old cancer survivor who has long struggled with multiple health problems, is back on the medications she was deprived of as a captive. But she remains too weak to walk more than a few steps.

"I think two months was up to the very, very last limit of her body hanging in there," her niece, Efrat Machikawa, said.

In the days since Moses returned, she has been savoring pleasures that once seemed trivial, like peeling a fresh orange and lingering over crossword puzzles, her niece said.

Yaffa Adar, 85, a Holocaust survivor who was seized from her kibbutz and hustled into Gaza on a golf cart, talks at length with her family about her time in captivity. But the days since have become more difficult as she grapples with what happened to her and the community she cherished, granddaughter Adva Adar said.

"She's incredibly mentally strong, but you can see how the hell got into her soul," the younger Adar said. "It's in the way she looks at the world, the way she looks at people."

In the hospitals, doctors, social workers and psychologists were careful about how they talked with the former hostages, not wanting to magnify their trauma. But as they settle in, both children and adults are confronting the toll of the October attack that captivity kept hidden from them.

Throughout the seven weeks she was held, Shoshan Haran, her daughters and grandchildren had to wonder what had happened to her husband.

"We had to tell them my father was murdered," Yuval Haran said.

In the days ahead, he and others acknowledge, they will face questions about how to move forward without those who were killed or remain missing. But for most, it is far too soon.

When Hen Avigdori was called to a Tel Aviv hospital at 4 a.m. to reunite with his wife and daughter he said his heart filled with joy akin to the feeling of becoming a parent for the first time, but multiplied tenfold.

Hearing his daughter's laughter again and talking for hours with his wife over coffee and cigarettes, it feels like his family has been reborn and they are treasuring the moment, he said.

Staying with family in southern Israel, Moses acknowledges that the kibbutz she loved no longer exists. But questions about where she wants to live will have to wait.

"It's not time yet. You take it day by day. That's part of the listening, part of the waiting, part of being here and now while everything else is going on," said Machikawa, her niece.

And in Yuval Haran's household — settled in quarters loaned to the family and shared with his mother, his sister, and his nieces, all recently freed — worries about the future are overwhelmed by the concerns of now.

In captivity, his mother made it her job to look after the girls, 4 and 8, and their mother. After more than a week of freedom, she still sleeps alongside them. Now, Haran says, the rest of the family will become their caregivers.

They will do whatever they can to help the girls and the women feel safe again. To reassure them that they can put their trust in others. To let them know that, at last, they are home.

Observers see OPEC 'panicking' as COP28 climate talks focus on possible fossil fuel phase-out

By SETH BORENSTEIN, DAVID KEYTON, SIBI ARASU and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Veteran negotiators at the United Nations climate talks Saturday said that the push to wean the world from dirty fossil fuels had gained so much momentum that they had poked a powerful enemy: the oil industry.

Late Friday, multiple news sources reported that the leader of OPEC, the powerful oil cartel, wrote to member countries earlier this week urging them to block any language that would phase out or phase down fossil fuels. The news had the effect of a thunderclap, shining a light on host and petrostate United Arab Emirates, which clearly has oil interests but also wants to show the world that it can lead the conference toward a substantive result.

Environmental activists, still smarting after decades of soft power from oil interests keeping such discussions from seeing the light of day, smirked at signs that the mighty cartel was circling the wagons.

"I think they're panicking," said Alden Meyer, an analyst with climate think tank E3G "Maybe the Saudis can't do on their own what they've been doing for 30 years and block the process."

Former Ireland President Mary Robinson said, "They're scared. I think they're worried."

Robinson, co-chair of the retired leaders group The Elders, is now a prominent climate campaigner. She said that OPEC is concerned "gives me hope." Last month she clashed publicly with the president of the COP28 negotiations, Sultan al-Jaber, who is also CEO of the Emirates' national oil company.

China's climate envoy Xie Zhenhua called this year's climate conference the "most difficult" of his long career. He said the contentious phase-out issue could be solved in one or two days.

Germany's climate envoy, Jennifer Morgan, suggested any call for blocking a deal would be felt most by small countries vulnerable of sea level rise caused by global warming.

"Right now, countries here are fighting for their lives. The small islands, and most countries here, are engaging very actively on this discussion in a real way," she said in an interview. "And I think it is obviously not responsible to have a position that could mean — would mean — the life and death of many million people."

But not all developing countries felt the same way.

"The development of our countries depends, in fact, on the use of fossil fuels," said Niger's Issifi Boureima, who's executive secretary of the Sahel Region Climate Commission. "It's not easy for countries like ours to accept a text that agrees to end fossils fuels today. It's not easy, because what do we do after that?"

"I think that in the dynamic of multilateral diplomacy, we need to avoid egoism, egoism of the north towards the south."

COP28 Director General Majid al-Suwaidi downplayed the OPEC letter, saying the UAE team running

the climate conference has been meeting with negotiators to get an ambitious deal. The oil cartel has no formal link to the climate negotiations.

"I feel confident that we're going to get a good result you're going to be surprised about," Suwaidi told The Associated Press.

OPEC didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment. Protestors Saturday in a flash mob briefly blocked the OPEC exhibit at climate talks, calling for an immediate phase-out of fossil fuels.

As discussions were happening about the letter and how to transition from fossil fuels, the world inched closer to deciding where next year's climate conference will be held, a third state petrostate. Azerbaijan announced it would host COP29 in Baku, where one of history's first oil fields sprung up. But U.N. officials said it wasn't quite a done deal because the proper paperwork hasn't been submitted.

The conference presidency has been crowing about deal after deal, many of them involving hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars of pledges, but they've more nibbled the edges of the key issue of cutting emissions. When it comes to reducing the gases that cause climate change, a key group of scientists who analyze pledges, actions and potential temperature increases said in a report on Saturday that all the action hadn't amounted to much.

"The COP28 Presidency has made a very big deal about a whole lot of voluntary initiatives, while adopting an ambiguous and weak position on the central issue of a fossil fuel phaseout," Climate Analytics CEO Bill Hare, co-author of the report, said.

Saturday's firestorm of controversy came as protests at the conference center in Dubai ramped up, with a "Global Day of Action" urging nations to move decisively to stop climate change and officials from various countries talked increasingly urgently at the official meetings. The OPEC letter has added fuel to their fury.

"With current policies, the planet is on track to a 2.9 (degree Celsius, 5.2 degree Fahrenheit above pre-industrial temperature) future. We cannot adapt to temperature rise that high; the loss and damage will be incalculable. It will be our death sentence," Marshall Islands natural resources minister John Silk said.

"We will not go silently to our graves," he said.

It's taking longer to schedule abortions in the US. Doctors fear riskier, more complex procedures

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

A woman whose fetus was unlikely to survive called more than a dozen abortion clinics before finding one that would take her, only to be put on weekslong waiting lists. A teen waited seven weeks for an abortion because it took her mother that long to get her an appointment. Others seeking the procedure faced waits because they struggled to travel hundreds of miles for care.

Such obstacles have grown more common since Roe v. Wade was overturned in June 2022, doctors and researchers say, causing delays that can lead to abortions that are more complex, costly and in some cases riskier — especially as pregnancies get further along.

About half of U.S. states now have laws that ban or restrict access to abortion. Because of that, many clinics don't offer the procedure, which has increased demand for appointments at the remaining providers.

At various points since Roe, waits in several states stretched for two or three weeks, and some clinics had no available appointments, according to results of a periodic survey spearheaded by Middlebury College economics professor Caitlin Myers and recently provided to The Associated Press. Doctors and researchers say even as wait times have lessened, people still encounter other challenges, like planning and paying for travel, taking time off work and finding child care.

"All of those things can contribute to delays, and then it kind of becomes like this vicious circle," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN at the University of California, San Francisco, who co-authored a research report earlier this year that compiled anecdotes from health care providers after Roe was overturned.

People may miss the window for medication abortions, which are not generally offered past 10 to 11 weeks gestation. A dwindling number of clinics provide abortions as people move through the second trimester, which begins at 13 or 14 weeks. Costs for the procedure change, too, from up to \$800 in the

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first trimester to \$2,000 or more in the second trimester.

"While abortion is safe at all points in pregnancy," with an overall complication rate of 2%, it "does get more complicated as the pregnancy continues," said Dr. Colleen McNicholas, chief medical officer at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region. "It does carry additional risks."

Rising demand pushes up waits

At least 66 clinics in 15 states stopped providing abortions in the 100 days after Roe was overturned, according to an analysis last year by the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

The necessity for people to travel out of state is at the root of abortion delays.

Clinics run by Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, which operates in Colorado, New Mexico and southern Nevada, saw out-of-state patients more than double after Roe. And Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region's health center in Fairview Heights, Illinois, saw a 715% increase in patients from outside of Illinois or Missouri in the year after Roe.

"We know that abortion bans have caused a ripple effect and increased wait times even in states where access is protected," McNicholas said.

The ongoing Myers Abortion Appointment Availability Survey called more than 700 facilities across the United States. Its latest survey, conducted in September, found that 11 states had median appointment wait times of more than five business days and four states had waits of at least eight business days, not counting weekends or holidays. The longest wait was in Iowa: 12 business days.

A year earlier, the survey found Iowa had a median wait of 13 business days, and six other states had waits between 12 and 15 business days.

Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains told the AP that wait times peaked at 28 days shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court decision, though it later fell. Before June 2022, waits in the region's Planned Parenthood clinics averaged 17 days, reflecting restrictions in Texas that were put into place in 2021.

In the report from Grossman's team, a health care worker described how it took one mom seven weeks to get an appointment for her pregnant teen, who was about 17 weeks along by then. Another patient described in the report was also that far along by the time she got an abortion after struggling for six weeks to find an appointment. She drove 10 hours to a different state for care.

The latest statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are from 2021 and show that about 7% of abortions took place at 14 weeks or later.

While there's no way to know definitively whether delays have pushed more abortions into the second trimester, several providers said they've seen the number rise in their own clinics. The St. Louis region's Planned Parenthood, for instance, tracked a 35% increase in the number of patients getting abortions at 14 weeks or later at the Southern Illinois health center in the year after the Supreme Court decision.

Dr. Rebecca Cohen, an OB-GYN at a hospital-affiliated clinic in Colorado, said her team has cared for an increasing number of patients seeking abortions later in pregnancy, some of whom "have experienced several weeks of delays" trying to find care.

Jillaine St.Michel struggled to find somewhere to have an abortion late last year after learning that her 20-week fetus had multiple genetic and developmental problems and probably wouldn't survive. She lives in Idaho, which has a ban on abortions, so St.Michel and her husband called about 15 out-of-state clinics, finally getting on a three-week waiting list in Denver and a two-week waiting list in Seattle.

St.Michel, 37, said she worried about passing abortion time limits: Colorado allows abortion at all stages of pregnancy, while Washington state allows the procedure up to viability, the point a fetus may survive outside the womb. Some babies can survive with medical help at 22 or 23 weeks.

A chance cancellation opened up a spot in Seattle four days after she called to get on the list. Still, she said, "we absolutely felt the time crunch."

Dealing with a deluge

Clinics have taken numerous steps to reduce waits, such as adding more telehealth appointments for medication abortions, staying open longer and adding more staff. That's generally brought appointment wait times down and also helped people obtain other types of reproductive care at the clinics in a timely

fashion.

"If someone's sexually active and they don't want to become pregnant, we want to get them on birth control," said Adrienne Mansanares, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains. "If they are experiencing symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection ... we want to get them treated."

But streamlining appointments is only part of the answer to reducing abortion delays, providers said. Individual issues like child care problems, canceled flights and financial concerns can be tough to overcome — even when clinics try to help by connecting patients to abortion funds, for instance.

This is especially difficult as travel distances grow longer. Research by Myers and colleagues found the average driving distance to the nearest clinic rose substantially in some states after Roe. From March 2022 to September 2023, it shot up from 34 to 160 miles in Alabama and from 43 to 499 miles in Texas.

The clinic where St. Michel, a chiropractor, had an abortion is about 500 miles from her home. She and her husband quickly came up with about \$4,000 for airplane tickets, a rental car, three nights of lodging and the procedure, since the clinic was out of network for her insurance. The couple decided not to turn to an abortion fund because they thought others needed it more, instead taking it out of their savings.

Hoping to help other families, she joined a lawsuit filed by the Center for Reproductive Rights, an organization of lawyers and advocates that supports abortion rights. The suit asks state courts in Idaho and Tennessee to place holds on abortion laws.

"I personally can't imagine that most people would be able to make this work," said St. Michel, who is pregnant again. "This is not how we should have to seek health care."

Texas Supreme Court pauses lower court's order allowing pregnant woman to have an abortion

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Supreme Court on Friday night put on hold a judge's ruling that approved an abortion for a pregnant woman whose fetus has a fatal diagnosis, throwing into limbo an unprecedented challenge to one of the most restrictive bans in the U.S.

The order by the all-Republican court came more than 30 hours after Kate Cox, a 31-year-old mother of two from the Dallas area, received a temporary restraining order from a lower court judge that prevents Texas from enforcing the state's ban in her case.

In a one-page order, the court said it was temporarily staying Thursday's ruling "without regard to the merits." The case is still pending.

"While we still hope that the Court ultimately rejects the state's request and does so quickly, in this case we fear that justice delayed will be justice denied," said Molly Duane, an attorney at the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is representing Cox.

Cox's attorneys have said they will not share her abortion plans, citing concerns for her safety. In a filing with the Texas Supreme Court on Friday, her attorneys indicated she was still pregnant.

Cox was 20 weeks pregnant this week when she filed what is believed to be the first lawsuit of its kind since the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling last year that overturned Roe v. Wade. The order issued Thursday only applied to Cox and no other pregnant Texas women.

Cox learned she was pregnant for a third time in August and was told weeks later that her baby was at a high risk for a condition known as trisomy 18, which has a very high likelihood of miscarriage or stillbirth and low survival rates, according to her lawsuit.

Furthermore, doctors have told Cox that if the baby's heartbeat were to stop, inducing labor would carry a risk of a uterine rupture because of her two prior cesareans sections, and that another C-section at full term would endanger her ability to carry another child.

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton argued that Cox does not meet the criteria for a medical exception to the state's abortion ban, and he urged the state's highest court to act swiftly.

"Future criminal and civil proceedings cannot restore the life that is lost if Plaintiffs or their agents proceed to perform and procure an abortion in violation of Texas law," Paxton's office told the court.

He also warned three hospitals in Houston that they could face legal consequences if they allowed Cox's physician to provide the abortion, despite the ruling from state District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble, who Paxton called an "activist" judge.

On Friday, a pregnant Kentucky woman also filed a lawsuit demanding the right to an abortion. The plaintiff, identified as Jane Doe, is about eight weeks pregnant and she wants to have an abortion in Kentucky but cannot legally do so because of the state's ban, the suit said.

Unlike Cox's lawsuit, the Kentucky challenge seeks class-action status to include other Kentuckians who are or will become pregnant and want to have an abortion.

Abortion delays have grown more common in the US since Roe v. Wade was overturned

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

A woman whose fetus was unlikely to survive called more than a dozen abortion clinics before finding one that would take her, only to be put on weekslong waiting lists. A teen waited seven weeks for an abortion because it took her mother that long to get her an appointment. Others seeking the procedure faced waits because they struggled to travel hundreds of miles for care.

Such obstacles have grown more common since Roe v. Wade was overturned in June 2022, doctors and researchers say, causing delays that can lead to abortions that are more complex, costly and in some cases riskier — especially as pregnancies get further along.

About half of U.S. states now have laws that ban or restrict access to abortion. Because of that, many clinics don't offer the procedure, which has increased demand for appointments at the remaining providers.

At various points since Roe, waits in several states stretched for two or three weeks, and some clinics had no available appointments, according to results of a periodic survey spearheaded by Middlebury College economics professor Caitlin Myers and recently provided to The Associated Press. Doctors and researchers say even as wait times have lessened, people still encounter other challenges, like planning and paying for travel, taking time off work and finding child care.

"All of those things can contribute to delays, and then it kind of becomes like this vicious circle," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN at the University of California, San Francisco, who co-authored a research report earlier this year that compiled anecdotes from health care providers after Roe was overturned.

People may miss the window for medication abortions, which are not generally offered past 10 to 11 weeks gestation. A dwindling number of clinics provide abortions as people move through the second trimester, which begins at 13 or 14 weeks. Costs for the procedure change, too, from up to \$800 in the first trimester to \$2,000 or more in the second trimester.

"While abortion is safe at all points in pregnancy," with an overall complication rate of 2%, it "does get more complicated as the pregnancy continues," said Dr. Colleen McNicholas, chief medical officer at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region.

Rising demand pushes up waits

At least 66 clinics in 15 states stopped providing abortions in the 100 days after Roe was overturned, according to an analysis last year by the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

The necessity for people to travel out of state is at the root of abortion delays. Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region's health center in Fairview Heights, Illinois, saw a 715% increase in patients from outside of Illinois or Missouri in the year after Roe.

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A year earlier, seven states had waits between 12 and 15 business days. In the report from Grossman's team, a health care worker described how it took one mom seven weeks to get an appointment for her

pregnant teen, who was about 17 weeks along by then.

The latest statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are from 2021 and show that about 7% of abortions took place at 14 weeks or later.

While there's no way to know definitively whether delays have pushed more abortions into the second trimester, several providers said they've seen the number rise in their own clinics. The St. Louis region's Planned Parenthood, for instance, tracked a 35% increase in the number of patients getting abortions at 14 weeks or later at the southern Illinois health center in the year after the Supreme Court decision.

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But streamlining appointments is only part of the answer to reducing abortion delays, providers said. Individual issues like child care problems, canceled flights and financial concerns can be tough to overcome.

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"I personally can't imagine that most people would be able to make this work," said St.Michel, who is pregnant again. "This is not how we should have to seek health care."

Peek inside Joe Biden's campaign fundraisers, where big money mingles with old jokes in swanky homes

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — If you're a Democrat with money to burn and friends in high places, you can spend thousands on tickets to a fundraiser with President Joe Biden. If not, keep reading to see what you're missing.

With an election year around the corner, Biden is accelerating his fundraising to prepare for an astronomically expensive campaign. (Think billions, not millions.) In this rarefied world, money equals access, and supporters regularly pay top dollar for a personal glimpse of the world's most powerful man.

Biden is collecting cash across the Los Angeles area this weekend, and his first stop was a sprawling estate where the host joked "it's just a normal Friday at our house" as hundreds of donors sipped wine in the backyard.

"You're the reason why we're gonna win, God willing, in 2024," Biden told the audience.

Each fundraiser is a little different, but there's a similar script. A look at what it's like inside the presidential money hunt.

The setting

Fundraisers are a rare glimpse at the lives of the country's wealthiest and most influential. Biden's motorcade has rolled up to a mountain villa in Park City, Utah, a townhouse in New York City and a sprawling

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estate at the top of Hollywood Hills.

In a Manhattan apartment with floor-to-ceiling views of Central Park, reporters were required to slip disposable covers over their shoes before they could enter the living room where donors nibbled on crustless tea sandwiches.

At Friday's fundraiser in Los Angeles, attendees wore colored wrist bands that indicated where they should sit. Ushers held up red, green, blue and orange signs to direct them to the right place.

The press corps can enter fundraisers only to hear Biden's formal remarks; no cameras are allowed. When Biden is mingling with supporters or answering their questions, reporters are sequestered in a garage, home gym or spare bedroom. Sometimes they are kept outside on the sidewalk.

The introduction

The lucky host often gets the privilege of introducing the president. Usually, these remarks are predictably laudatory, but sometimes they get spicy.

Randi McGinn, a prominent New Mexico lawyer, joked about the attractiveness of the president's Secret Service detail and referenced Donald Trump's dalliance with a porn star.

Biden smiled — or grimaced, it was hard to tell — and made the sign of the cross as she spoke.

The president always thanks his hosts and any elected officials present. If he spots any children, Biden often jokingly warns them "this is going to be boring, boring, boring for you."

The unexpected

Although fundraisers are often run-of-the-mill occasions, careful reporters know to stay attentive. Biden has a history of being more candid than usual when surrounded by deep-pocketed supporters.

During a June fundraiser in California, Biden upset China by describing President Xi Jinping as a "dictator." Biden also said Xi was unaware that a Chinese balloon that floated over the United States was being used for spying.

"The reason why Xi Jinping got very upset in terms of when I shot that balloon down with two box cars full of spy equipment is he didn't know it was there," Biden said.

In Park City in August, Biden ruminated about his signature legislation, the Inflation Reduction Act.

"I wish I hadn't called it that," Biden said, "because it has less to do with reducing inflation than it does to do with dealing with providing for alternatives that generate economic growth."

And on Tuesday in Weston, Massachusetts, the 81-year-old president suggested he might not be seeking reelection if it weren't for Trump's comeback bid.

"If Trump wasn't running, I'm not sure I'd be running," Biden said. "But we cannot let him win, for the sake of the country."

The stories

Donors pay top dollar to hear Biden speak at private events, but reporters can rattle off some of his well-worn lines from memory.

The president says he's "never been more optimistic" about the country as long as we "remember who in hell we are." He cites his legislative accomplishments, from limiting prescription drug costs to investing in infrastructure such as roads and bridges. He says the rich need to "pay their fair share" of taxes. He warns that the U.S. is at "an inflection point."

He usually talks about meeting with Xi while they each served as vice presidents of their respective countries. In Biden's telling, Xi asked him to define America. "I said, 'I can do it in one word — possibilities,'" Biden says.

A centerpiece of Biden's fundraisers is his story of deciding to run for president against Trump in 2020.

He talks about "people coming out of the woods, carrying torches" during the 2017 marches in Charlottesville, Virginia, and "chanting the same antisemitic bile that was chanted in Germany in the '30s." When Trump said there were "very fine people on both sides" of the violence, Biden says, "that's when I decided I couldn't remain silent any longer."

The attacks

Fundraisers are an opportunity for Biden to rile up his supporters and score points on his opponents in a friendly environment.

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He often says "this is not your father's Republican Party," and he warns about "the extreme right, the MAGA movement," referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

Sometimes he avoids mentioning Trump's name by making oblique references to "my predecessor." But given Trump's standing as the clear front-runner for the Republican nomination in 2024, Biden has seen little reason to hold back.

Biden generally warns about the potential for cuts to health care or rollbacks to environmental programs if Trump wins next year. And Biden always keeps the focus on what he describes as a threat to the country's institutions.

"Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans," Biden said in Minneapolis last month, "are determined to destroy this democracy."

Today in History: December 10, Nelson Mandela is mourned

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 10, the 344th day of 2023. There are 21 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 10, 2013, South Africa held a memorial service for Nelson Mandela, during which U.S. President Barack Obama energized tens of thousands of spectators and nearly 100 visiting heads of state with a plea for the world to emulate "the last great liberator of the 20th century." The ceremony was marred by the presence of a sign-language interpreter who deaf advocates said was an impostor waving his arms around meaninglessly.

On this date:

In 1817, Mississippi was admitted as the 20th state of the Union.

In 1861, the Confederacy admitted Kentucky as it recognized a pro-Southern shadow state government that was acting without the authority of the pro-Union government in Frankfort.

In 1898, a treaty was signed in Paris officially ending the Spanish-American War.

In 1958, the first domestic passenger jet flight took place in the U.S. as a National Airlines Boeing 707 flew 111 passengers from New York to Miami in about 2 1/2 hours.

In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, saying he accepted it "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."

In 1967, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into Wisconsin's Lake Monona; trumpeter Ben Cauley, a member of the group the Bar-Kays, was the only survivor.

In 1994, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize, pledging to pursue their mission of healing the anguished Middle East.

In 1996, South African President Nelson Mandela signed the country's new constitution into law during a ceremony in Sharpeville.

In 2005, actor-comedian Richard Pryor died in Encino, California, at age 65.

In 2006, former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet died at age 91.

In 2007, former Vice President Al Gore accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a call for humanity to rise up against a looming climate crisis and stop waging war on the environment.

In 2019, House Democrats announced two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, declaring that he "betrayed the nation" with his actions toward Ukraine and an obstruction of Congress' investigation; Trump responded with a tweet of "WITCH HUNT!" At an evening rally in Pennsylvania, he mocked the impeachment effort and predicted it would lead to his reelection in 2020.

In 2021, tornadoes slammed into Kentucky, Arkansas and three neighboring states, killing more than 90 people, including 81 in Kentucky.

In 2022, Morocco became the first African country to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Fionnula Flanagan is 82. Actor-singer Gloria Loring is 77. Pop-funk musician

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Walter "Clyde" Orange (The Commodores) is 77. Country singer Johnny Rodriguez is 72. Actor Susan Dey is 71. Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich is 67. Jazz musician Paul Hardcastle is 66. Actor John York (TV: "General Hospital") is 65. Actor-director Kenneth Branagh (BRAH'-nah) is 63. Actor Nia Peeples is 62. TV chef Bobby Flay is 59. Rock singer-musician J Mascis is 58. Rock musician Scot Alexander (Dishwalla) is 52. Actor-comedian Arden Myrin is 50. Rock musician Meg White (The White Stripes) is 49. Actor Emmanuelle Chriqui is 48. Actor Gavin Houston is 46. Actor Alano Miller is 44. Violinist Sarah Chang is 43. Actor Patrick John Flueger is 40. Country singer Meghan Linsey is 38. Actor Raven-Symone is 38. Actor/singer Teyana Taylor is 33. Actor Kiki Layne is 32. NFL quarterback Joe Burrow is 27.