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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.

Tuesday, Dec. 12

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad croissant, tomato spoon salad, frosted brownie.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, try taters

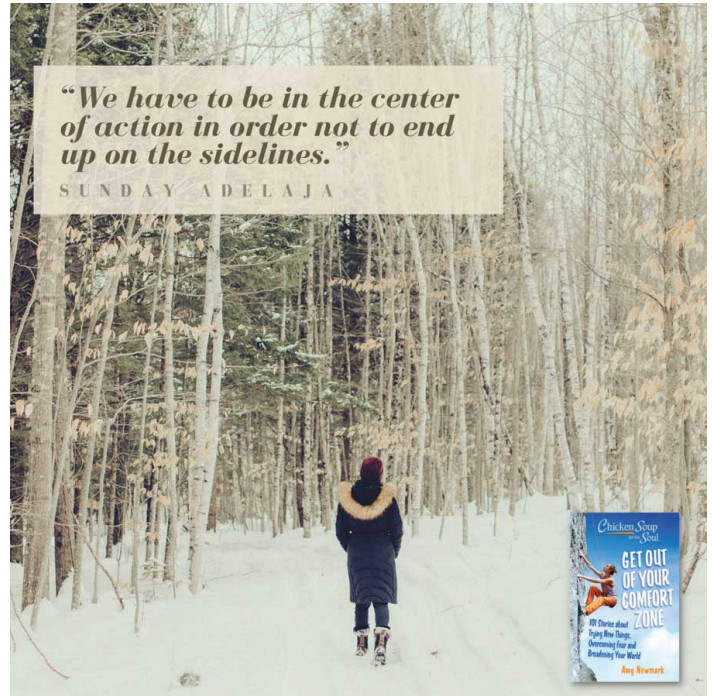
Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Holiday Lighting Contest, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.



Wednesday, Dec. 13

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, pineapple/mandarin oranges, peanut butter cookie.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Cheese nachos, refried beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Caroling (choir, league and 7-8 confirmation), 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Parents confirmation meeting for 7-8 grade, 6:30 p.m.

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

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

OPEN: **Recycling Trailer in Groton**
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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1440

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill resigned Saturday amid backlash over remarks made during a congressional hearing about on-campus antisemitism Tuesday. Reports of antisemitic harassment have increased at US universities since the start of the Israel-Hamas war two months ago, prompting scrutiny of those institutions' responses. A major donor withdrew a \$100M partnership with Penn Thursday as a protest of Magill's comments.

Shohei Ohtani, one of baseball's biggest stars, will depart the Los Angeles Angels and head across town to the Los Angeles Dodgers after signing a contract reportedly worth \$700M. In total value, the 10-year deal is believed to be the biggest contract signed by any athlete in global sports history.

The Texas Supreme Court paused a lower court's ruling over the weekend allowing a Dallas-area woman to receive an abortion despite the state's new laws limiting access to the procedure. The case is believed to be the first of its kind in the US since Roe v. Wade was overturned last June.

Israel Defense Forces order civilians to evacuate Khan Younis in southern Gaza amid push into city center; total Palestinians killed surpasses 18,000, according to Hamas-led health ministry.

X (formerly Twitter) reinstates account of InfoWars' Alex Jones after user poll, five years after he was permanently banned from the site for abusive behavior; Jones previously denied 2012 Sandy Hook massacre.

Six killed, including two children, with dozens of others injured amid severe storms and tornadoes in central Tennessee, Kentucky Saturday.

All three major markets end up Friday (S&P 500 +0.4%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.5%), notch the sixth straight week of growth; S&P 500 reaches highest point of the year, up 20% in 2023.

Health insurance giant Cigna drops bid to acquire rival Humana, will buy back \$10B worth of shares Honeywell to buy Carrier for nearly \$5B.

Southwest Airlines' flight attendants union rejects contract proposal; vote not expected to disrupt holiday air travel.

European Union reaches world's first comprehensive set of regulations for AI; plan creates a risk ranking system for different types of AI and allows consumers to file complaints against platforms.

Paleontologists discover 75-million-year-old fossil of a Gorgosaurus, a species of tyrannosaur from what is now western North America, with its final two meals preserved in its stomach.

Physicists demonstrate optical tweezers—focused laser beams that can hold and move tiny objects—which can position single molecules so precisely they can be used for quantum computing.

LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels wins 2023 Heisman Trophy as college football's most outstanding player.

Ryan O'Neal, Oscar-nominated actor known for starring roles in "Love Story" and "Paper Moon," dies at 82.

Los Angeles Lakers win first-ever NBA In-Season Tournament. Columbus Crew top Los Angeles FC to win their third MLS Cup.

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers
GT

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

Sisseton Girls C Game
West Central Girls C Game
West Central Girls JV Game
West Central Boys JV Game

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

Urinalysis in patient care

Urinalysis, or testing of the urine, has ancient origins dating back to the time of Hippocrates and beyond. Although we have evolved in our methodology of studying the urine and our understanding of the meaning of its characteristics, we do still rely on urinalysis in making clinical diagnoses frequently in medicine.

In centuries past, the tools of urinalysis were blunt and primarily involved human senses of sight, smell, and taste (yes, taste). Ancient physicians noted that sediment in the urine often correlated with fever, the sediment in question probably being white blood cells. Bubbles in the urine might portend kidney disease, which we know to be true if the bubbles are caused by excessive protein in the urine. And diabetes mellitus was generally known to be present in cases of excessive, sweet tasting urine.

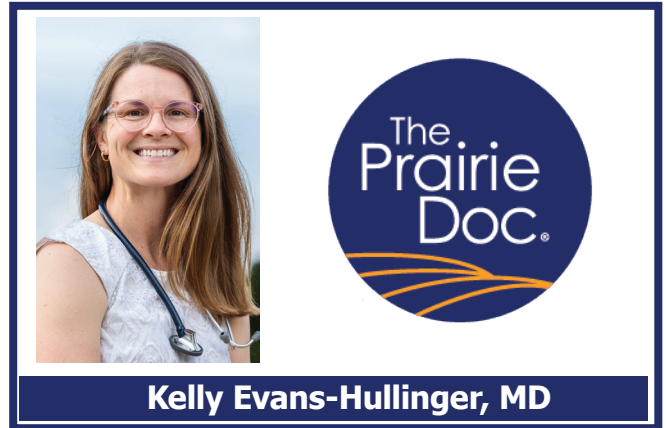
In modern laboratories, we test urine using chemical assays and by looking at urine sediment under a microscope. What might we be looking for when we ask our patients to provide a urine sample?

Red blood cells can be present in a variety of conditions, including trauma to the urinary tract such as from infection or kidney stones, tumors of the urologic tract, and diseases affecting the microscopic structures of the kidney, among other things. White blood cells are more specific to urinary tract infection, though they can be seen in some other types of kidney injury as well.

We look routinely for protein in the urine of patients with diabetes or known kidney disease. Protein in the urine is typically the first sign of kidney damage from chronic diseases like diabetes. And the amount of protein in the urine of a patient with chronic kidney disease can help us understand prognosis and whether certain medications are working. Glucose is found in the urine if a person has very high blood glucose (or if they are taking certain medications). Numerous other chemical tests of the urine can help us to diagnose selective medical conditions.

As a physician in the modern era, luckily I have never tasted my patients' urine like Hippocrates and his cohorts would have. But I do use urinalysis every day to help me diagnose and care for my patients.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



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Weekly Vikings Recap - Vikings vs. Raiders

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

After having the week off last week, the 6-6 Minnesota Vikings flew out to Las Vegas to face the 5-7 Raiders which might have been the most boring game in NFL history as both teams managed to not score a single point until the fourth quarter.

After the Vikings' disappointing loss to the Chicago Bears two weeks ago, the question for many Vikings fans was whether Kevin O'Connell would make a change at quarterback with the recent poor performances of Joshua Dobbs. To get ahead of things, O'Connell announced early in the week leading up to the game that Dobbs would continue to be the starter for the Vikings. However, the vote of confidence did not do anything to help Dobbs as his poor play continued against the Raiders.

O'Connell's decision to start Dobbs may have had something to do with the fact that star wide receiver, Justin Jefferson, was playing for the first time since week five, and his addition may have helped Dobbs and his passing. Unfortunately, Jefferson's return did not last long as he injured his chest after getting crushed trying to catch a high pass from Dobbs. Jefferson's early departure seemed to greatly affect the Vikings' offense as the team struggled to move the ball the rest of the game.

Late in the fourth quarter with the score still tied 0-0, O'Connell had seen enough and made the decision to go to backup quarterback, Nick Mullens. At the time of the decision to change quarterbacks, Josh Dobbs had amassed only 63 passing yards with a terrible 43% completion percentage. Despite not scoring any points on the initial drive with Mullens, the Vikings moved the ball well enough to flip the field and give themselves the advantage in terms of field position.

After the Raiders had to punt, the sixteenth total punt of the game we might add, Nick Mullens and the Vikings finally had a drive good enough to reach the red zone. After deciding to get conservative and make the Raiders use up their timeouts, the Vikings finally got on the scoreboard thanks to a Greg Joseph field goal. The field goal by Joseph officially ended the 0-0 tie at the 1:57 mark of the fourth quarter, making it the second longest amount of time that an NFL game has been scoreless.

This boring game would finally come to an end with an unbelievable score of 3-0 after Ivan Pace intercepted Raiders' quarterback, Aiden O'Connell, on the first play of their final drive. The 3-0 final score was the lowest in an NFL game since 2007.

Vikings 3 - Raiders 0

Next week, the Vikings will head out on the road again as they face the Cincinnati Bengals without their star quarterback, Joe Burrow. The story all week for the Vikings will be whether the Vikings finally decide to go back to Jaren Hall. Hall, who started in Atlanta in week nine, had a great start to the game before getting knocked out with a concussion. If the Vikings do decide to move on from Dobbs, that will surely be the end of his run as the Vikings' starting quarterback.



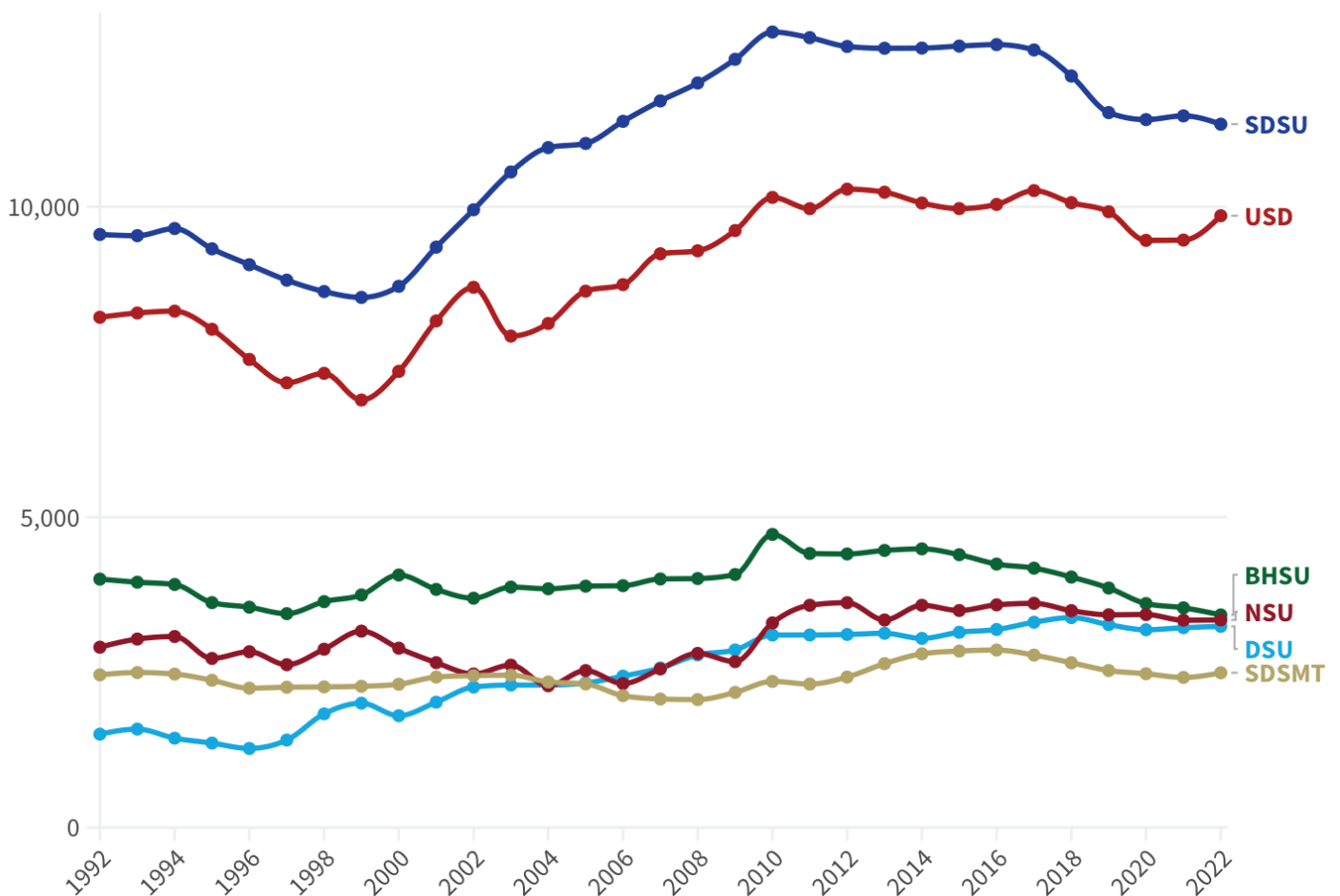
Board of Regents considers expanding in-state tuition to 3 more states

Jacob Boyko
South Dakota News Watch

BROOKINGS, S.D. – The Board of Regents will consider an expansion to its South Dakota Advantage program next week that would grant resident tuition rates to three other states.

Public university enrollments in South Dakota over time

Attendance at South Dakota higher ed schools has gone down overall since 2010.



Source: Board of Regents • Michael Klinski / SD News Watch

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If the regents approve the measure, students from Minnesota, Kansas and Missouri will be able to attend South Dakota's six public universities at the same cost as South Dakota residents.

"It's becoming an increasingly competitive market and we're doing all we can to attract students to South Dakota," said Nathan Lukkes, executive director and CEO of SDBOR. "With the higher education landscape changing drastically and some of the demographic challenges coming up in the next decade, borders are becoming less and less important. And everybody's vying for the same students."

Universities face enrollment cliff

Since fewer children were born during the 2007-2009 recession, there will be fewer college-aged kids over the next several years. In order to mitigate enrollment declines, universities' outreach efforts will become more crucial than ever, said Tim Rave, regents president.

"It's no secret we're going to start pushing up against the enrollment cliff, as every university in the country is. And it's imperative that we get out in front of that to encourage as many students to come to South Dakota (as we can) and stay once they graduate," he said.

The South Dakota Advantage program, which began in fall 2019, granted in-state tuition rates for Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana and Colorado residents. Illinois and Wisconsin were added to the list in 2023.

There is already a separate reciprocity agreement with Minnesota that allows residents to pay the higher amount between their home-state tuition and the South Dakota campus they attend, according to the Board of Regents. Bringing Minnesota into the program will save Minnesota residents attending a South Dakota public university upward of \$600 per semester.

Program has proven success

Jim Rankin, president of South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, told News Watch South Dakota Advantage is making his university more competitive in farther-away markets.

"I think we've got over 350 Colorado students, probably about just under 15% of our students," he said. "We didn't have those kinds of numbers in the past."

SDBOR enrollment data show out-of-state enrollment growth for first-time freshmen from each state in the initial South Dakota Advantage program. The exception is Iowa, which along with Nebraska were already granted in-state tuition.

According to SDBOR, here are the enrollment changes of first-time freshmen from surrounding states between fall 2018 and fall 2023:

- Iowa: 483, 437
- Nebraska: 266, 402
- Colorado: 112, 149
- North Dakota: 64, 96
- Wyoming: 50, 82
- Montana: 21, 33

The data also show total nonresident enrollment climbing in the SDBOR system from 12,700 in fall 2021 to 13,308 in fall 2023.

Building the state's future

Lukkes told News Watch that 23% of nonresident graduates stayed in South Dakota after graduation in 2019. By 2022, it had risen to over 28%.

"Last year we had 793 nonresident graduates that stayed and entered the workforce in South Dakota," he said. "The year before was 768, and the year before that 742. It's a critical piece of our workforce puzzle as we continue to struggle with shortages in education, health care and business."

Shawn Hembolt, assistant vice president for enrollment management at South Dakota State University, agrees.

"We know that if we can get them here, enrolled at our university, have them spend four quality years here in South Dakota, the chances of them staying in South Dakota and helping enhance our workforce and our state is even greater," he said.

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Scrapping the out-of-state tuition rate for nearby markets means the universities make less money off of each student. But Rankin said the program is a net gain overall.

"You're charging a little less to those out-of-state students coming in. But at the same time, you're hoping to bring in more students that wouldn't have come here in the first place," he said. "What we really want to see is that increased enrollment, which will make up for that decrease in tuition."

In-state tuition tips the scales

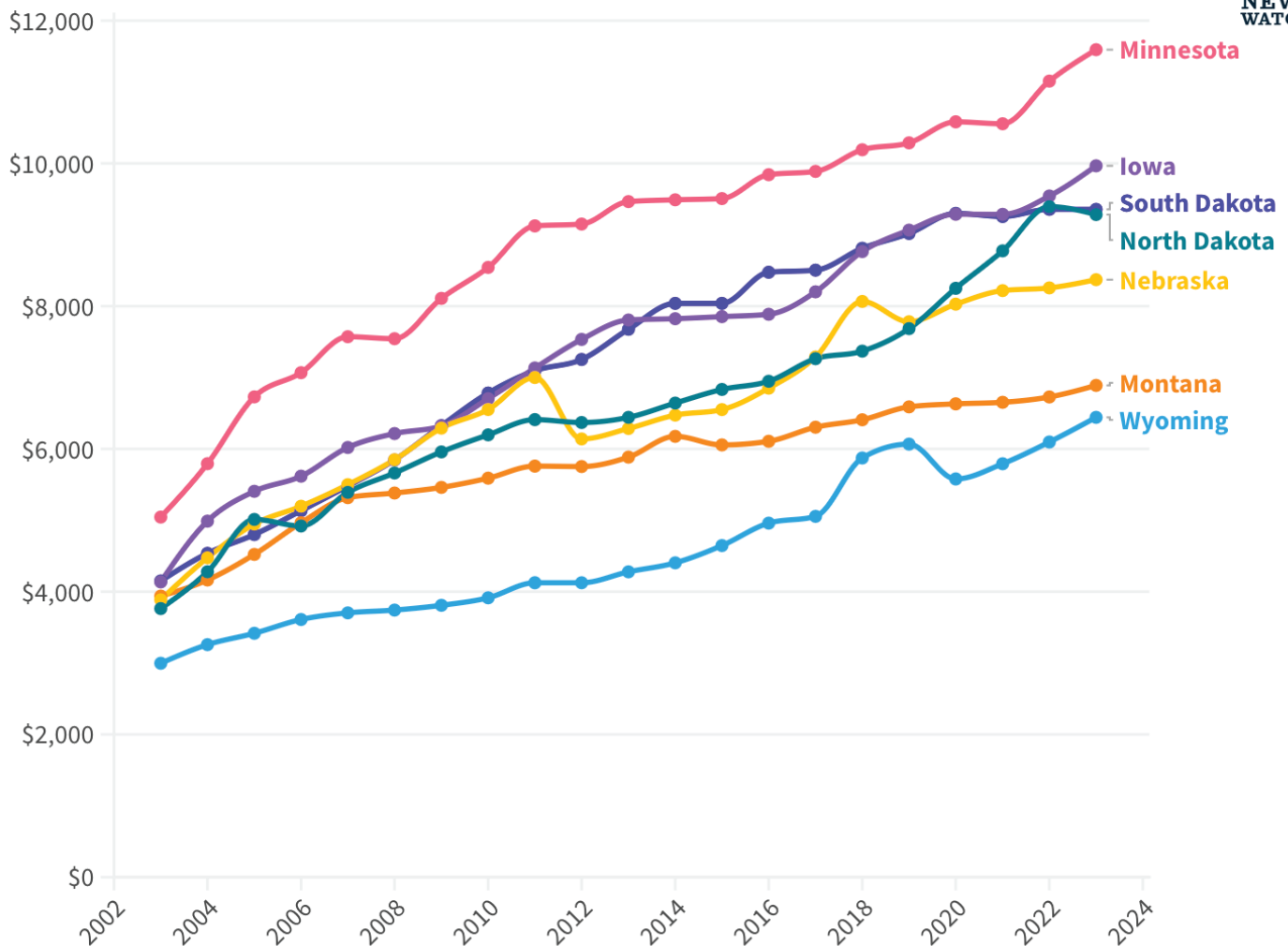
RuthAnn Holmes, a Wyoming native, is a senior at SDSU majoring in agricultural communication. After graduating high school in 2020, it wasn't very clear where she'd end up.

"I had three big options," Holmes said. "I had Colorado State, Texas A&M and SDSU. They all have really strong animal science and meat science degrees I was interested in."

Holmes said being offered in-state tuition tipped the scales in favor of coming to South Dakota.

"I feel it's very important because I, by myself, am the one paying for tuition and I don't have assistance

Tuition, fees at regional state public institutions over time



Source: SD Board of Regents fact books • Graphic: Michael Klinski / SD News Watch

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from my parents in paying for that," she said. "Paying in-state tuition made (college) a lot more financially available for me."

Holmes estimates SDSU's more affordable education saved her about \$20,000 from her second-choice pick, Colorado State University. She said she's open to staying in South Dakota after graduating.

Some distant states are closer than in-state points

Brock Brown, who serves on the regents as a student, said most of his classmates at the University of South Dakota School of Law are from out-of-state, which shows the benefit of the lower tuition rates.

"Something they talk about constantly as the reason they chose to attend USD's law school is because of the cost compared to their own state," he said.

Brown also pointed out the distance between SDSU in Brookings and Black Hills State University in Spearfish is greater than the distance from SDSU to the Wisconsin, Missouri and Kansas borders.

"I think this (program) makes us competitive in states a little further away and it gets some students that may not have looked at us to look at South Dakota a lot harder," Rankin said.

The regents will discuss the proposed changes and may vote on the proposal at a Dec. 13-14 meeting at SDSU.



RuthAnn Holmes, an SDSU student from Hillsdale, Wyo., chose SDSU over other nearby universities because of its affordability. She is majoring in agricultural communication with minors in meat science and animal science. (Photo: Jacob Boyko / South Dakota News Watch)

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Why are ecologists so bullish on “enhanced geothermal” power plants, and how do they differ from regular geothermal?

-- Paul Berman, Milwaukee, WI

Geothermal energy is energy derived from the natural heat beneath the Earth’s surface. The word geothermal comes from the Greek “geo” (for earth) and “therme” (heat).

Humans have been harnessing the heat from the center of the Earth for eons in one form or another, but it wasn’t until the 20th century that we started utilizing it as a renewable power source. By drilling below the Earth’s surface and cycling water or other liquids down there, the heat is brought up to use directly as a heat source or indirectly to

create steam that turns turbines that generate electricity. When ambient temperatures are colder than the ground, a geothermal heat pump removes heat from the collector’s fluids, concentrates it, and transfers it to the building. When ambient temperatures are warmer than the ground, the heat pump removes heat from the building and deposits it underground.

The world’s first commercial geothermal power plant opened in Italy in 1911, but the U.S. didn’t see its first utility-grade geothermal plant until 1960 when the Geysers Geothermal Field opened for business in Northern California. Cut to the present and the U.S. leads the world in geothermal energy production with some 6,500 megawatts of power online from 93 different plants from coast to coast. Geothermal systems, which provide so-called “baseload” supplies of power—that is, available 24/7—are a good complement to other renewables which are only available on an intermittent basis (solar when the sun shines, wind when the wind blows).

And in November 2023, Texas-based Fervo Energy, with backing from Google, opened a new generation of geothermal plants in Nevada. This so-called “enhanced geothermal system” (EGS) facility supercharges the geothermal production process by using advanced drilling techniques to access deeper and harder-to-reach resources. EGS also involves using high-pressure water to break up the subterranean rocks so as to enable the extraction of larger loads of heat much more quickly. As the water circulates through these fractures, it absorbs heat from the surrounding rocks before being brought back to the surface to generate electricity. (Conventional geothermal plants tap into hot springs and geysers much closer to the Earth’s surface.) And deeper drilling means enhanced geothermal can be implemented just about anywhere on the planet.

Despite the invention of the EGS concept in the early 1970s, Americans are a little late to the party with regard to developing it for large-scale generation. The first commercial-scale EGS plants opened in France and Germany in the early 2000s, and these days dozens of others can be found across the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan.

Industry analysts think U.S. producers will soon catch up with other leading EGS countries given that it’s such a reliable and inexpensive energy generation system to maintain—although up front development costs are still high given that the technology is relatively new.



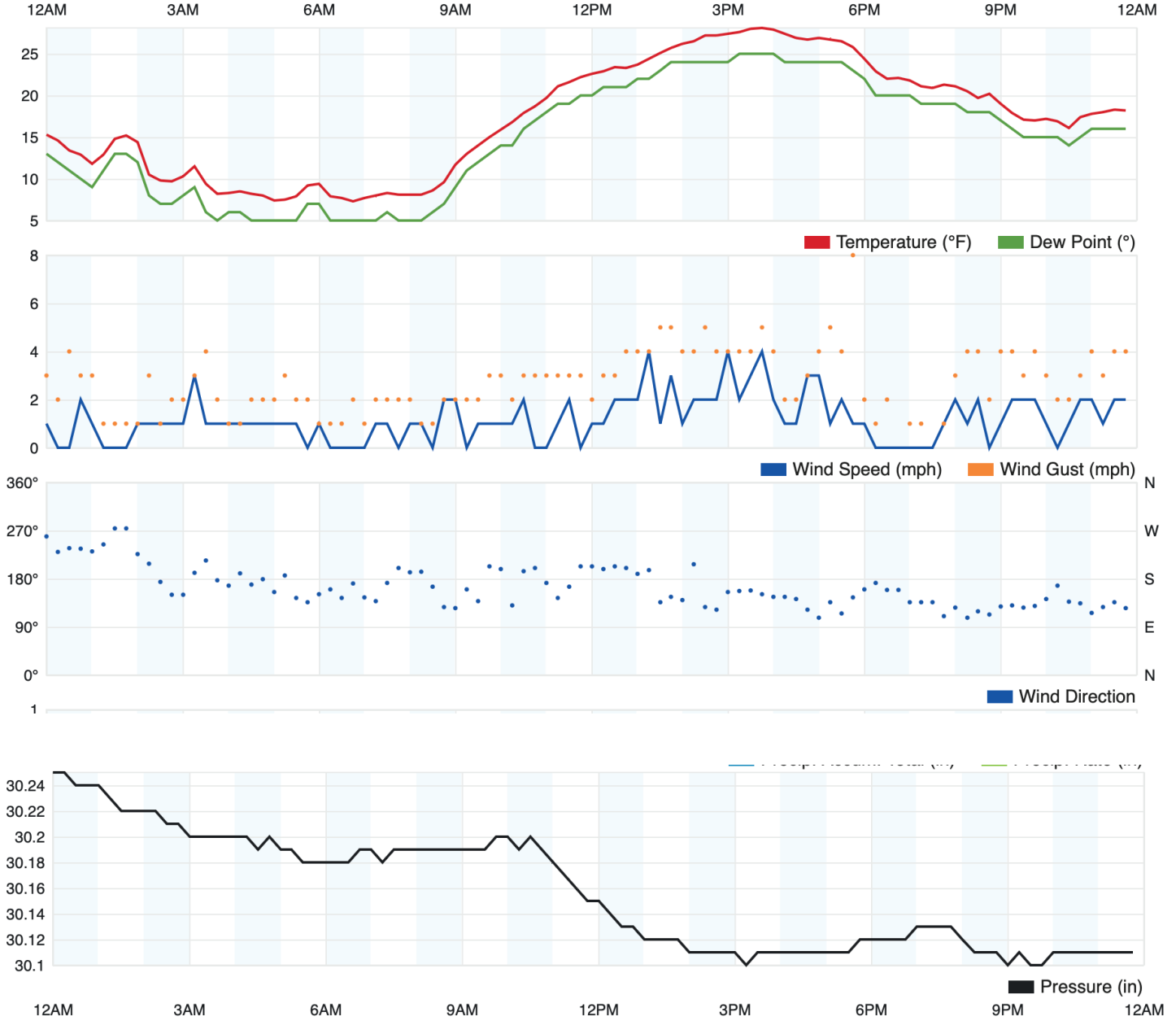
At the Newberry Geothermal Lease Project south of Bend, Oregon, Altarock Energy has been investigating the viability of enhanced geothermal power for industrial scale use since 2009.

Credit: Michael Campbell, BLM.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Mon Dec 11	Tue Dec 12	Wed Dec 13	Thu Dec 14	Fri Dec 15	Sat Dec 16	Sun Dec 17
35°F	29°F	39°F	47°F	41°F	42°F	40°F
13°F	18°F	27°F	31°F	23°F	27°F	21°F
SSW	WNW	SSW	S	NW	S	NW
11 MPH	7 MPH	10 MPH	19 MPH	14 MPH	21 MPH	19 MPH



A Mostly Dry Seven Day Forecast, Warming After Tuesday

December 10, 2023

1:41 PM

Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)

	12/11 Mon	12/12 Tue	12/13 Wed	12/14 Thu	12/15 Fri
Aberdeen	37	29	40	49	40
Britton	34	25	36	45	37
Brookings	40	30	41	48	42
Chamberlain	45	35	48	55	43
Clark	34	26	37	46	39
Eagle Butte	41	33	44	50	40
Ellendale	35	28	38	46	38
Eureka	35	28	39	46	37
Gettysburg	38	30	42	50	39
Huron	43	33	45	53	43
Kennebec	46	36	46	53	43
McIntosh	36	29	40	44	37
Milbank	38	29	41	49	42
Miller	41	32	44	51	42
Mobridge	40	34	43	50	40
Murdo	46	36	46	53	42
Pierre	45	36	49	55	43
Redfield	40	32	43	51	41
Sisseton	36	27	40	48	40
Watertown	36	27	38	46	41
Webster	32	24	36	43	38
Wheaton	36	26	38	48	39

Key Points:

- Warmer on Monday with highs in the 30s and low 40s.
- Cold front Monday afternoon and evening.
- Wind gusts of 25 to 35 mph.
- 20% chance of light snow,
- Cool on Tuesday,
- Turning warmer on Wednesday.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	12/11 Mon					12/12 Tue					Maximum			
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am		12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	10	15	21	23	25	24	23	21	15	13	12	13	10	25
Britton	16	17	20	23	25	28	26	23	21	14	16	16	14	28
Brookings	8	14	17	20	21	23	23	22	18	16	16	15	10	23
Chamberlain	9	16	22	20	22	22	21	16	10	9	10	10	8	22
Clark	15	16	18	20	24	25	25	23	17	14	18	12	10	25
Eagle Butte	18	22	28	29	30	28	24	16	13	12	17	18	16	30
Ellendale	12	15	23	26	28	28	26	23	18	17	16	14	14	28
Eureka	12	16	24	28	28	28	25	21	13	12	16	14	13	28
Gettysburg	14	18	24	28	28	28	23	16	14	9	16	15	15	29
Huron	9	12	16	18	24	24	22	22	16	13	10	10	8	24
Kennebec	14	18	24	24	26	25	20	16	12	6	12	13	12	26
McIntosh	17	24	32	35	33	31	26	20	13	9	17	20	17	35
Milbank	15	16	20	21	26	28	26	24	21	18	17	16	12	28
Miller	14	18	22	22	23	23	21	18	15	10	9	10	10	23
Mobridge	12	16	22	26	28	25	23	16	12	8	18	14	14	28
Murdo	16	21	25	26	26	26	21	15	10	7	15	16	16	26
Pierre	10	16	21	24	25	24	17	14	8	8	13	14	13	25
Redfield	10	14	18	22	25	24	23	20	15	10	9	10	10	25
Sisseton	16	20	23	25	29	32	32	30	26	22	18	16	13	32
Watertown	13	16	21	21	25	26	24	23	21	16	16	14	10	26
Webster	16	18	22	25	29	30	30	28	24	18	15	11	12	30
Wheaton	12	14	17	21	25	25	25	25	22	20	18	16	16	25



Warmer temperatures will move into the area ahead of a cold front on Monday, with highs in the 30s and 40s. The cold front will slide southward across the region on Monday afternoon and evening, producing northwest wind gusts of 25 to 35 mph. There is a 20% chance for light snow with the cold front.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 28 °F at 3:37 PM

Low Temp: 7 °F at 6:47 AM

Wind: 8 mph at 5:37 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 50 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 59 in 1939

Record Low: -22 in 1927

Average High: 30

Average Low: 9

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.22

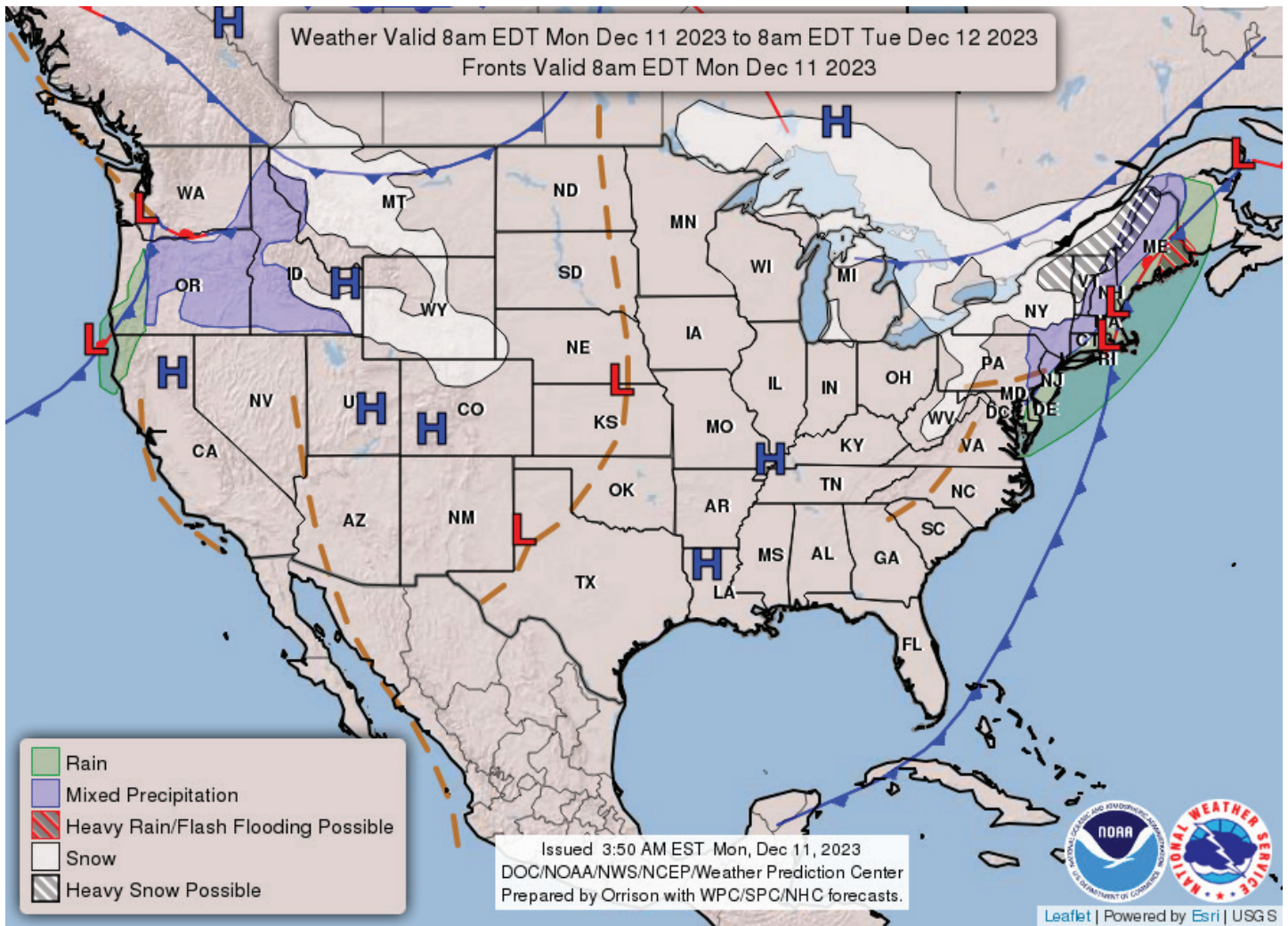
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.43

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:50:54 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:01:13 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 11, 1965: Ice, up to 3 inches thick, with even more in some locations, accumulated from freezing rain on utility lines and trees in northern South Dakota, causing extensive damage. The damage was estimated at \$1 million each to telephone lines and power lines, with the highest losses in the northeast quarter of the state. The first accumulation of the glaze began as a thick rime due to dense fog and freezing temperatures before the 11th. Freezing rain, which started the afternoon of the 11th and continued into the 12th, formed a coating of ice over the heavy rime accumulation. The glaze remained for a week or more in most areas. In west central Minnesota, freezing drizzle and freezing rain at night on the 11th caused ice accumulations of 1/2 to 1 inch thick on roads, telephone, and electric wires, as well as tree limbs. Power and other services were disrupted over a broad area. Some services were out for up to four days.

December 11, 2004: High winds gusting to around 60 mph caused some spotty damage in northeast South Dakota. In Watertown, some trees were downed. One tree fell onto a house, causing some minor damage. In Milbank, two rail cars were blown down a railroad track and derailed.

1905: The highest temperature ever recorded in South America was recorded at Rivadavia, Argentina with a temperature of 120 degrees.

1932 - Very cold weather prevailed along the West Coast. San Francisco received 0.8 inch of snow, and at the airport the temperature dipped to 20 degrees. At Sacramento CA, the mercury dipped to 17 degrees to establish an all-time record low for that location. Morning lows were below freezing from the 9th to the 15th at Sacramento, and the high on the 11th was just 34 degrees. The cold wave dealt severe damage to truck crops and orange groves in the Sacramento Valley. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Low pressure over southwestern Ontario, Canada, brought snow and gusty winds to the North Central U.S. Winds gusted to 62 mph at Riverton WY. Snow and high winds in eastern North Dakota reduced visibilities to less than one hundred feet at times. Warm weather prevailed across the Southern Plains Region. Half a dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Del Rio TX with a reading of 89 degrees. Laredo TX and Kingsville TX tied for honors as hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Arctic cold invaded the central and eastern U.S. Sault Ste Marie MI reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero, and International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 25 degrees below zero. Temperatures remained below zero all day over parts of eastern Upper Michigan and northern New England. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong Santa Ana winds developed across southern California and parts of central California. Winds in Kern County of central California gusted to 100 mph near Grapevine. The high winds reduced visibilities to near zero in the desert areas, closing major interstate highways east of Ontario CA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1992: A complex storm system moved eastward from the Gulf Coast of Texas to eastern Georgia on December 9 and 10th. In the next 24 hours, the low-pressure system moved to the Chesapeake Bay and rapidly intensified. This system produced gale force winds with gusts exceeding hurricane force affected not only the Mid-Atlantic coastline but also as far southwest as the southern Appalachians where trees were downed and roofs damaged. This storm also produced 20 to 30-foot waves in Massachusetts on December 12 and 13th. Precipitation amounts varied considerably. Rainfall amounts of 8 inches occurred in southeastern Massachusetts, while several areas in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland recorded more than 30 inches of snow. Precipitation ended during the evening hours on the 12th. Ten deaths resulted from the storm with insured losses totaling near \$850 million and non-insured losses near \$2 billion.

2008 - A rare snowstorm swept across parts of south Louisiana and Mississippi, blanketing the area with snow. Nearly 8 inches of snow fell over parts of Louisiana. These conditions caused schools and bridges to close and left thousands of residents without power (Associated Press). (NCDC)

2010 - The "Pineapple Express" - a meteorological event where southwest winds bring warm, moist air to the U.S. West Coast - produced record rainfall to the Pacific Northwest during December 11th-12th. Seattle experienced record daily rainfall two days in a row. The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport recorded 1.42 inches of rain on the 11th, breaking the old daily record of 1.32 inches set in 1955. The next day, 2.19 inches fell, breaking the daily record of 1.70 inches set in 1966. The Stillaguamish River in western Washington state reached 21.06 feet at Arlington, tying the record set in November 2006. Flood stage for the river is 14 feet. The storm system also brought record warmth to the area. On December 14th, the temperature at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport reached 57, breaking the old daily record of 55 set in 2004. (NCDC)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHOSE PARTY?

Competent! Outstanding! Careful! Friendly! Supportive! Bright! Cheerful! Caring! Gracious! And the list of words to describe Beth, the secretary to the president of the company, could go on and on. She was loved by everyone who knew her.

When it came time for her birthday one year, her co-workers decided to honor her with a lavish party. They rented a beautiful ballroom, hired the best caterer, designed a special cake, had special napkins with her name printed on them, and collected money to buy a gift.

All went well. The tables were beautifully set, the caterer was on time, the guests arrived, and there was excitement in the room. Everyone kept looking at the entrance awaiting the arrival of Beth. After waiting for fifteen minutes, the co-worker who organized the event said to Beth's best friend, "Where is she?"

"I'm not sure," she replied. "I'll phone her."

She did – and discovered that she was at her favorite sandwich shop enjoying her lunch - alone. No one thought to invite Beth to her own celebration!

There will be many parties this Christmas. And as usual, the Guest, Whose birthday we celebrate, will not be invited. Tables will be set, lights will blink, guests will arrive, laughter will ring out, gifts will be exchanged, everyone will have fun – but Jesus will not be present. No one will think to invite Him – the One who should be the main attraction.

Prayer: Lord of the season, may we place Your Son, our Savior, at the center of everything we do this Christmas. May we never forget, "It's all about Him." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.08.23

21 26 53 66 70 13

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 29 Mins 41 Secs

[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: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.10.23

11 19 20 37 44 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

4 7 8 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$87,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

8 14 23 29 37 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 40 Secs

[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: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Agreeing to agree: Everyone must come to consensus at COP28 climate talks, toughening the process

BY SETH BORENSTEIN and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — It's the killer detail in international climate talks: Consensus.

With nearly 200 nations of different sizes, economies, political systems, resources and needs, they all have to find common ground if they are going to save the one common ground they share — planet Earth.

Consensus is frequently used to weaken efforts to curb climate change and experts say that's by design, dating back to oil interests and the first United Nations climate negotiations. Some veteran politicians would like to change it, while others embrace it as the only fair way to get things done.

"Whatever decision is taken can only be as strong as what the least ambitious (nations) are prepared to accept," said climate talks historian Joanna Depledge of Cambridge University. "And we've seen that over the years."

U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat from Rhode Island, said the practice of requiring near-unanimity could be fatal: "A small, self-interested minority of states cannot be allowed to block the progress necessary to put our entire planet on a path to climate safety."

Over the next few days consensus will be front and center again as COP28 draws near a close in Dubai. More than 100 nations are pushing for language phasing out fossil fuels eventually, while a few powerful nations — like oil-producing Saudi Arabia — are talking about blocking it.

The only previous time United Nations climate even raised the issue of a phase-out of a fossil fuel was two years ago in Glasgow, Scotland. A proposal to phase-out coal, the dirtiest of the fossil fuels, was in the final decision and broadly supported until, at the very last second India, raised an objection. The entire proceedings ground to a halt, negotiators furiously huddled and bargained.

In the end, phase-out became the weaker phase-down. And small island nations, most vulnerable to climate change, blasted the procedure, the compromise and India, but then accepted the wording as the best that could be agreed upon.

At Dubai's conference, both former Ireland president Mary Robinson, now of the retired leaders group The Elders, and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, who won a Nobel peace prize for his climate advocacy, called on the United Nations to ditch the consensus policy for a three-quarters majority (or more) requirement. It's an idea that could be passed, but has failed when proposed in the past, historian Depledge said.

"We need a reform in the COP process because as long as the system allows a single nation to veto what the rest of the world wants to do, it's not fit for purpose," Gore said in an interview with The Associated Press. "If you have the head of an oil company as the president of the COP in this region and Saudi Arabia objects, I guarantee you he's going to see that hand go up and he's going to say, 'Oh, I'm sorry, we don't have permission from Saudi Arabia to do what you want to do.' So they control the agenda here."

Robinson said "the main problem is this need for consensus."

She called it a bad habit and that a benchmark of even 90% agreement would make more sense. Robinson acknowledged the idea is to keep small countries from being overrun by the United States and China of the world, but as a former president of a small country she said it benefits wealthy oil and gas interests. She said it almost sidetracked the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Proponents of consensus say it's the ultimate in fairness. World Resources Institute climate director Melanie Robinson said it may not work easily, but "what is important is this is a forum where every country has an equal voice and every voice matters."

"The beauty of the UNFCCC is it's a consensus driven process," said United Arab Emirates chief negotiator Hana al-Hashimi. "Any country can come forward at any point, put forward letters, put forward proposals, and put forward ways forward."

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Espen Barth Eide, Foreign Minister of Norway, said sure the consensus process “can be painstakingly slow and frustrating. But the benefit is that when you have a decision, it has been taken by all countries and that gives a lot of authority.”

“The very fact that we have a Paris agreement, which is actually remarkably strong on where we’re heading, which inspires companies and countries worldwide, is because it’s consensus,” he said. “So I have to say, I have to defend the consensus principle. This is how the U.N. works, and I think if we move away from that, we might get a speedier and maybe more progressive decision, but it will not have the global buy in.”

U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz, Democrat from Hawaii, has a more practical reason for liking consensus.

“I don’t think we can sort of set up a bunch of new rules to make sure only the good guys are in the room, because it would be a very small room,” Schatz said.

The consensus rule was adopted in the first COP in 1995 and it set the tone for what was to come.

“Entrenching consensus was a master stroke of the fossil fuel lobby in the early days, and by that I mean Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, backed by U.S.-based oil lobbyists,” Depledge said. “It was OPEC who insisted on consensus – and because no agreement could be reached on a voting rule, decision making is now indeed by consensus, by default.”

A young German environment minister, Angela Merkel, fought hard against it but lost, Gore said.

In 1996, efforts to change it failed. In 2011, Mexico and Papua New Guinea proposed a new way around the consensus rule, but it failed again, Depledge said.

Depledge and Gore said it is possible to change negotiation rules mandating near-unanimity, weirdly enough with less than a consensus. That was the idea Mexico and Papua New Guinea came up with.

The rules allow for nations to adopt new rules to the 1992 Rio treaty that started the climate negotiations with a three-quarters vote. But the catch is it’s not a simple vote, Depledge said. It has to be a formal adoption of a treaty amendment by a governmental body, such as Congress or parliament.

The trouble is that most countries are afraid of voting to change consensus rules because they fear that someday they will be on the wrong end of a vote, Depledge said.

“Everybody’s nervous about going down that road,” Depledge said.

UN officials and activists ramp up the urgency as climate talks enter final days

By JON GAMBRELL, JAMEY KEATEN and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Visibly tired and frustrated top United Nations officials urged climate talks to push harder for an end to fossil fuels. Time seems to be running out both in the talks in Dubai and for action that could keep warming at or below the internationally agreed-upon threshold.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres returned to the summit on Monday and said it was “time to go into overdrive, to negotiate in good faith, and rise to the challenge.” He said negotiators at the COP28 summit in particular must focus on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate justice.

He said the global stocktake — the part of talks that assesses where the world is at with its climate goals and how it can reach them — should “phase out all fossil fuels” in order to reach the goal of limiting the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times. That phase-out was, he said, “a central aspect” for the summit to be considered a success.

“We can’t keep kicking the can down the road,” Guterres said in brief remarks. “We are out of road and almost out of time.”

“What is very clear is that the bar for success is high,” said EU Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra. “And that is not because these Europeans say so, or because small islands say so, or Africa or Latin America say so. But because scientists tell us that we have no alternative if we want to keep future generations safe.”

As the Secretary-General spoke about a dozen silent protesters held out cards that spelled “hold the line.”

Guterres brought back up the concept of a two-track phase-down of fossil fuels between wealthy nations acting faster and harder and giving more time and money to poorer countries. Other negotiators, includ-

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ing Norway's Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, have also floated the idea, but it hasn't been prominent in negotiating texts.

Activists responded with skepticism of the plan.

Nnimmo Bassey, a longtime Nigerian environmental activist, said that the ultimate goal should be for "fossil fuels to be kept in the ground" as Indigenous communities around the world have often borne the cost of oil exploration.

"We can't keep on running the tap while pretending we're mopping the floor," Bassey said. "We have to turn off the taps."

The presidency of the conference — run by the CEO of the United Arab Emirates national oil company — "recognizes that for this to be viewed as a success, we need to find some agreement on fossil fuels," said Steven Guilbeault, Canadian environment minister and one of eight super-negotiators tasked with helping find common ground. "I think if we can't do that, people will see this as a failure, even though we've agreed on lots of other good things."

But Guilbeault said, "I'm confident we can finish tomorrow."

Simon Stiell, the executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, told journalists Monday morning that the "climate wolves" remained at the world's doors as negotiations reach their climax at the summit.

"We do not have a minute to lose in this crucial final stretch and none of us have had much sleep," Stiell said. "One thing is for certain: I win, you lose is a recipe for collective failure," he said.

Negotiators from powerhouses United States and China were working together Monday morning.

But signs of trouble were all around.

As Monday wore on, Emirati officials cancelled a hastily called news conference with COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber, then cancelled another with another official in the early afternoon. They offered no explanation for the cancellations, which drew into question an earlier promise by al-Jaber to bring the COP to an end sharply at 11 a.m. Tuesday. They were part of a series of cancellations by prominent negotiators.

Sticking points for the global stocktake are along familiar lines. Many countries, including small island states, European countries and Latin American nations, are calling for a phase-out of fossil fuels, responsible for most of the warming on Earth. But other nations want weaker language that will allow oil, gas and coal to keep burning in some way.

One of the major players in all this is India, which in 2021 torpedoed the idea of a "phase-out" of coal but then in 2022 proposed the idea of phasing out all fossil fuels, not just coal, which never got on the agenda in last year's climate talks. It's now the center point of discussion.

The world's most populous nation, and No. 3 carbon dioxide emitter, is trying to be both ambitious yet keep the backbone of its economy, coal, said Vaibhav Chaturvedi of New Delhi-based Council on Energy, Environment and Water.

Alden Meyer, an analyst with climate think tank E3G, said Saudi Arabia was trying to mobilize the other members of the OPEC oil cartel to object to any inclusion of fossil fuels in the text — which he said would violate the terms of the Paris climate accord.

"This could be a very long week," he said.

Canada's Guilbeault said OPEC countries are "being very unwilling to even contemplate even a conversation, and I think that's unhelpful."

Joseph Sikulu, a Pacific climate warrior who was protesting outside of Guterres' briefing, said, "we know that on the inside of the negotiations the high exploiting countries like the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Australia, are the ones who are blocking on the phase out of fossil fuels."

"We need them to step aside ... so that we can get the results that are needed from these negotiations," Sikulu said.

Norway's Barth Eide said "all countries want ambition, but some countries have their priorities one place and other countries another place. ... So this can still both end up as a very successful COP, and it can also be much less successful depending on where we find the final language."

As of early Monday afternoon, delegates were still waiting on a new draft of the global stocktake. But Barth Eide said: "I am much more concerned about having a good text than an early text. So if the hours delay means that it will be better, I think that's worth it."

Biden goes into 2024 with the economy getting stronger, but voters feel horrible about it

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden goes into next year's election with a vexing challenge: Just as the U.S. economy is getting stronger, people are still feeling horrible about it.

Pollsters and economists say there has never been as wide a gap between the underlying health of the economy and public perception. The divergence could be a decisive factor in whether the Democrat secures a second term next year. Republicans are seizing on the dissatisfaction to skewer Biden, while the White House is finding less success as it tries to highlight economic progress.

"Things are getting better and people think things are going to get worse — and that's the most dangerous piece of this," said Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, who has worked with Biden. Lake said voters no longer want to just see inflation rates fall — rather, they want an outright decline in prices, something that last happened on a large scale during the Great Depression.

"Honestly, I'm kind of mystified by it," she said.

By many measures, the U.S. economy is rock solid. Friday's employment report showed that employers added 199,000 jobs in November and the unemployment rate dropped to 3.7%. Inflation has plummeted in little over a year from a troubling 9.1% to 3.2% without causing a recession — a phenomenon that some once skeptical economists have dubbed "immaculate."

Yet people remain dejected about the economy, according to the University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment. The preliminary December figures issued Friday showed a jump in sentiment as people seem to recognize that inflation is cooling. But the index is still slightly below its July level.

In a possible warning sign for Biden, people surveyed for the index brought up the 2024 election. Sentiment rose dramatically more among Republicans than Democrats, potentially suggesting that GOP voters became more optimistic about winning back the White House.

"Consumers have been feeling broadly uneasy about the economy since the pandemic, and they are still coming to grips with the notion that we are not returning to the pre-pandemic 'normal,'" Joanne Hsu, director and chief economist of the survey, said of the overall trend in recent months.

Jared Bernstein, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, stressed that a strong underlying economy is "absolutely necessary" to eventually lifting consumer sentiment. His argument is that as the economy continues to improve, more people will recognize the benefits and sentiment will improve.

"We've got to keep fighting to lower costs and build on the progress that we've made," Bernstein said. "We just need more time to get these gains to working Americans — that's our plan."

The White House has made three major shifts in its messaging in hopes of building up confidence in Biden's economic leadership. The president this summer began to pepper his speeches with the term "Bidenomics" to describe his policies, only to have Republicans latch onto the word as a point of attack.

White House officials have pointed out specific items for which prices have fallen outright. They noted lower prices for turkeys during Thanksgiving as well as for eggs. Biden repeatedly emphasizes that he lowered insulin costs for Medicare participants, while other officials discuss how gasoline prices have dropped from their peak.

Second, Biden recently started to blame inflation on corporations that hiked prices when they saw an opportunity to improve their profits, bringing more prominence to an argument first used when gasoline prices spiked. The president's argument is suspicious to many economists, yet the intended message to voters is that Biden is fighting for them against those he blames for fueling inflation.

"Let me be clear: Any corporation that is not passing these savings on to the consumers needs to stop their price gouging," Biden said recently in Pueblo, Colorado. "The American people are tired of being

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played for suckers.”

And Biden is now going after the track record of former President Donald Trump, the current GOP front-runner. Biden’s campaign sent out a statement after Friday’s employment report that said, “Despite his claims of being a jobs president, Donald Trump had the worst jobs record since the Great Depression, losing nearly three million jobs.”

The Republican counter to Biden has been to dismiss the positive economic data and focus on how voters are feeling. As the annual inflation rate has fallen, GOP messaging has focused instead on multi-year increases in consumer prices without necessarily factoring in wage gains. And Republican lawmakers have argued that people should trust their gut on the economy instead of the statistics cited by Biden.

“Joe Biden’s message to them is just this: He says don’t believe your lying eyes,” Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyoming, said in a recent floor speech.

Biden’s speeches over the past two years has done little to improve his anemic polling on the economy. Administration officials had once assumed that better economic numbers would overcome any doubts among voters, only to find that the negativity stayed even as the U.S. economy became likely to avoid a recession once forecasted by economists.

Claudia Sahm, a former Federal Reserve economist, has been surprised by the anger generated online when she has noted the signs of a strong economy.

A typical U.S. household is better off than it was in 2020. Inequality has lessened somewhat in recent years as wage growth has favored poorer workers. Yet people still seem rattled and disconnected by the shock of the pandemic, the arrival of government aid and the inflation that followed as hiring improved.

“People have really been jerked around,” Sahm said. “Things have been turned on and off. Everything has moved fast. It’s been disruptive and confusing. We’re just tired.”

There is no solitary cause for this gap between the major data and public feeling. But the experts trying to make sense of things have multiple theories about what’s going on. Besides the pandemic’s impact, it’s possible that social media has distorted how people feel about the economy as they watch the posh lifestyles of influencers. Many people also judge the economy based on their own political beliefs, rather than the underlying numbers.

It could simply be that people need time to adjust after a period of rising inflation. As a result, there’s a lag before a slowing rate of inflation boosts how consumers feel, according to a recent analysis by the economists Ryan Cummings and Neale Mahoney.

“Sentiment is still being weighed down by the high inflation we had last year,” Cummings said. “As that recedes further into the rearview mirror, its effects are likely to diminish.”

Another possibility is that the loss of pandemic aid from the government left people materially poorer. Millions of households got checks from the government and an expanded child tax credit deposited directly into their accounts. Republicans blamed this funding for feeding inflation, but the money also initially helped to shelter people from the pain of rising prices.

Adjusting for government transfers and taxes, the average annual income for someone in the lower half of earners was \$34,800 when Biden took office, according to an analysis provided by Gabriel Zucman, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley.

That average fell to \$26,100 by March 2023 in a sign that wage growth could not make up for the loss of government aid.

Samuel Rines, an investment strategist at Corbu, found that companies including Pepsi, Kraft-Heinz, Procter & Gamble and Kimberly-Clark latched onto the higher food and energy prices after Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine to boost their own products’ prices and increase profits.

Earnings reports suggest that consumers started to tire of some companies’ double-digit price increases this summer, prompting those companies to indicate that future price increases will be closer to the historic average of 2%.

Biden can reasonably argue that companies took advantage of the war in Ukraine and the pandemic to raise their prices, Rines said. But the increases happened 12 to 18 months ago and Biden’s current argu-

ment doesn't apply to what businesses are doing now.

Rines said of the president's message on price gouging: "It's pretty much 18 months too late."

Israel battles militants in Gaza's main cities, with civilians still stranded near front lines

By NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in Gaza's two largest cities on Monday, with civilians still sheltering along the front lines even after massive waves of displacement across the besieged territory.

Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and returns all of the scores of hostages still held by Palestinian militants after being captured during the Oct. 7 surprise attack into Israel that ignited the war.

The U.S. has provided unwavering diplomatic and military support for the campaign, even as it has urged Israel to minimize civilian casualties and further mass displacement. The war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and driven nearly 85% of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

Residents said there was heavy fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces opened a new line of attack last week, and battles were still underway in parts of Gaza City and the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble.

"The situation is extremely difficult," said Hussein al-Sayyed, who is staying with relatives in Khan Younis after fleeing Gaza City earlier in the war. "I have children and I don't know where to go. No place is safe."

He and his three daughters are staying in a three-story home with around 70 others, most of whom have fled from the north, and said they have been rationing food for days. "Over many days, I have eaten just one meal a day to save food for the girls. They are still young," he said.

Another Khan Younis resident, Radwa Abu Frayeh, witnessed heavy Israeli strikes around the European Hospital, where the U.N. humanitarian office says tens of thousands of people have sought shelter. She said a strike hit a home close to hers late Sunday.

"The building shook," she said. "We thought it was the end and we would die."

FEARS OF PERMANENT DISPLACEMENT

With very little aid allowed in, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. Some observers openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of Gaza altogether in a repeat of the mass exodus from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

"Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar, a key intermediary, on Sunday.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, called allegations that Israeli intends mass displacement from Gaza "outrageous and false." But other Israeli officials have discussed such a scenario, raising alarm in Egypt and other friendly Arab countries that refuse to accept any refugees.

At the same time, it's not clear when or if Palestinians would be allowed to return to Gaza City and much of the north — home to some 1.2 million before the war — where entire neighborhoods have been flattened.

The fighting in and around Khan Younis threatens to bring similar destruction to the south, and has already pushed tens of thousands toward the town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt. It has also hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid to most of Gaza, putting even more pressure on people to head south.

HARSH CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas, saying it endangers residents by fighting in dense areas and positioning military infrastructure — including weapons, tunnels and rocket launchers — in or near civilian buildings.

The military said Sunday that troops killed armed men as they left a clinic, and that forces operating in Jabaliya found a truck full of long-range rockets near a school. In a home in Jabaliya, soldiers found a

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rifle, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers and explosives, it said.

Israel has urged people to flee to what it says are safe areas in the south but has continued to strike alleged militant targets throughout the territory. Associated Press reporters saw nine bodies brought to a local hospital on Monday after an airstrike hit a home in Rafah overnight.

The aid group Doctors Without Borders said people in the south are also falling ill as they pack into crowded shelters or sleep in tents in open areas.

Nicholas Papachrysostomou, MSF emergency coordinator in Gaza, said "every other patient" at a clinic in Rafah has a respiratory infection after prolonged exposure to cold and rain.

"In some shelters, 600 people share a single toilet. We are already seeing many cases of diarrhea. Often children are the worst affected," he said.

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,900, 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.

Some 1,200 people have been killed on the Israeli side, mostly civilians killed during the Oct. 7 attack, in which Hamas and other militants also captured more than 240 people, including babies, women and older adults. More than 100 captives were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month in exchanges for women and minors held in Israeli prisons.

Israel says Hamas still has 117 hostages and the remains of 20 people killed in captivity or during the Oct. 7 attack. Most remaining hostages are soldiers and civilian men, and the militants hope to exchange them for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The military says 101 Israeli soldiers have died since the start of the Gaza ground offensive. Palestinian militants have continued firing rockets at Israel, though the vast majority have been intercepted or landed in open areas without causing casualties or damage.

Live updates | Israel says it's prepared to fight for months to defeat Hamas

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel said it is prepared to fight for months or longer to defeat Gaza's Hamas rulers, as its ground offense intensifies with more airstrikes and artillery fire.

Qatar, which has played a key mediating role, says efforts to stop the war and have all hostages released will continue, but a willingness to discuss a cease-fire is fading.

Israel faces international outrage after its military offensive has killed more than 17,700 Palestinians in Gaza, around two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Hamas-controlled Health Ministry. About 90% 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 provided vital support to Israel in recent days by vetoing a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire and pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel. The U.N. General Assembly plans to vote Tuesday on a similar resolution.

Israel says 97 of its soldiers have died in its ground offensive after Hamas raided southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 240 hostages.

With only a trickle of humanitarian aid reaching a small portion of Gaza, residents face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. Some observers worry that Palestinians will be forced out of Gaza altogether.

Currently:

- Blinken defends bypassing Congress to sell weapons to Israel
- Holocaust survivors will mark Hanukkah amid worries over war in Israel, global rise of antisemitism
- Students and lawmakers gather in Philadelphia to denounce antisemitism after university president resigns
- U.S. vetoes U.N. resolution backed by many nations demanding immediate humanitarian cease-fire

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in Gaza

— 'Shadows of children:' For the youngest hostages, life moves forward in whispers

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

Here's what's happening in the war:

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO VOTE ON CEASE-FIRE RESOLUTION

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. General Assembly has scheduled an emergency meeting on Tuesday to vote on a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza.

Assembly President Dennis Francis sent a letter to the 193 U.N. member states on Sunday saying the meeting had been requested by the 22-member Arab Group and 57-member Organization of Islamic Co-operation.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, told The Associated Press that the draft resolution to be voted on Tuesday afternoon is similar to the Security Council resolution the United States vetoed on Friday.

Mansour said that resolution was cosponsored by 103 countries and he is hoping for more cosponsors and a high vote for the General Assembly resolution when it is put to a vote.

There are no vetoes in the General Assembly, but unlike the Security Council its resolutions are not legally binding. They are important nonetheless as a barometer of global opinion.

BLINKEN DEFENDS SALE OF TANK SHELLS TO ISRAEL WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has defended the emergency sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition and also called for quick congressional approval of more than \$100 billion in aid for Israel, Ukraine and other national security priorities.

Blinken said the needs of Israel's military operations in Gaza justify the rare decision to bypass Congress. "Israel is in combat right now with Hamas," he said during television interviews on Sunday. "And we want to make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Hamas."

The tank ammunition and related support constitute only a small portion of military sales to Israel and the rest remains subject to congressional review, Blinken said. "It's very important that Congress' voice be heard in this," he said.

The decision to proceed with the sale of more than \$106 million in tank shells came as the Biden administration's larger aid package is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS HOLD A VIRTUAL CEREMONY TO MARK HANUKKAH

BERLIN — Holocaust survivors from around the globe will mark the start of the fifth day of Hanukkah together with a virtual ceremony as Jews worldwide worry about the Israel-Hamas war and a spike of antisemitism in Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

Survivors can join an online ceremony of a menorah lighting on Monday to pay tribute to the 6 million European Jews killed by the Nazis in the Holocaust.

Several dozen survivors were also expected to gather in person for a menorah lighting at Jerusalem's Western Wall — the holiest place where Jews can pray.

The New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany is organizing the event in observance of International Holocaust Survivors Night.

BIDEN TO HOST HANUKKAH CEREMONY AT THE WHITE HOUSE AS ANTISEMITISM GROWS

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Joe Biden is hosting a White House reception on Monday to mark Hanukkah, celebrating the Jewish holiday as he has continued to denounce rising antisemitism in the U.S. and abroad during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

Hanukkah continues through Friday.

The Biden administration in May announced what it called the first-ever national strategy to counter antisemitism. That laid out more than 100 actions, including a series of steps to raise awareness and understanding of antisemitism and the threat it poses around the U.S.

Still, antisemitism has only intensified in some quarters since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants sparked Israel's ongoing war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll.

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HEAD OF UN AGENCY SAYS ISRAEL IS TRYING TO CLEAR PALESTINIANS FROM GAZA

Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, said Israel appears to be trying to clear Gaza of its Palestinian population through its military offensive and evacuation orders.

"The developments we are witnessing point to attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt, regardless of whether they stay there or are resettled elsewhere," he wrote in the Los Angeles Times.

On Sunday, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi also accused Israel of being "determined" to push Palestinians out of Gaza.

"We are seeing a systematic effort, it seems to empty Gaza from its people," he said at a conference in Doha, Qatar.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesperson, called the allegations "outrageous and false."

POPE SAYS CAUSES OF WARS SHOULD BE REMOVED

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has asked for continued prayers for populations suffering from war.

"We're getting near Christmas. Will we be able, with the help of God, to take concrete steps of peace?" the pontiff asked the public gathered in St. Peter's Square for his weekly window appearance on Sunday. "It's not easy, we know, some conflicts have historic roots that are deep."

"But we have also the witness of men and women who have worked with wisdom and patience for peaceful coexistence," he said.

He called for "every effort to face and remove causes of conflicts." Invoking human rights, Francis also urged that civilians, hospitals and houses of worship be protected and that hostages be freed and the delivery of humanitarian aid guaranteed.

FRENCH WARSHIP IS TARGETED BY DRONES

PARIS — France says one of its warships in the Red Sea was targeted by drones coming from Yemen and shot them down.

A short statement on Sunday from the Armies Ministry did not say who fired the two drones at the French Navy frigate Languedoc on Saturday night.

It said they came directly at the ship two hours apart from the direction of Yemen. The ministry said the warship intercepted and destroyed both of them about 110 kilometers (70 miles) off the Red Sea port of Al Hudaydah on the Yemeni coast.

It did not say what weapons the Languedoc used to bring down the drones. The frigate is on a French Navy mission in the Red Sea.

MEN AND BOYS IN GAZA SAY THEY WERE BEATEN BY ISRAELI TROOPS

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Several men and a teenage boy released from five days of detention and interrogation by Israeli troops said Saturday that they were beaten, given only minimal water and often prevented from using the toilet.

They spoke to The Associated Press at a hospital in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah. Several had bruises on their bodies or deep cuts from zip ties.

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

The detainees shed more light on what appears to be a widening army practice of rounding up teenage boys and men as troops sweep through neighborhoods. Earlier this week, photos emerged of soldiers guarding dozens of men who were kneeling or sitting in the streets, stripped down to their underwear, with hands tied behind their backs.

A government spokesperson said Friday that those being rounded up were being interrogated to determine if they had ties to Hamas militants.

The detainees released Saturday said they had been pulled out of a building in the Shujaiyah area of Gaza City, a site of intense battles in recent days.

Snow blankets northern China, closing roads and schools and suspending train service

BEIJING (AP) — Overnight snowfall across much of northern China prompted road closures and the suspension of classes and train service on Monday.

A red alert for a blizzard was in effect until mid-morning in Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province, and schools were closed there and in two other cities in Henan, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The Zhengzhou airport was also closed until 11 a.m.

A total of 134 road sections in 12 provinces, including 95 on highways, were closed as of 7 a.m. because of snowfall and icy conditions, CCTV said. Several trains in two parts of Shanxi province were suspended.

It was the first significant snowfall this year in much of China, outside of mountainous areas and in the northeast near the border with Russia's Siberia.

A thin layer of snow blanketed rooftops and parked cars in downtown Beijing. The roads were mostly clear and workers swept remaining snow from the sidewalks. The Beijing Public Transport Group said that 187 bus routes were suspended on Monday morning. Some subway lines were adding additional trains during the morning rush hour, CCTV said.

Dak Prescott, Brandon Aubrey help Cowboys pull even with Eagles in NFC East with 33-13 victory

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Pro Football Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Mike McCarthy was nervous for an NFC East showdown with Philadelphia after the Dallas coach missed two days during the week after an emergency appendectomy.

Not to worry, thanks to his quarterback, kicker and opportunistic defense.

Dak Prescott threw for two touchdowns, Brandon Aubrey made four field goals to start his career a record 30 for 30, and the Cowboys pulled even in the division with their 15th consecutive home victory, 33-13 over the Eagles on Sunday night.

The Cowboys (10-3) weren't deterred by Jalen Carter's 42-yard fumble return for a touchdown, winning their fifth consecutive game since a loss at Philadelphia that gave the Eagles a two-game division lead.

Dallas owner Jerry Jones said it was the biggest win in McCarthy's four seasons as coach.

"And it has to do with the fact that he came up off the operating table and did not even wince and stand there and fight it all night and coach it," Jones said.

The Eagles (10-3) lost three fumbles and didn't score an offensive touchdown as quarterback Jalen Hurts, who had the first fumble, lost consecutive games for the first time since October 2021.

While the Cowboys currently hold the tiebreaker with an extra NFC East victory, the defending NFC champion Eagles would take the division title on subsequent tiebreakers if they win their remaining four games.

"The role's the same as it's always been," coach Nick Sirianni said. "And now we're going through some adversity. And so adversity can do a couple of things to you. It can break you or it can make it way better."

Aubrey became the first kicker with two field goals of at least 59 yards in the same game, connecting from 60 yards late in the first quarter. His 59-yarder in the third allowed Aubrey to surpass Greg Zuerlein and Harrison Butker, who each had a pair from at least 58 yards.

The 28-year-old rookie added two in the fourth quarter, from 45 and 50 yards, to extend his NFL record for perfection to start a career. The previous record was 18.

"Just going out there, doing it one at a time," said Aubrey, who grew up in the Dallas area and once was a Major League Soccer prospect. "I know I can make any of the kicks they've asked me to do."

With McCarthy calling plays from the sideline just four days after leaving the facility and ending up in surgery, Prescott had a career-best seventh consecutive game with at least two TD passes.

"I just wanted to do my part," said McCarthy, who is in his first year of calling plays for Dallas. "I wanted to make sure I was prepared as I normally am. I was a little nervous about it today. We're all creatures of habit."

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The Dallas offense bogged down after Prescott's first-half TD passes, but two big completions for first downs to tight end Jake Ferguson, including a hurdling effort early in the fourth quarter, led to both of Aubrey's field goals after the break.

The Cowboys were cruising when Prescott lost control of the ball while being sacked by Fletcher Cox in the third quarter, and Carter picked up the loose ball and ran untouched to get the Eagles within 24-13.

Down two touchdowns late in the third, Philadelphia couldn't convert on fourth-and-8 from the Dallas 30-yard line. Stephon Gilmore made the open-field tackle on DeVonta Smith for just a 1-yard gain.

"The fourth-down stop was probably the biggest one of the game," McCarthy said. "That was a huge momentum swing in the game. I thought our defense was lights out tonight."

Smith later had the last of Philadelphia's three fumbles, ending any realistic hopes for a rally. All three fumbles ended promising drives for the Eagles, who were coming off a 42-19 loss to San Francisco.

"It was the same thing two weeks in a row," Cox said. "We kind of dug ourselves a hole in the first half. It was kind of hard getting our way out. I think the biggest thing for this team now is really find out who the dudes are."

CeeDee Lamb and Michael Gallup had the scoring catches for Dallas, and Rico Dowdle had a 1-yard plunge that was originally called short but overturned when the Cowboys challenged.

Prescott was 24 of 39 for 271 yards, and the Cowboys limited Hurts to 197 yards passing and 30 rushing.

CHURNING IT OUT

Ferguson is compiling quite the highlight reel of hurdle plays, and now the second-year player has consecutive games of at least five catches and at least 70 yards for the first time.

"Confidence is through the roof with him," Prescott said. "He's a fun guy to play with. Active, will do whatever it takes. Wants to make the catch, wants to jump over guys."

INJURIES

Eagles S Reed Blankenship was ruled out with a concussion after leaving the game in the first half. ... Cowboys DT Johnathan Hankins sprained an ankle in the third quarter and didn't return.

UP NEXT

Eagles: At Seattle on Monday, Dec. 18. The Seahawks' loss at San Francisco means Philadelphia won't face a team with a winning record in its final four games.

Cowboys: At Buffalo next Sunday in the first of consecutive road matchups with AFC East playoff contenders. The second is division-leading Miami.

Teachers have been outed for moonlighting in adult content. Do they have legal recourse?

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

At a small rural Missouri high school, two English teachers shared a secret: Both were posting adult content on OnlyFans, the subscription-based website known for sexually explicit content.

The site and others like it provide an opportunity for those willing to dabble in pornography to earn extra money — sometimes lots of it. The money is handy, especially in relatively low-paying fields like teaching, and many post the content anonymously while trying to maintain their day jobs.

But some outed teachers, as well as people in other prominent fields such as law, have lost their jobs, raising questions about personal freedoms and how far employers can go to avoid stigma related to their employees' after-hour activities.

At St. Clair High School southwest of St. Louis, it all came crashing down this fall for 28-year-old Brianna Coppage and 31-year-old Megan Gaither.

"You're tainted and seen as a liability," Gaither lamented on Facebook after she was suspended. Coppage resigned.

The industry has seen a boom since the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is now believed 2 million to 3 million people produce content for subscriptions sites such as OnlyFans, Just for Fans and Clips4Sale, said Mike

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Stabile, spokesman for the Free Speech Coalition, a trade association for the adult entertainment industry.

"I think that there was a time prior to the pandemic where the idea that someone might become a porn star was akin to saying that someone might be abducted by aliens," Stabile said. "I think that what the pandemic and the sort of explosion of fan content showed was that a lot of people were open to doing it."

It frequently proves risky, though. A recent report from the trade association found 3 in 5 adult entertainment performers have experienced employment discrimination. The report, based on a survey of more than 600 people in the industry, said 64% of adult creators have no other significant source of income, while there were no details on the occupations of those who did.

In St. Clair, Coppage was the first to be outed after someone posted a link to her OnlyFans account on a community Facebook group. Superintendent Kyle Kruse said Coppage was not asked to resign, but she did anyway.

"I do not regret joining OnlyFans," Coppage told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in September. "I know it can be taboo, or some people may believe that it is shameful, but I don't think sex work has to be shameful. I do just wish things just happened in a different way."

Gaither, who also coached cheerleading, said she used her account to pay off student loans. She also was outed, although she wrote that she had an alias and did not show her face.

Neither teacher responded to phone or email messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. But both women told other news outlets that their OnlyFans earnings soared from the publicity.

The district said little, but parents and even some students voiced concerns.

"As a society, if we've come to it to think that it's OK for children to be seeing their teacher having sex, that's outrageous," said Kurt Moritz, the father of a 7-year-old boy in the district. "We shouldn't be giving children an extra reason to fantasize over their teachers."

Moritz and a former student said they were particularly alarmed when Coppage did a YouTube interview with an adult content creator and said she would be willing to film with former students. Moritz said the remark went too far, and 17-year-old Claire Howard, who moved out of the district midway through last school-year, agreed.

"That's something that shouldn't be sexualized," Howard said.

Whether fired adult content creators have a legal recourse is unclear. Employers have wide latitude to terminate employees. The question is whether firing people moonlighting in the adult entertainment industry has a disproportionate effect on women and LGBTQ+ people, said attorney Derek Demeri, an employment law expert in New Jersey.

Both groups are protected, and data from the Free Speech Coalition shows they are the ones who overwhelming produce adult content, he noted.

"If you have a policy that on its face is not about discrimination but ends up having a disparate impact on a protected community, now you're crossing into territory that may be unlawful," Demeri said, adding that this applies even in cases where the day job involves working with children.

Attorney Gregory Locke, who was fired in March as a New York City administrative law judge after city officials learned about his OnlyFans account, was contacted by a handful of adult content creators who were terminated from their day jobs. He hasn't yet sued but said he agrees with Demeri's legal reasoning.

Locke's termination followed an online spat over drag queen story hours in which he used a profane remark in response to a councilmember who opposed the events. Locke, who is gay, said people need to stop treating sex work like such a big problem.

"We're a gig economy now and millennials have more student debt than we know what to do with," he said. "There's all sorts of reasons why people would reach out for outside income like sex work, like OnlyFans."

At least one lawsuit has been filed in a similar situation. Victoria Tiece sued Orange County Public Schools in January, alleging she was banned from volunteering at her son's Florida elementary school because she posts on OnlyFans.

"When you start getting the moral police involved in it, where does it stop? At what point does the school have the right to intervene in one's private life?" asked her attorney, Mark NeJame.

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In South Bend, Indiana, 42-year-old Sarah Seales said she was fired last year from her job teaching science to elementary school children through a Department of Defense youth program called STARBASE after she began posting on OnlyFans to make more money to support her twins.

A Department of Defense spokesperson said it was inappropriate to comment on matters of pending litigation.

Attorney Mark Nicholson, who specializes in revenge porn cases, interviewed Seales and hired her to work on his firm's podcast. They ultimately decided against suing the blogger who drew attention to Seales' side gig, he said.

"If we pay our teachers as much as we pay athletes," Nicholson said, "maybe she wouldn't have had to open up an OnlyFans."

Embattled wolves gain a new frontier in Democratic Colorado. The move is stoking political tensions

By MATTHEW BROWN and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

DENVER, Colo. (AP) — Wildlife officials plan to release gray wolves in Colorado in coming weeks, at the behest of urban voters and to the dismay of rural residents who don't want the predators but have waning influence in the Democratic-led state.

The most ambitious wolf reintroduction effort in the U.S. in almost three decades marks a sharp departure from aggressive efforts by Republican-led states to cull wolf packs. More releases planned for Colorado over the next several years will start to fill in one of the last remaining major gaps in the western U.S. for a species that historically ranged from northern Canada to the desert southwest.

The reintroduction, starting with the release of up to 10 wolves, emerged as a political wedge issue when GOP-dominated Wyoming, Idaho and Montana refused to share their wolves for the effort. Colorado officials ultimately turned to another Democratic state — Oregon — to secure wolves.

As anticipation grows among wildlife advocates, who've already started a wolf-naming contest, ranchers in the Rocky Mountains where the releases will occur are anxious. They've already seen glimpses of what the future could hold as a handful of wolves that wandered down from Wyoming over the past two years killed livestock.

The fear is such attacks will worsen, adding to a spate of perceived assaults on western Colorado's rural communities as the state's liberal leaders embrace clean energy and tourism, eclipsing economic mainstays such as fossil fuel extraction and agriculture.

Especially grating for rancher Don Gittleson is that his fellow Colorado residents invited the reintroduction through their narrow approval of a 2020 ballot measure. Suburbs and cities along Colorado's Front Range, which includes Denver, carried the vote despite strong opposition across less-densely populated counties where the wolves will be released — the home district of conservative Republican firebrand Rep. Lauren Boebert.

"It was the cities that voted for it, and most of them can't tell the difference between a wolf or a coyote or a dog," said Gittleson, who lost at least six cows and calves to wolves from his Sherman Creek Ranch in northern Colorado over the past couple years — among the first documented wolf attacks in the state in more than 70 years.

In 2022, gray wolves attacked domesticated animals hundreds of times across 10 states in the contiguous U.S. including Colorado, according to an Associated Press review of depredation data from state and federal agencies. Attacks killed or injured at least 425 cattle and calves, 313 sheep and lambs, 40 dogs, 10 chickens, five horses and four goats, according to the data. Other times livestock simply goes missing, such as two calves that Gittleson said disappeared after wolves had passed through.

Such losses can be devastating to individual ranchers or pet owners. However, their industry-wide impact is negligible: The number of cattle killed or injured in the documented cases equals 0.002% of herds in the affected states, according to a comparison of depredation data with state livestock inventories.

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"95% of ranchers in Colorado will never have a problem," said Ed Bangs, a former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who led the reintroduction of wolves in the mid-1990s to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho. "4.5% will have the occasional problem every couple of years maybe, and maybe one or two guys will have a problem like every other year. I don't think it's enough to put them out of business."

"But if it was my cattle and my business, I'd be pissed," he added.

Opposition to wolves is being used as a political bludgeon by elected officials such as Boebert, who sponsored legislation to lift remaining federal protections for wolves. That may not significantly sway an election but it's a boon "for candidates like Boebert to rally behind, I think for want of another issue, to gin up cultural resentments," said Seth Masket, director of the Center on American Politics at the University of Denver.

Colorado wildlife officials anticipate releasing 30 to 50 wolves within the next five years.

To allay livestock industry fears, ranchers who lose livestock or herding and guard animals to wolf attacks will be paid fair market value, up to \$15,000 per animal. Meanwhile, Colorado residents who backed the reintroduction are going to have to get used to wildlife agents killing wolves that prey on livestock.

Already some wolves have been killed when they crossed from Colorado into Wyoming, which has a "predatory" zone for wolves covering most of the state where they can be shot on sight.

The roiling political debates over the predator have been divorced from the details on the ground, said Matt Barnes, a range scientist focusing on preventing conflict between carnivores and ranchers. The former rancher argued that there's a "middle ground" where agriculture and wildlife can inhabit the same landscape.

"People are really arguing not so much about the animals themselves, or even the land, but underlying worldviews about how humans fit into a more than human world," said Barnes.

Colorado officials have a detailed strategy to deter wolves from livestock, including blinking lights that hang along fence lines and propane cannons that make frightening sonic blasts. Another method is tying fabric streamers to fences to make wolves wary of crossing onto ranches. The predators eventually get used to such deterrents, so they are used for relatively short periods of time.

Gray wolves were exterminated across most of the U.S. by the 1930s under government-sponsored poisoning and trapping campaigns. They received endangered species protections in 1975, when there were about 1,000 left, in northern Minnesota.

There's been no turning back for other states where gray wolves have become reestablished. An estimated 7,500 wolves in about 1,400 packs now roam parts of the contiguous U.S. Populations are expanding most rapidly in Oregon and Washington — Democratic states that wolves are naturally recolonizing after being reintroduced to neighboring states.

In Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, where wolf hunting is legal, Republican-dominated legislatures have sought to drive down wolf numbers by loosening rules for killing the predators and increasing the number that can be taken by individual hunters. That led to more Yellowstone wolves being shot but had a minor impact on overall wolf numbers. State officials say it's helped reduce attacks on livestock as wolves become more wary of humans.

The stepped up killing also drew attention from President Joseph Biden's administration, which is considering restoring federal wolf protections in the states in response to laws that made it much easier to kill the predators. It's the only region of the U.S. where wolves are not currently federally protected.

Interior officials have sought for a decade — beginning under former President Barack Obama — to remove protections for wolves across the remainder of the contiguous U.S. That finally happened under former President Donald Trump, until a federal court struck down the action.

A new proposal is due by early February. If wolves lose their protected status, it would open the door to future hunts for the predators in Colorado and elsewhere, with each state to decide.

Near Gittleston's Sherman Creek Ranch, Brain Anderson found three of his lambs dead last month on his family's ranch. One was partially eaten, the other two seemingly untouched save for blood stains in their wool.

Anderson will be reimbursed, likely for the market rate of about \$300 per animal, he said, but "the monetary value isn't what's important to me. ... I have three customers now this year that aren't going to get a lamb."

Still, he's less concerned about the long-term impacts on ranching assuming people get paid when livestock get killed.

"Is it going to affect people over the next four years? You betcha. Is agriculture and ranching still going to happen? Oh yeah," he said.

Biden to host Hanukkah ceremony at the White House amid fears about rising antisemitism

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is hosting a White House reception Monday to mark Hanukkah, celebrating the holiday as he has continued to denounce rising antisemitism in the U.S. and abroad amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The president, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff will attend the reception. Hanukkah continues through Friday.

The Biden administration in May announced what it called the first-ever national strategy to counter antisemitism. That laid out more than 100 actions, including a series of steps to raise awareness and understanding of antisemitism and the threat it poses around the U.S.

Still, antisemitism has only intensified in some quarters since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants sparked Israel's ongoing war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged its members to demand an immediate humanitarian cease-fire.

The Biden administration supported a since-expired, temporary pause in the fighting as Hamas released some of the hostages it held in Gaza, and is pushing for another truce — but the fighting continues in the meantime.

The husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, Emhoff is the first Jewish person to be the spouse of one of the country's nationally elected leaders. Last week, he presided over the lighting ceremony of a massive menorah in front of the White House to mark Hanukkah's first night, saying then that American Jews are "feeling alone" and "in pain."

On Saturday, Liz Magill, the president of the University of Pennsylvania, 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.

Universities across the U.S. have been accused of failing to protect Jewish students amid rising fears of antisemitism worldwide and fallout from the war in Gaza.

Holocaust survivors will mark Hanukkah amid worries over war in Israel, global rise of antisemitism

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Holocaust survivors from around the globe will mark the start of the fifth day of Hanukkah together with a virtual ceremony as Jews worldwide worry about the Israel-Hamas war and a spike of antisemitism in Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

Survivors can join an online ceremony of a menorah lighting on Monday night to pay tribute to the 6 million European Jews killed by the Nazis in the Holocaust.

Several dozen survivors were also expected to gather in-person for a menorah lighting at Jerusalem's Western Wall — the holiest place where Jews can pray.

"Holocaust survivors somehow overcame the depravity of concentration camps, death camps and killing centers, among other horrors, to become our living exemplars, providing a roadmap on how light can

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overcome darkness," Greg Schneider, the executive vice president of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, said in remarks released to The Associated Press ahead of the ceremony.

The New York-based conference is organizing the event in observance of International Holocaust Survivors Night.

"Their resilience, their strength and their fortitude leave a truly indelible light in this world," Schneider added.

Hanukkah, also known as Judaism's festival of lights, marks the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the 2nd century B.C., after a small group of Jewish fighters known as the Maccabees liberated it from occupying Syrian forces.

This year's holiday comes as many Jews feel traumatized by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and in which the militants took some 240 as hostages. Israel responded with a bombing campaign and a ground offensive that has so far killed more than 17,900 people in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's Health Ministry. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Several celebrities and world leaders spoke about the attack in messages that were to be shown at the ceremony. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said "Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel has affected us all deeply. Something of abyssal evil broke free that day," according to comments released to the AP.

"The perpetrators' motive is clear: They wanted to hit Israel," the chancellor added. "They wanted to murder Jews. In its repugnant brutality and abhorrence, however, the terror is also directed against humanity itself."

Scholz, addressing Holocaust survivors, said he tries "to imagine how much the images from Israel, how much antisemitic hatred on the internet and on the streets around the world must be hitting you, of all people right in the heart."

"This ... pains me a lot," he said.

The virtual event, which starts at 8 p.m. on Monday in Germany, will also include musical performances, celebrity guests and messages from Holocaust survivors from around the globe.

Leon Weintraub, a Holocaust survivor from Sweden, who was in Israel during the Hamas attack, recounted what he experienced that day.

"On Oct. 7, I woke up from the sirens in the center of Tel Aviv. All at once I was again in September 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland," he said. "A terrible feeling, a shiver, a feeling of dread to be again in a war."

"We celebrate Chanukah now, the festival of lights. I hope that the light will also bring the people enlightenment," Weintraub added. "That people will rethink and look at us people of Jewish descent as normal, equal. Human beings."

American comedian Billy Crystal, actress Jamie Lee Curtis and actor Jason Alexander will also speak at the event, and there will also be a by a musical performance from Grammy and Tony Award-winning singer Barry Manilow, as well as the cast of Harmony.

The Hanukkah celebration will be streamed with captions in three languages — English, Hebrew and Russian. Anyone in the world who is interested can view the event, the Claims Conference said.

Russian presidential hopeful vows to champion peace, women and a 'humane' country

By JOANNA KOZLOWSKA Associated Press

Sometime in the early 2010s, Yekaterina Duntsova's eldest daughter drew a picture of her debating Russian President Vladimir Putin live on prime-time TV.

A decade on, the little-known journalist and mom-of-three from a small town in western Russia recalls the drawing as a joke about her civic activism — but says it also carried a "message about the future."

Duntsova hopes that future might see her forcing Putin into a run-off in Russia's next presidential vote, scheduled for March, despite her political inexperience and analysts' assessments that the Kremlin leader's

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tight grip on politics has virtually assured him another term as head of state.

Speaking to The Associated Press in Moscow, Duntsova, a 40-year-old independent, said her message of peace with Ukraine, freedom for imprisoned critics of the government and a "humane" Russia that heeds its citizens' concerns could give hope to those opposing the Kremlin's military operation in Ukraine, the decades-long centralization of power and the crackdown on dissent.

"Of course, I am afraid," she said, citing the Kremlin's targeting of opposition activists and protesters. But she insisted it is necessary to "present an alternative" to Putin and his policies.

"I've spoken with many activists and local lawmakers about the upcoming election, about what's in store for us. Because there was no obvious candidate ... who would stand for similar values (to ours)," she said.

"At some point, the idea came up ... that it would be interesting if it were a woman (to run against Putin), because that would really be something different. Rigidity and harshness against softness, kindness, peace," she added.

As a journalist-turned-grassroots campaigner and local legislator who also holds a law degree, Duntsova weighs her words carefully to avoid falling afoul of Russian laws that restrict expression around the 21-month-old conflict in Ukraine. Opponents of what the Kremlin insists on calling a "special military operation" now face up to 15 years in prison for "discrediting" or "disseminating false information about" the Russian military.

Despite that, Duntsova insisted she wants the fighting in Ukraine to come to a swift end and for Moscow and Kyiv to come to the negotiating table.

"We want peace," she said.

She declined to talk about what a possible peace agreement might look like, but pointed to Ukrainian authorities' repeated refusal to open negotiations while Putin is in power.

"It follows that they're ready to have them with somebody else," she said.

She added that if elected, her first presidential decree would mandate the release of Russia's "political prisoners," without giving names — although in earlier statements she spoke of her readiness to free Putin's arch-enemy, the anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny.

Duntsova built her career in Rzhev, a historic town of around 60,000 people about 230 kilometers (143 miles) west of Moscow. She said her work for a local TV station instilled in her a passion for engaging with people's concerns and gradually pushed her toward civic engagement.

"I came to think that I cannot limit myself to just observing what is happening, I need to participate in it myself," she said.

In 2009, 10 years before she joined the local legislative body, Duntsova gathered nearly 4,000 signatures in support of a grassroots campaign for the reinstatement of direct mayoral elections in Rzhev, scrapped earlier that year amid the Kremlin's drive to centralize power in Russia.

She hopes that experience will come in useful in her presidential bid. Russian electoral law requires all independent candidates to gather 300,000 unique voter signatures and submit the list for review by the Central Electoral Commission to be allowed to run.

Before they can begin, however, they must be endorsed by a group of at least 500 supporters gathered in a single place. Duntsova said her campaign team plans to hold the meeting in Moscow, despite fears it might be broken up by the authorities.

She has already been called in for questioning in Rzhev after announcing her intent to run in the election, with prosecutors asking her to clarify her political views and use of the term "peace." She said she invoked her constitutional right to remain silent.

Duntsova stresses she does not see herself as an opposition politician, but one motivated by "human, usual, ordinary ethical values."

She spoke of her desire to build a "humane" Russia "that's peaceful, friendly and ready to cooperate with everyone on the principle of respect."

"And first of all, this respect must be extended ... to people who live here," she added.

She said she would champion issues close to women, including Russian authorities' recent controversial

attempts to restrict abortion in the increasingly conservative country.

Duntsova readily acknowledged Putin's enduring popularity in Russian society, but asserted that she and her campaign team would fight on to energize voters who are disillusioned with politics.

"If there is a run-off, that will already be a victory, (showing) that support for the current head of state is not as substantial as they say ... And of course, my participation in the election will show people that they have a choice, that they don't have to stay home, that they should turn out," she argued.

She insisted she was not a "spoiler candidate" covertly backed by the Kremlin and fielded to give the vote a semblance of competitiveness, a common occurrence in Putin's Russia.

Most Russian opposition figures expect Putin will be declared the winner in March no matter how voters cast their ballots, and say they hope to focus on undermining the widespread public support he enjoys rather than trying to influence the vote's outcome.

One group, however, believes there is mileage in putting forward candidates to challenge Putin. A project called Our Headquarters, launched by several activists helping those fleeing Russia to settle abroad, promises to support "democratic candidates with an antiwar position."

Andrey Davydov, one of the group's project coordinators, has endorsed Duntsova's bid. He told the AP her lack of experience in federal-level politics might prove an advantage

But Dmitry Oreshkin, an independent political analyst and professor at the Free University of Riga in Latvia, thinks Duntsova has a slim chance of being officially registered as a candidate and "genuinely become a focal point for anti-Putin sentiment."

Duntsova, for her part, raises the prospect of running again in future elections.

"If we're not successful this time, it means we will be six years down the line," she said.

Jury trial will decide how much Giuliani must pay election workers over false election fraud claims

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A trial set to get underway in Washington on Monday will determine how much Rudy Giuliani will have to pay two Georgia election workers who he falsely accused of fraud while pushing Donald Trump's baseless claims after he lost the 2020 election.

The former New York City mayor has already been found liable in the defamation lawsuit brought by Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Wandrea "Shaye" Moss, who endured threats and harassment after they became the target of a conspiracy theory spread by Trump and his allies. The only issue to be determined at the trial — which will begin with jury selection in Washington's federal court — is the amount of damages, if any, Giuliani must pay.

The case is among many legal and financial woes mounting for Giuliani, who was celebrated as "America's mayor" in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack and became one of the most ardent promoters of Trump's election lies after he lost to President Joe Biden.

Giuliani is also criminally charged alongside Trump and others in the Georgia case accusing them of trying to illegally overturn the results of the election in the state. He has pleaded not guilty and maintains he had every right to raise questions about what he believed to be election fraud.

He was sued in September by a former lawyer who alleged Giuliani only paid a fraction of roughly \$1.6 million in legal fees stemming from investigations into his efforts to keep Trump in the White House. And the judge overseeing the election workers' lawsuit has already ordered Giuliani and his business entities to pay tens of thousands of dollars in attorneys' fees.

Moss had worked for the Fulton County elections department since 2012 and supervised the absentee ballot operation during the 2020 election. Freeman was a temporary election worker, verifying signatures on absentee ballots and preparing them to be counted and processed.

Giuliani and other Trump allies seized on surveillance footage to push a conspiracy theory that the election workers pulled fraudulent ballots out of suitcases. The claims were quickly debunked by Georgia election officials, who found no improper counting of ballots.

The women have said the false claims led to an barrage of violent threats and harassment that at one point forced Freeman to flee her home for more than two months. In emotional testimony before the U.S. House Committee that investigated the U.S. Capitol attack, Moss recounted receiving an onslaught of threatening and racist messages.

In her August decision holding Giuliani liable in the case, U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell said he gave “only lip service” to complying with his legal obligations and had failed to turn over information requested by the mother and daughter. The judge in October said that Giuliani had flagrantly disregarded an order to provide documents concerning his personal and business assets. She said that jurors deciding the amount of damages will be told they must “infer” that Giuliani was intentionally trying to hide financial documents in the hopes of “artificially deflating his net worth.”

Giuliani conceded in July that he made public comments falsely claiming Freeman and Moss committed fraud to try to alter the outcome of the race while counting ballots at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. But Giuliani argued that the statements were protected by the First Amendment.

Life in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine is grim. People are fleeing through a dangerous corridor

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

SUMY, Ukraine (AP) — Whenever 52-year-old Anna is agitated, she senses the chilling touch of a gun barrel between her brows — a haunting reminder of an encounter with a group of Russian soldiers on her street about a year ago.

On that day, amid tears and screams, the soldiers threatened to kill her and her husband, fired bullets on the ground between their feet and then dragged her brother-in-law to an unknown location, apparently furious that he couldn't guide them to where they could find alcohol.

Two weeks later, Anna's husband, who himself had been hospitalized previously because of heart problems, found his brother's body in the forest, not far from the village where they lived, in a Russian-occupied area of Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia region. Two weeks after that, he died.

“His heart couldn't bear it,” Anna said.

Alone and afraid, Anna sank into a depression.

“I don't know how I coped with it,” she says, repeating the phrase over and over as tears run down her face. On Nov. 22, she finally fled her home, joining a trickle of refugees on “the corridor,” a 2-kilometer (1.2-mile) trek along a front line of the fighting that Ukrainians also refer to as the “gray zone,” situated between the Belgorod region of Russia and Ukraine's Sumy region.

THE LAST CORRIDOR OUT

Since the war in Ukraine began, thousands of people have fled Russian-occupied areas over myriad routes. Now, nearly two years in, “the corridor” is their only option to cross directly into Ukraine.

Allowed to move freely through Russian-controlled zones, most take buses to the corridor from homes throughout the country: Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in the southeast, Donetsk and Luhansk in the northeast, and Crimea, the southern peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014.

Once they get to the corridor, they must proceed on foot, traipsing through an open, treeless no man's land, the whir of artillery and the whine of drones from nearby battles echoing in their ears. They are warned before they go that no one will be able to guarantee their safety as they cross. Some travel with children or elderly parents.

By the time they arrive in Sumy, they are exhausted, barely finding the strength to carry the few belongings they were able to grab before they fled. And yet, for many, to remain in the occupied zones is not an option.

“Staying there is equal death for them,” said Kateryna Arisoi, director of the nongovernmental organization Pluriton, which set up a volunteer-staffed shelter in Sumy. “They are struggling because of torture, kidnapping, killing. They simply cannot stay there.”

A GRIM AND DANGEROUS LIFE IN OCCUPIED UKRAINE

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Civilians in occupied territories are detained for minor reasons, such as speaking Ukrainian or simply for being a young man, according to an investigation The Associated Press conducted earlier this year. Thousands are being held without charge in Russian prisons and areas of the occupied territories.

Ukraine's government estimates at least 10,000 civilians are detained.

On both sides of the corridor, refugees are subjected to rigorous searches and questioning. On the Russian side, some, especially men, are not allowed to cross.

Many are afraid and agreed to speak to the news media only on condition of anonymity. Anna declined to provide her last name for fear of repercussions against relatives who still live in the occupied area of her province.

"They don't consider us human," Anna says of the Russian soldiers.

Also prompting many to flee are new laws forcing residents of occupied areas to acquire Russian citizenship. A report by the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale University's School of Public Health says they must do so by July 2024 or they could be deported, including to remote areas of Russia.

At the shelter, those who were able to avoid being issued a Russian passport speak with evident pride. No one speaks aloud about receiving one.

A STEADY FLOW OF REFUGEES

The rate at which people cross the corridor depends on the weather and the situation at the front line. Recently, with temperatures steadily dropping ahead of winter, an average of 80-120 people have been returning daily, Arisoi said. She said the highest numbers were recorded after the collapse of the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine earlier this year, when about 200 people a day were fleeing.

More than 15,500 people have passed through the Pluriton shelter since it opened in March, said Arisoi, herself a refugee who fled her home in the eastern city of Bakhmut after it was reduced to rubble and taken over by Russian military forces in May.

"I also lost everything. ... I know the feeling when you lose your home, your life, your status, when you become like a zero," she said.

A LENGTHY JOURNEY TO A PLACE CLOSE BY

Before the war, 73-year-old Halyna Sidorova left Zaporizhzhia city, where her children and grandson are located, to care for her elderly mother in a village outside of Polohy, another city in Zaporizhia province about two hours away by car.

During the war, the two areas were divided by a front line that Sidorova could not cross, and she suddenly found herself in occupied territory, isolated from the relatives she had left behind.

Sidorova made a decision. Shortly before her 93-year-old mother's death, she told her, "Mom, when you pass away, I'll stay here for up to nine days, come to your grave to say goodbye, and then I'll go home."

When the time came, she silently packed her things, grabbed a walking stick, and embarked on the challenging journey: a full day's bus ride through other occupied territories and into Russia, where she set out on foot along the corridor.

Sidorova told no one that she was leaving. Throughout the difficult journey, she found solace in a prayer.

"I read the prayer the whole way ... the entire journey, even when falling asleep, I continued reading," she said while sitting in the shelter in Sumy.

When she finally arrives back home in Zaporizhia city, Sidorova's journey will have taken her nearly full circle.

A CONFLICTED DECISION

Anna and her husband initially resisted leaving.

But as the days passed, more Russian troops began occupying empty houses and forests, a situation that she said became "terrifying to the core."

In January, they intercepted her husband's brother as he was returning home from work, asking him where they could get alcohol. He told them the truth: He didn't know. When he got home, two armed Russians came to his house and started beating him with a rifle in his yard, Anna said.

When she and her husband, who lived opposite the brother's house, ran out to see what was happen-

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ing, the Russians started shooting at their feet.

She said one of them pointed a rifle at her forehead, and remarked: "I'll kill you now."

The Russian soldier alternated between aiming the pistol at her chest and shooting at her and her husband's feet before eventually letting them go. The brother-in-law would not be spared. Two weeks later, her husband would be dead.

But it wasn't until 10 months later, on her 10-year-old grandson's birthday, that Anna finally decided to leave.

The grandson had fled with Anna's daughter to Poland in the early days of the war. When Anna called to wish him a happy birthday, he said to her, "Why are you there? We need you."

Less than a week after the call, she left.

The minute she departed, she was homesick, missing the flowers she had planted in the yard of her home and the little fence and pathway she had built with her husband.

"We always did everything together," she said.

As she entered the corridor on the Russian side, soldiers shouted at her to "get out of here!" and she burst into tears.

The journey was not easy. The weather was cold and she fell and bruised her knees while dragging a few bags containing her meager belongings.

At the shelter in the Sumy region, she sits on a lower bunk, her head leaning against the edge of the bed above her. Still ahead of her is the trip to Poland.

Adorning her frostbitten hands are two wedding rings: Hers on the left, her deceased husband's on her right.

"I want to go home already," she says, her voice trembling.

Battles rage across Gaza as Israel indicates it's willing to fight for months or more to beat Hamas

By WAFAA SHURAF, NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Battles raged across Gaza on Sunday as Israel indicated it was prepared to fight for months or longer to defeat the territory's Hamas rulers, and a key mediator said willingness to discuss a cease-fire was fading.

Israel faces international outrage after its military offensive, with diplomatic support and arms from close ally the United States, has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians. About 90% 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 in recent days by vetoing a United Nations Security Council resolution to end the fighting and pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

Russia backed the resolution. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and expressed dissatisfaction with "anti-Israel positions" taken by Moscow's envoys at the U.N. and elsewhere, an Israeli statement said.

Netanyahu told Putin that any country assaulted the way Israel was "would have reacted with no less force than Israel is using," the statement added.

The U.N. General Assembly scheduled an emergency meeting Tuesday to vote on a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the U.N., told The Associated Press that it's similar to the Security Council resolution the U.S. vetoed Friday.

There are no vetoes in the General Assembly but unlike the Security Council its resolutions are not legally binding. They are important nonetheless as a barometer of global opinion.

Israel's air and ground war has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants killed 1,200 people and captured around 240. Over 100 of them were released during a weeklong cease-fire last month.

With very little aid allowed in, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

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Some observers openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of Gaza altogether.

"Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar, a key intermediary.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, called allegations of mass displacement from Gaza "outrageous and false."

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, told the forum that mediation efforts seeking to stop the war and have all hostages released will continue, but "unfortunately, we are not seeing the same willingness that we had seen in the weeks before."

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals. "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.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CNN that as far as the duration and the conduct of the fighting, "these are decisions for Israel to make."

This is a war that cannot be won, Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, asserted to the Qatar forum, warning that "Israel has created an amount of hatred that will haunt this region that will define generations to come."

FIGHTING AND ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

Israeli forces face heavy resistance, including in northern Gaza, where neighborhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have operated for over six weeks.

Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear, hands in the air. One man held an assault rifle above his head, walked forward and placed a gun on the ground.

Other videos have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded. Detainees from a group released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water.

Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said dozens of arrests took place in two Hamas strongholds and that people are undressed to make sure they are not hiding explosives.

Residents said there was still heavy fighting 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.

"They are attacking anything that moves," said Hamza Abu Fatouh, a Shijaiyah resident. He said the dead and wounded were left in the streets as ambulances could not reach the area.

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.

Heavy fighting also was underway in and around the southern city of Khan Younis.

WAITING DAYS FOR FOOD

The price of dwindling food in Gaza has soared. Abdulsalam al-Majdalawi said he had come every day for nearly two weeks to a U.N. distribution center, hoping to get supplies for his family of seven.

"Thank God, today they drew our name," he said.

One hundred trucks with humanitarian aid entered Sunday, said Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority. That's far short of what's needed.

With the war in its third month, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 17,900, 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 residential neighborhoods. The military says 97 Israeli soldiers have died in the offensive. Palestinian militants have continued firing rockets into Israel.

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

Israel says it has provided detailed instructions for civilians to evacuate to safer areas, even as it strikes what it says are militant targets. Thousands have fled to areas along the border with Egypt — one of the last places where aid agencies are able to deliver food and water.

Demonstrations were again held in several cities in support of the Palestinians and calling for an end to the war, while thousands marched in Europe against antisemitism.

The war has raised tensions across the Middle East, 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. Israeli artillery, drone, and airstrikes over Lebanon border towns intensified.

Over 300 Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar arrive in Indonesia's Aceh region after weeks at sea

By REZA SAIFULLAH and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

ACEH BESAR, Indonesia (AP) — Two boats carrying more than 300 Rohingya Muslims, including emaciated women and children, arrived at Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Sunday morning after being adrift for weeks.

One boat, which had been at sea for about one and a half months and carrying 135 people, arrived at a beach in Lamreh village in Aceh Besar Regency. The boat held 65 women, 35 men, 20 girls and 15 boys.

"The boat was sinking. We had no food or water left," said Shahidul Islam, 34. He said they had left their refugee camp in Bangladesh.

But residents around the beach in Lamreh village hesitated to have the refugees near their homes. The residents took the 135 refugees in four trucks to the Aceh governor's office in the city of Banda Aceh Sunday night.

The other boat carrying 180 people — 74 women, 53 men, 27 girls and 26 boys — arrived at a beach in Blang Raya village in Pidie Regency. It had been adrift in the Andaman Sea without adequate supplies for about 27 days.

Mahmud Husein, 25, a survivor, said he gave the boat owner 40,000 taka (\$363) to help him leave Bangladesh.

"We came to Indonesia, but we want to go to other countries if they want to help us," Husein said.

Another boat, carrying more refugees, embarked from Bangladesh at the same time, Husein confirmed, but it remained missing. The U.N. refugee agency warned that people onboard could die if more was not done to rescue them.

About 740,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar to camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, following a brutal counterinsurgency campaign. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes, and international courts are considering whether their actions constitute genocide.

Since November, more than 1,500 Rohingya refugees have arrived by boat in Indonesia's Aceh province. Some were denied landing by the residents in Aceh Utara district and Sabang island, sparking concerns from human rights organizations.

Rijalul Fitri, head of Blang Raya village in Aceh, said Sunday they did not want the refugees in their village. "We stayed up all night so as not to allow them to dock, but at 2:30 a.m., they arrived," he said.

Fitri was adamant about the refugees' relocation, saying, "They can't stay here."

President Joko Widodo on Friday said in a statement that Indonesia's government suspected a surge in human trafficking because of the increasing number of Rohingya Muslims who entered the country over the past few weeks, especially in Aceh.

Police in the city of Lohkseumawe, where there is a camp for Rohingya Muslim refugees, arrested three Aceh residents for alleged human trafficking. They were charged with taking 1.8 million rupiah (about \$115), to smuggle 30 refugees from the camp to the city of Medan in North Sumatra province, said Henki Ismanto, the Lohkseumawe police chief.

Most of the refugees leaving by sea attempt to reach Muslim-majority Malaysia in search of work. Indo-

nesia, where Muslims comprise nearly 90% of the country's 277 million people, has been detaining them.

Tennessee residents clean up after severe weekend storms killed 6 people and damaged neighborhoods

By KRISTIN M. HALL, PATRICK WHITTLE and GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press
NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Residents of central Tennessee communities slammed by deadly tornadoes this weekend described tragic and terrifying scenes in which one mobile home landed on top of another, roofs were ripped from houses and an entire church collapsed during a string of powerful storms that killed six people.

Emergency workers and community members cleaned up Sunday from the severe weekend storms and tornadoes that also sent dozens more to the hospital while damaging buildings, turning over vehicles and knocking out power to tens of thousands.

Marco Tulio Gabriel Pérez came to Nashville from Atlanta after hearing that his sister and 2-year-old nephew were killed in the tornado. He said two other children in the family survived with minor injuries.

Family members were crying as they looked through the rubble of the trailers on Sunday morning.

"Regrettably, a tragedy happened here. Since it's a tornado, it came through like you can see here. She lived in this trailer. The other trailer overturned on top of my deceased sister. She remained underneath, the other trailer went on top," Pérez told The Associated Press in Spanish.

The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department identified the victims killed north of downtown as Joseph Dalton, 37; Floridema Gabriel Pérez, 31; and her son, Anthony Elmer Mendez, 2. Dalton was inside his mobile home when the storm tossed it on top of Pérez's residence. Two other children were taken to a hospital with injuries that were not life-threatening, the department said in a statement.

Officials elsewhere confirmed that three people, including a child, died after a tornado struck Montgomery County 50 miles (80 kilometers) northwest of Nashville near the Kentucky state line on Saturday afternoon. They did not immediately provide names. About 60 people were treated for injuries at area medical facilities, including nine transferred in critical condition to a Nashville hospital, said Jimmie Edwards, Montgomery County's director of emergency services.

Twenty-one total injuries were reported in Nashville, city officials said. A church north of downtown collapsed during the storm, resulting in 13 people being treated at hospitals, Nashville emergency officials said in a news release. They were later listed in stable condition.

The sanctuary and activities building at Community Baptist Church in Nashville were totally demolished, Donella Johnson, the wife of the church's pastor, said in a Facebook video. Several members caught by the damage had emergency surgeries for broken hips and legs, she said.

The church website had publicized an appreciation banquet for the Johnsons for late Saturday afternoon.

"Though we have experienced devastation beyond measure, we did not lose life," the pastor, the Rev. Vincent Johnson said. "God took brick and wood and metal and it was mangled in a tornado ... yet God preserved us."

At least six tornado tracks were reported Saturday in central Tennessee, according to the National Weather Service. Agency meteorologist Cory Mueller in Nashville said it was sending out tornado tracking teams on Sunday to attempt to confirm these potential tornadoes and calculate their severity.

Mueller said it wasn't uncommon for tornadoes to be generated during this time of year.

Joe Pitts, mayor of the Montgomery County city of Clarksville, said it could be a couple of weeks before power is restored to everyone. Residents of the city of about 166,000 spent Sunday helping one another dig out from the devastating storms, he said.

"We know we have people who are suffering because of loss of life, loss of property," Pitts said. "One thing I love about this city is that when someone has a need, we rally around that need."

At a news conference with Metropolitan Nashville leaders, Mayor Freddie O'Connell said that over 20 structures had collapsed there as a result of Saturday's storm and that "countless others have sustained significant damage."

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Nashville Electric Service executive Teresa Broyles-Aplin said electric substations in north Nashville and in nearby Hendersonville suffered significant damage and that outages could last days in some areas.

She said it was possible that a widely distributed video showing a fireball in the Saturday evening sky could have been caused by Nashville Electric equipment.

"That gives you a good idea of the extent of damage that we're dealing with at some of these substations," she said.

Residents in the region are familiar with severe weather in late fall. Saturday's 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.

Ellen Schlavach and Robyn Robichaud said that a tree fell on their house in the Madison neighborhood of Nashville, and many of their neighbors' homes were damaged worse. They had been out running errands on Saturday and had seen some warnings that a thunderstorm was coming. They realized things were serious after they got back home and received emergency alerts on their phones.

"We very quickly realized that we had to gather up all the pets and hide in the bathroom," Schlavach said. "The house was shaking. A tree fell on the house. Very loud. Very scary."

Greg Chance of Nashville said that he was watching the news on Saturday with his wife and daughter and knew there was bad weather coming. Within minutes, they went to their safe place at a spot in the kitchen where there were no windows nearby and sat on the floor.

"And then the next thing we know, it just sounded like an explosion went off. You could hear stuff flying everywhere. It was crazy. It's crazy. It is terrifying," he said, emotion rising in his voice as he described the three of them holding onto each other.

He said he worked with Dalton, one of those killed in the storm, at a company that makes fasteners for construction. Chance said he couldn't sleep knowing that his coworker lost his life and left behind a son. He said the boy and his mother were taken to the hospital with injuries.

About 35,000 electricity customers were without power in Tennessee on Sunday evening, according to PowerOutage.us, down from more than 80,000 on Saturday night. School would be closed in Clarksville through Tuesday, officials said.

Recovery continued as areas east faced severe weather Sunday. Tornado warnings were posted in the afternoon in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area and points in counties toward the Virginia border. Some homes were damaged by storms in Garner, a suburb of Raleigh.

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.

Customs and Border Protection "continues to surge personnel and resources to the Border Patrol's Tucson

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Sector to expeditiously take migrants into custody," the agency said Sunday. "The fact is we are enforcing the law, and there are consequences for those who fail to use lawful pathways."

"Individuals encountered at the border are screened and vetted, and those without a legal basis to stay are removed," it said, adding that consequences can include a minimum five-year bar on re-entry. The agency said it is also focusing efforts on smugglers and transportation networks like bus lines that bring the migrants through northern Mexico.

Critics of closing the Lukeville crossing, 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 to 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 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.

Trump says he won’t testify again at his New York fraud trial. He says he has nothing more to say

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump said Sunday he has decided against testifying for a second time at his New York civil fraud trial, posting on social media a day before his scheduled appearance that he “very successfully & conclusively” testified last month and saw no need to do so again.

The former president, the leading contender for the 2024 Republican nomination, had been expected to return to the witness stand Monday as a coda to his defense against New York Attorney General Letitia James’ lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, alleges Trump inflated his wealth on financial statements used in securing loans and making deals. The case threatens Trump’s real estate empire and cuts to the heart of his image as a successful businessman.

“I will not be testifying on Monday,” Trump wrote in an all-capital-letters, multipart statement on his Truth Social platform less than 20 hours before he was to take the witness stand.

“I have already testified to everything & have nothing more to say,” Trump added, leaving the final word among defense witnesses to an accounting expert hired by his legal team who testified last week that he found “no evidence, whatsoever, for any accounting fraud” in Trump’s financial statements.

A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions about his decision.

The decision was an abrupt change from Trump’s posture in recent days, when his lawyers said he was insistent on testifying again despite their concerns about a gag order that has cost him \$15,000 in fines for disparaging the judge’s law clerk.

“President Trump has already testified. There is really nothing more to say to a judge who has imposed an unconstitutional gag order and thus far appears to have ignored President Trump’s testimony and that of everyone else involved in the complex financial transactions at issue in the case,” Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said Sunday.

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Trump's decision came days after his son, Eric Trump, ditched his return appearance on the witness stand. Trump said on social media that he'd told Eric to cancel.

It also follows Trump's first trip back to court since he testified in the case on Nov. 6. Last Thursday, he watched from the defense table as the accounting professor, New York University professor Eli Bartov, blasted the state's case and said Trump's financial statements "were not materially misstated."

Trump's cancellation caught court officials by surprise. Without Trump on the witness stand, the trial will be on hold until Tuesday, when Bartov will finish his testimony. State lawyers say they'll then call at least one rebuttal witness.

In a statement, James said whether Trump testified again or not, "we have already proven that he committed years of financial fraud and unjustly enriched himself and his family. No matter how much he tries to distract from reality, the facts don't lie."

Trump was often defiant and combative when he testified Nov. 6. Along with defending his wealth and denying wrongdoing, he repeatedly sparred with the judge, whom he criticized as "extremely hostile," and slammed James as "a political hack."

Trump answered questions from state lawyers for about 3½ hours, often responding with lengthy diatribes. His verbose answers irked the judge, Arthur Engoron, who admonished, "This is not a political rally."

Had Trump returned to the stand Monday, it would've been his defense lawyers leading the questioning, but lawyers from James' office could have cross-examined him, too.

Engoron ruled before the trial that Trump and other defendants engaged in fraud. He ordered that a receiver take control of some Trump properties, but an appeals court has paused that decision.

Engoron is now considering six other claims, including allegations of conspiracy and insurance fraud. James seeks penalties of more than \$300 million and wants Trump banned from doing business in New York. The judge is deciding, rather than a jury, because juries aren't allowed in this type of case.

Though testimony is nearly over, the trial that started Oct. 2 will bleed into next year. Closing arguments are scheduled for Jan. 11, just four days before the Iowa caucuses start the presidential primary season. Engoron said he hopes to have a decision by the end of January.

Trump has had a prime role in the trial. Along with his testimony, he has voluntarily gone to court eight days to watch witnesses, turning his appearances into de facto campaign stops. During breaks, he has taken full advantage of the cameras parked in the courthouse hallway, spinning what's happening inside the courtroom, where cameras aren't allowed, in the most favorable light.

Trump's frequent presence in court — as a witness, observer and aggrieved defendant — has underscored the unique personal stakes for a billionaire who's also juggling four criminal cases and a campaign.

Where other politicians have shied from legal peril, Trump has leaned in as his court and political calendars increasingly overlap, with primaries a few weeks away and the first of his criminal trials slated for March.

But Trump's interest in vindicating his company and his wealth has also run up against the limitations of the gag order, which was reinstated at the end of November by a state appellate court after a two-week interlude. The same gag order was also in effect when he testified in November.

Despite the gag order, Trump was adamant in recent days that he'd testify again — even as one of his lawyers, Alina Habba, said she discouraged him from taking the stand.

"He still wants to take the stand, even though my advice is, at this point, you should never take the stand with a gag order," Habba told reporters last week, before Trump changed his mind.

Trump spent Saturday evening with Habba at the New York Young Republican Club's black-tie gala. At the event, about a mile from the courthouse, he went on at length highlighting his objections, saying, "I have proven my innocence literally every single day."

In inaugural speech, Argentina's Javier Milei prepares nation for painful shock adjustment

By DAVID BILLER and DÉBORA REY Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — It wasn't the most uplifting of inaugural addresses. Rather, Argentina's newly empowered President Javier Milei presented figures to lay bare the scope of the nation's economic "emergency," and sought to prepare the public for a shock adjustment with drastic public spending cuts.

Milei said in his address to thousands of supporters in the capital, Buenos Aires, that the country doesn't have time to consider other alternatives.

"We don't have margin for sterile discussions. Our country demands action, and immediate action," he said. "The political class left the country at the brink of its biggest crisis in history. We don't desire the hard decisions that will need to be made in coming weeks, but lamentably they didn't leave us any option."

South America's second largest economy is suffering 143% annual inflation, the currency has plunged and four in 10 Argentines are impoverished. The nation has a yawning fiscal deficit, a trade deficit of \$43 billion, plus a daunting \$45 billion debt to the International Monetary Fund, with \$10.6 billion due to the multilateral and private creditors by April.

"There's no money," is Milei's common refrain. He repeated it Sunday to explain why a gradualist approach to the situation, which would require financing, was not an option.

But he promised the adjustment would almost entirely affect the state rather than the private sector, and that it represented the first step toward regaining prosperity.

"We know that in the short term the situation will worsen, but soon we will see the fruits of our effort, having created the base for solid and sustainable growth," he said.

Milei, a 53-year-old economist, rose to fame on television with profanity-laden tirades against what he called the political caste. He parlayed his popularity into a congressional seat and then, just as swiftly, into a presidential run. The overwhelming victory of the self-declared "anarcho-capitalist" in the August primaries sent shock waves through the political landscape and upended the race.

Argentines disillusioned with the economic status quo proved receptive to an outsider's outlandish ideas to remedy their woes and transform the nation. He won the election's Nov. 19 second round decisively — and sent packing the Peronist political force that dominated Argentina for decades. Still, he is likely to encounter fierce opposition from the Peronist movement's lawmakers and the unions it controls, whose members have said they refuse to lose wages.

Earlier on Sunday, Milei was sworn in inside the National Congress building, and outgoing President Alberto Fernández placed the presidential sash upon him. Some of the assembled lawmakers chanted "Liberty!"

Afterward, he broke tradition by delivering his inaugural address not to assembled lawmakers but to his supporters gathered outside — with his back turned to the legislature. He blamed the outgoing government for putting Argentina on the path toward hyperinflation while the economy stagnated, saying the political class "has ruined our lives."

"In the last 12 years, GDP per capita fell 15% in a context in which we accumulated 5,000% inflation. As such, for more than a decade we have lived in stagflation. This is the last rough patch before starting the reconstruction of Argentina," he said. "It won't be easy; 100 years of failure aren't undone in a day. But it begins in a day, and today is that day."

Given the general bleakness of Milei's message, the crowd listened attentively and cheered only occasionally. Many waved Argentine flags and, to a lesser extent, the yellow Gadsden flag that is often associated with the U.S. libertarian right and which Milei and his supporters have adopted.

"Economically, we are just like every Argentine, trying to make it to the end of the month," said Wenceslao Aguirre, one of Milei's supporters. "It's been a very complicated situation. We hope this will change once and for all."

As Milei takes office, the nation wonders which version of him will govern: the chainsaw-wielding, anti-establishment crusader from the campaign trail, or the more moderate president-elect who emerged in recent weeks.

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As a candidate, Milei pledged to purge the political establishment of corruption, eliminate the Central Bank he has accused of printing money and fueling inflation, and replace the rapidly depreciating peso with the U.S. dollar.

But after winning, he tapped Luis Caputo, a former Central Bank president, to be his economy minister and one of Caputo's allies to helm the bank, appearing to have put his much-touted plans for dollarization on hold.

Milei had cast himself as a willing warrior against the creep of global socialism, much like former U.S. President Donald Trump, whom he openly admires. But when Milei traveled to the U.S. last week, he didn't visit Mar-a-Lago; rather, he took lunch with another former U.S. leader, Bill Clinton.

He also dispatched a diplomat with a long history of work in climate negotiations to the ongoing COP28 conference in Dubai, Argentine newspaper La Nacion reported, despite having insistently rejected humanity's involvement in global warming. And he backtracked on plans to scrap the nation's health ministry.

And during his inaugural address, he directed some comments to the political class, saying that he has no intention to "persecute anyone or settle old vendettas," and that any politician or union leader who wants to support his project will be "received with open arms."

His moderation may stem from pragmatism, given the scope of the immense challenge before him, his political inexperience and need to sew up alliances with other parties to implement his agenda in Congress, where his party is a distant third in number of seats held.

He chose Patricia Bullrich, a longtime politician and first-round adversary from the coalition with the second most seats, to be his security minister, as well as her running mate, Luis Petri, as his defense minister.

Still, there are signs that Milei has not given up his radical plans to dismantle the state. Already he has said he will eliminate multiple ministries, including those of culture, environment, women, and science and technology. He wants to meld the ministries of social development, labor and education together under a single ministry of human capital.

Following his inaugural address, Milei traveled in a convertible to the presidential palace. Later on Sunday he is scheduled to swear in his ministers and meet with foreign dignitaries.

Prominent far-right figures will be among them: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán; the head of Spain's Vox party, Santiago Abascal; former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Bolsonaro-allied lawmakers, including his son.

Milei reportedly sent a letter inviting Brazil's current president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, after calling the leftist "obviously" corrupt last month during a televised interview and asserting that, if he became president, the two would not meet.

Lula dispatched his foreign minister to attend Milei's inauguration.

Also joining was Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who made his first visit to Latin America as Kyiv continues to court support among developing nations for its 21-month-old fight against Russia's invading forces. Zelenskyy and Milei shared a close exchange just before the inaugural address and held a bilateral meeting later in the day.

Divers recover the seventh of 8 crew members killed in crash of a US military Osprey off Japan

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Divers on Sunday recovered the remains of the seventh of the eight crew members from a U.S. military Osprey aircraft that crashed off southern Japan during a training mission.

The Air Force CV-22 Osprey went down Nov. 29 just off Yakushima Island in southwestern Japan while on its way to Okinawa. The bodies of six of the crew had since been recovered, including five from the sunken wreckage of the aircraft.

The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the body found by Air Force divers was one of the two crew members still missing. The identity of the airman had been determined but the information was being withheld until next of kin could be notified, the command said.

"Currently there is a combined effort in locating and recovering the remains of our eighth airman," it said. A week after the crash and repeated reminders from the Japanese government about safety concerns, the U.S. military grounded all its Osprey V-22 aircraft after a preliminary investigation indicated something went wrong with the craft that was not a human error.

The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight.

The crash raised new questions about the safety of the Osprey, which has been involved in multiple fatal accidents over its relatively short time in service. Japan grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys after the crash.

Japanese defense officials say Ospreys are key to the country's military buildup especially in southwestern Japan, in the face of a growing threat from China. But the crash has rekindled worries and public protests in areas where additional Osprey deployment is planned.

Japanese residents and media have criticized Japan's government for not pushing hard enough to get Ospreys grounded sooner or gain access to information about the crash.

Students and lawmakers gather at Philadelphia temple to denounce antisemitism

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Students, lawmakers and religious leaders joined forces Sunday at a temple in Philadelphia to strongly denounce antisemitism on college campuses and in their communities.

The gathering at Congregation Rodeph Shalom came one day after University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill resigned amid criticism over her testimony at a congressional hearing. Magill was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

"I have seen Pennsylvanians take actions big and small, and both matter, to combat antisemitism," Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, said at the event. "I've seen it here in Philadelphia where students raised their voices, where students made sure they were heard in the halls of power at their university, and leadership was held accountable."

Similar sentiments were voiced by U.S. Sen. Bob Casey Jr., a fellow Democrat, and student speakers from Harvard and Penn. Harvard President Claudine Gay also took part in the congressional hearing along with Massachusetts Institute of Technology President Sally Kornbluth. They also drew criticism for their lawyerly answers.

Eitan Linhart, a sophomore at Penn, discussed his experience with what he called the rise in antisemitism on the school's campus. He cited a Jewish fraternity being defaced with graffiti that read "The Jews are Nazis" and spoke of friends who no longer wear yarmulkes on campus out of fear.

"What surprises me is not the hatred," Linhart said. "What surprises me is the indifference."

Miyazaki's 'The Boy and the Heron' is No. 1 at the box office, a first for the Japanese anime master

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For the first time in Hayao Miyazaki's decades-spanning career, the 82-year-old Japanese anime master is No. 1 at the North American box office. Miyazaki's latest enchantment, "The Boy and the Heron," debuted with \$12.8 million, according to studio estimates.

"The Boy and the Heron," the long-awaited animated fantasy from the director of "Spirited Away," "My Neighbor Totoro" and other cherished anime classics, is only the third anime to ever top the box office in U.S. and Canadian theaters, and the first original anime to do so. The film, which is playing in both subtitled and dubbed versions, is also the first fully foreign production to land atop the domestic box office this year.

Though Miyazaki's movies have often been enormous hits in Japan and Asia, they've traditionally made less of a mark in North American cinemas. The director's previous best performer was his last movie, 2013's "The Wind Rises," which grossed \$5.2 million in its entire domestic run.

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"It's really a resounding statement for what animation can be," said Eric Beckman, founder and chief executive of GKIDS, the North American distributor for Studio Ghibli films. "American audiences have been ready for a lot more than what they've been getting, and I think this really points to that direction."

"The Boy and the Heron" for years was expected to be Miyazaki's swan song. But just as it was making its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, Junichi Nishioka, Studio Ghibli vice president, said the previously retired Miyazaki has begun working toward another film.

"The Boy and the Heron," has been hailed as one of the best films of the year. The film, featuring an English dub voice cast including Robert Pattinson, Christian Bale, Dave Bautista and Mark Hamill, follows a boy who, after her mother perishes in World War II bombing, is led by a mysterious heron to a portal that takes him to a fantastical realm. In Japan, its title translates to "How Do You Live?"

"The Boy and the Heron" earlier collected \$56 million in Japan despite zero promotion. Studio Ghibli opted to release the film without production stills, trailers, ads or billboards.

The U.S. and Canadian release included conventional advertising but was similarly handled with the care of something truly special as a Miyazaki movie. Throughout this year, all 10 of Miyazaki's films with Ghibli were rereleased in theaters by GKIDS, which was founded in 2008 as way to bring ambitious animation to wider audiences.

"Working on a Hayao Miyazaki film is a huge honor but also kind of terrifying," Beckman said. "We're really just trying to do justice to the film."

Last week's top film, "Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé," dropped steeply in its second weekend. The concert film, the second pop star release distributed by AMC Theatres following Taylor Swift's "The Eras Tour," collected \$5 million in its second weekend, a decline of 76% from its \$21 million opening.

That allowed Lionsgate's still-going-strong "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes" to take second place, with an estimated \$9.4 million in its fourth weekend of release. The "Hunger Games" prequel has a domestic haul of \$135.7 million.

"The Boy and the Heron" wasn't the only Japanese film that ranked among the top movies in theaters over the weekend. "Godzilla Minus One" followed up its stellar debut last weekend with \$8.3 million for Toho Studios. Takashi Yamazaki's acclaimed kaiju movie dipped just 27% in its second weekend of release, bringing its total to \$25 million.

Several potential awards contenders got off to strong starts in limited release. Yorgos Lanthimos' warped fantasy "Poor Things," starring Emma Stone, opened with \$644,000 from nine theaters in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Austin, Texas. "Poor Things" expands in more theaters next week.

Ava DuVernay's "Origin," played an Oscar-qualifying run in two theaters in New York and Los Angeles with a per screen average of \$58,532 for Neon. It stars Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor as the author Isabel Wilkerson while she investigates race and inequality for her book "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents." "Origin" opens wide Jan. 19.

"Wonka," one of the holiday season's most anticipated releases, kicked off its overseas run with \$43.2 million from 37 international markets. The film, starring Timothée Chalamet and directed by "Paddington" filmmaker Paul King, is expected to lead U.S. and Canada ticket sales next weekend.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "The Boy and the Heron," \$12.8 million.
2. "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes," \$9.4 million.
3. "Godzilla Minus One," \$8.3 million.
4. "Trolls Band Together," \$6.2 million.
5. "Wish," \$5.3 million.
6. "Renaissance, A Film by Beyoncé," \$5 million.
7. "Napoleon," \$4.2 million.
8. "Waitress: The Musical," \$3.2 million.
9. "Animal," \$2.3 million.

10. "The Shift," \$2.2 million.

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

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy witnessed the swearing-in on Sunday of Argentina's new president, Javier Milei.

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

During Zelenskyy's visit to Buenos Aires, his office and the White House announced he would travel to Washington to meet with President Joe Biden on Tuesday.

Biden has asked Congress for a \$110 billion (\$61.4 billion) package of wartime funding for Ukraine and Israel, along with other national security priorities. But the request is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security.

The visit to Washington would focus on "ensuring the unity of the U.S., Europe and the world" in supporting Ukraine in the war against Russia, Zelenskyy's office said.

In Argentina, Milei welcomed Zelenskyy at the presidential palace after his inauguration. The two shared an extended hug, exchanged words and then Milei, who has said he intends to convert to Judaism, presented his Ukrainian counterpart with a menorah as a gift. They were expected to have a longer one-on-one meeting later on Sunday.

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 Argentine's electoral victory last month, thanking him for his "clear support for Ukraine." In its readout of the call, 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.

Zelenskyy used the trip to Argentina to meet leaders of several developing countries. He met the prime minister of the West African country of Cape Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, on his way to Buenos Aires. Once in Argentina, Zelenskyy met separately with the presidents of Paraguay, Ecuador and Uruguay, his office said.

"The support and strong united voice of Latin American countries that stand with the people of Ukraine in the war for our freedom and democracy is very important for us," Zelenskyy said in a statement.

He also had a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, discussing "the details of the next defense package from the French Republic, which will significantly enhance Ukraine's firepower, and the current needs of our country in armaments," Zelenskyy's office said.

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.

Zelenskyy will meet Biden at the White House amid a stepped-up push for Congress to approve more aid

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, will meet at the White House on Tuesday as the U.S. administration steps up the pressure on Congress to provide billions more in aid to Kyiv in its war with Russia.

The visit is intended "to underscore the United States' unshakeable commitment to supporting the people of Ukraine as they defend themselves against Russia's brutal invasion," the White House said in a statement Sunday. "As Russia ramps up its missile and drone strikes against Ukraine, the leaders will discuss Ukraine's urgent needs and the vital importance of the United States' continued support at this critical moment."

Zelenskyy's office confirmed that he had accepted Biden's invitation. He also has been asked to speak to a meeting of all senators.

Biden has asked Congress for a \$110 billion package of wartime funding for Ukraine (\$61.4 billion) and Israel, along with other national security priorities. But the request is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security.

Zelenskyy traveled to Buenos Aires to witness the swearing-in on Sunday of Argentina's new president, Javier Milei. The Ukrainian leader had been scheduled to address U.S. senators by video last week, but had to cancel the appearance, according to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Congress already has allocated \$111 billion to assist Ukraine, and Biden's budget director, Shalanda Young, said in a letter this past week to House and Senate leaders that the U.S. will run out of funding to send weapons and assistance to Ukraine by the end of the year, which would "kneecap" Ukraine on the battlefield.

"It's time to cut a deal that both sides can agree to," Young said Sunday.

The stakes are especially high for Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during two television interviews Sunday, given that "we are running out of funding" for the Ukrainians. "This is a time to really step up because if we don't, we know what happens. (Russian President Vladimir) Putin will be able to move forward with impunity and we know he won't stop in Ukraine."

Earlier, he defended the emergency sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition and also called for quick congressional approval of the foreign assistance. Blinken said the needs of Israel's military operations in Gaza justify the rare decision to bypass Congress. "Israel is in combat right now with Hamas," he said. "And we want to make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Hamas."

The tank ammunition and related support constitute only a small portion of military sales to Israel, Blinken said, and that the rest remains subject to congressional review. "It's very important that Congress' voice be heard in this," he said.

The decision to proceed with the sale of more than \$106 million for tank shells came as the administration's larger aid package is caught up in a larger immigration debate.

Blinken noted that Biden has said he is willing to make significant compromises to get the aid package moving. "It's something the president is fully prepared to engage on," Blinken said.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said there is bipartisan agreement that something has to be done to address record numbers of migrants crossing into the United States from Mexico.

"We want to solve that, to secure the border. I just saw the president of the United States say that we've got to secure the border. He's right. So, any effort that doesn't do that will be rejected by Republicans," Romney said.

Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, said the administration has yet to justify additional aid to Ukraine. "So what we're saying to the president and really to the entire world is, you need to articulate what the ambition is. What is \$61 billion going to accomplish that \$100 billion hasn't?" Vance said.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said the money would make a difference because Russia is struggling to fund its war effort. "It can change the outcome of this war," Murphy said. "Because at the very same time

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that we are making a renewed commitment to Ukraine, Russia's ability to continue to fight this war is in jeopardy."

Romney said he also supports the aid to Ukraine. "My own view is that it's very much in America's interest to see Ukraine successful and to provide the weapons that Ukraine needs to defend itself. Anything other than that would be a huge dereliction of our responsibility, I believe, to the world of democracy but also to our own national interest," he said.

Blinken appeared on ABC's "This Week" and CNN's "State of the Union." Romney and Murphy were on NBC's "Meet the Press." Vance was on CNN. Young was on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Biden and Congress are mulling big changes on immigration. What are they and what could they mean?

REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is taking a more active role in Senate negotiations over changes to the immigration system that Republicans are demanding in exchange for providing money to Ukraine in its fight against Russia and Israel for the war with Hamas.

The Democratic president has said he is willing to make "significant compromises on the border" as Republicans block the wartime aid in Congress. The White House is expected to get more involved in talks this week as the impasse over changes to border policy has deepened and the funds remaining for Ukraine have dwindled.

"It's time to cut a deal that both sides can agree to," Biden's budget director, Shalanda Young, said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Republicans say the record numbers of migrants crossing the southern border pose a security threat because authorities cannot adequately screen all the migrants and that those who enter the United States are straining the country's resources. GOP lawmakers also say they cannot justify to their constituents sending billions of dollars to other countries, even in a time of war, while failing to address the border at home.

Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, who is leading the negotiations, pointed to the surge of people entering the U.S. from Mexico and said "it is literally spiraling out of control."

"All we're trying to do is to say what tools are needed to be able to get this back in control, so we don't have the chaos on our southern border," Lankford said on CBS.

But many immigration advocates, including some Democrats, say some of the changes being proposed would gut protections for people who desperately need help and would not really ease the chaos at the border.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, the top Democratic bargainer, said the White House would take a more active role in the talks. But he also panned Republican policy demands so far as "unreasonable."

"We don't want to shut off the United States of America to people who are coming here to be rescued from dangerous, miserable circumstances, in which their life is in jeopardy. The best of America is that you can come here to be rescued from terror and torture," Murphy said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Much of the negotiating is taking place in private, but some of the issues under discussion are known: asylum standards, humanitarian parole and fast-track deportation authority, among others.

A look at what they are and what might happen if there are changes:

HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

Using humanitarian parole, the U.S. government can let people into the country by essentially bypassing the regular immigration process. This power is supposed to be used on a case-by-case basis for "urgent humanitarian reasons" or "significant public benefit." Migrants are usually admitted for a pre-determined period and there's no path toward U.S. citizenship.

Over the years, administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have used humanitarian parole to admit people into the U.S. and help groups of people from all over the world. It's been used to admit people from Hungary in the 1950s, from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the latter half of the 1970s, and

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Iraqi Kurds who had worked with the U.S. in the mid-1990s, according to research by the Cato Institute. Under Biden, the U.S. has relied heavily on humanitarian parole. The U.S. airlifted nearly 80,000 Afghans from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and brought them to the U.S. after the Taliban takeover. The U.S. has admitted tens of thousands of Ukrainians who fled after the Russian invasion.

In January the Democratic administration announced a plan to admit 30,000 people a month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela via humanitarian parole, provided those migrants had a financial sponsor and flew to the U.S. instead of going to the U.S.-Mexico border for entry.

The latest U.S. government figures show that nearly 270,000 people had been admitted into the country through October under that program. Separately, 324,000 people have gotten appointments through a mobile app called CBP One that is used to grant parole to people at land crossings with Mexico.

Republicans have described the programs as essentially an end run around Congress by letting in large numbers of people who otherwise would have no path to be admitted. Texas sued the administration to stop the program aimed at Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans.

WHAT MIGHT CHANGE WITH ASYLUM?

Asylum is a type of protection that allows a migrant to stay in the U.S. and have a path to American citizenship. To qualify for asylum, someone has to demonstrate fear of persecution back home due to a fairly specific set of criteria: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinions. Asylum-seekers must be on U.S. soil when they ask for this protection.

They generally go through an initial screening called a credible fear interview. If they are determined to have a chance of getting asylum, they are allowed to stay in the U.S. to pursue their case in immigration court. That process can take years. In the meantime, asylum-seekers can start to work, get married, have children and create a life.

Critics say the problem is that most people do not end up getting asylum when their case finally makes it to immigration court. But they say migrants know that if they claim asylum, they essentially will be allowed to stay in America for years.

"People aren't necessarily coming to apply for asylum as much to access that asylum adjudication process," said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration court judge and fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration in the U.S.

Some of what lawmakers are discussing would raise the bar that migrants need to meet during that initial credible fear interview. Those who do not meet it would be sent home.

But Paul Schmidt, a retired immigration court judge who blogs about immigration court issues, said the credible fear interview was never intended to be so tough. Migrants are doing the interview soon after arriving at the border from an often arduous and traumatizing journey, he said. Schmidt said the interview is more of an "initial screening" to weed out those with frivolous asylum claims.

Schmidt also questioned the argument that most migrants fail their final asylum screening. He said some immigration judges apply overly restrictive standards and that the system is so backlogged that it is hard to know exactly what the most recent and reliable statistics are.

WHAT IS EXPEDITED REMOVAL?

Expedited removal, created in 1996 by Congress, basically allows low-level immigration officers, as opposed to an immigration judge, to quickly deport certain immigrants. It was not widely used until 2004 and generally has been used to deport people apprehended within 100 miles of the Mexican or Canadian border and within two weeks of their arrival.

Defenders say it relieves the burden on the backlogged immigration courts. Immigration advocates say its use is prone to errors and does not give migrants enough protections, such as having a lawyer help them argue their case. As president, Republican Donald Trump pushed to expand this fast-track deportation policy nationwide and for longer periods of time. Opponents sued and that expansion never happened.

WHAT MIGHT THESE CHANGES DO?

Much of the disagreement over these proposed changes comes down to whether people think deterrence works.

Arthur, the former immigration court judge, thinks it does. He said changes to the credible fear asylum

standards and restrictions on the use of humanitarian parole would be a “game changer.” He said it would be a “costly endeavor” as the government would have to detain and deport many more migrants than today. But, he argued, eventually the numbers of people arriving would drop.

But others, like Schmidt, the retired immigration court judge, say migrants are so desperate, they will come anyway and make dangerous journeys to evade Border Patrol.

“Desperate people do desperate things,” he said.

The Dodgers gave Shohei Ohtani \$700 million to hit and pitch — but also because he can sell

By DAVID BRANDT AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Shohei Ohtani’s jaw-dropping \$700 million, 10-year deal with the Los Angeles Dodgers has some similarities to other contracts for the world’s biggest sports stars, including soccer icons Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, along with NFL quarterback Patrick Mahomes.

In terms of his marketability, experts point to another name.

The real comparison? Try Taylor Swift.

The global music sensation’s broad appeal — one that bridges the gap between generations and expands to other countries — is an extremely rare phenomenon that Ohtani shares. There’s no doubt the Dodgers hope they can leverage the Japanese star’s arrival into even more money for a franchise that is already one of the most popular in Major League Baseball.

“He’s rocketed into a stratosphere all his own,” sports agent Leigh Steinberg said.

Ohtani was expected to sign the biggest deal in MLB history as a free agent this offseason and didn’t disappoint. He’s the sport’s best two-way player ever — not even Babe Ruth hit and pitched at the same time so effectively — and though he won’t be able to pitch in 2024 following Tommy John surgery, he should provide plenty of value at the plate before he returns to the mound in 2025.

But the \$700 million price tag was more than most imagined.

His \$70 million average salary is 62% above the previous high of about \$43.3 million, 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 over six seasons with the Angels. It also exceeds the entire payrolls of Baltimore and Oakland this year.

The reason the Dodgers made that kind of commitment is simple: It’s probably worth it. Not just because he could help win World Series, but because of the value he brings even if he doesn’t.

“If Ohtani is marketed right, he’s a globally iconic player,” said Mike Lewis, a professor of marketing at Emory University who specializes in sports business. “It could be like something from Formula One, where you’ve got the attention of the whole world. Baseball has sometimes struggled to gain national attention, but he’s the kind of guy who attracts millions of eyeballs, and not just from the U.S.”

The Dodgers haven’t had trouble attracting eyeballs over the past several years. They’re a perennially successful franchise — winning the NL West 10 of the past 11 seasons and the World Series in 2020 — and averaged more than 47,000 fans per game last year, best in the sport. They’ve doled out big money to stars like Freddie Freeman, Mookie Betts and Clayton Kershaw.

But nothing compares to Ohtani.

Lewis — the Emory professor — said the spike in interest could be comparable to Major League Soccer’s Inter Miami, which saw a massive jump in online interaction, particularly on Instagram, after Messi signed.

As of Sunday morning, the Dodgers’ Instagram account had 3.2 million followers. Ohtani on his own has 6.3 million.

That’s just the tip of the iceberg. The average fan understands that Ohtani will generate revenue with more tickets, concessions and jerseys sold.

But no player drives more interest internationally, especially in Ohtani’s native Japan, with a baseball-obsessed population of 126 million. Ohtani already has a deep group of sponsors targeting audiences on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, including New Balance, ASICS and Porsche Japan.

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For the Dodgers, his international appeal means more companies in the U.S. and abroad are interested in advertising — Japanese companies frequently paid for prime ad spaces around Angel Stadium when Ohtani was in Anaheim. That alone brings a cascade of cash that could pay off a significant portion of Ohtani's deal.

For the creative folks in the advertising industry, the possibilities are almost endless.

That's where the Swift comparisons come into play.

Swift was a dominant force in 2023, partly because of "The Eras Tour" that sold out shows from coast to coast. But then she took it to the next level, developing a film of that tour that brought in millions of more fans to theaters throughout the country. Fans obsess over her every move on social media, including her budding romance with NFL star Travis Kelce.

Ohtani is potentially the same type of superstar. His free agency generated the sort of online sleuthing and hysteria usually associated with the Swifties, with fans frantically tracking private plane movements and alleged sightings trying ascertain which of his suitors would land Ohtani. Like Swift, Ohtani also starred a documentary this year — his was produced by ESPN.

There's also the fact that among athletes, he's fairly low risk. He hasn't had a hint of controversy through his career, producing a squeaky clean image that any potential advertiser can get behind. In fact, fans know surprisingly little about his personal life — something that only seems to add intrigue.

Steinberg — the retired agent — said that he's certain every MLB team interested in Ohtani did a revenue forecast to estimate the amount of money Ohtani would generate, even before he touches the field. If the Dodgers were willing to pay \$700 million to land him, he's confident they did their homework.

Monster homers. Potential dominance on the mound. It's a Hollywood script that the Dodgers are hoping comes true.

"He's handsome and he's a huge box office draw," Steinberg said. "There are very few players who can match that. He has appeal to all."

Today in History: December 11, King Edward VIII abdicates British throne to marry Wallis Simpson

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Dec. 11, the 345th day of 2023. There are 20 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 11, 1936, Britain's King Edward VIII abdicated the throne so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson; his brother, Prince Albert, became King George VI.

On this date:

In 1816, Indiana became the 19th state.

In 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States; the U.S. responded in kind.

In 1946, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was established.

In 1972, Apollo 17's lunar module landed on the moon with astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt aboard; they became the last two men to date to step onto the lunar surface.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation creating a \$1.6 billion environmental "superfund" to pay for cleaning up chemical spills and toxic waste dumps.

In 1997, more than 150 countries agreed at a global warming conference in Kyoto, Japan, to control the Earth's greenhouse gases.

In 1998, majority Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee pushed through three articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, over Democratic objections.

In 2001, in the first criminal indictment stemming from 9/11, federal prosecutors charged Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee), a French citizen of Moroccan descent, with conspiring to murder thousands in the suicide hijackings. (Moussaoui pleaded guilty to conspiracy in 2005 and was sentenced to life in prison.)

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In 2002, a congressional report found that intelligence agencies that were supposed to protect Americans from the Sept. 11 hijackers failed to do so because they were poorly organized, poorly equipped and slow to pursue clues that might have prevented the attacks.

In 2008, former Nasdaq chairman Bernie Madoff was arrested, accused of running a multibillion-dollar Ponzi scheme that wiped out the life savings of thousands of people and wrecked charities. (Madoff died in April 2021 while serving a 150-year federal prison sentence.)

In 2013, Time magazine selected Pope Francis as its Person of the Year, saying the Roman Catholic church's new leader — the first from Latin America — had changed the perception of the 2,000-year-old institution in an extraordinary way in a short time.

In 2017, chef Mario Batali stepped away from his restaurant empire and his cooking show "The Chew" as he conceded that reports of sexual misconduct "match up" to his behavior.

In 2018, a Virginia jury called for a sentence of life in prison plus 419 years for the man who killed a woman when he rammed his car into counterprotesters at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. (James Alex Fields Jr. received that sentence in July, 2019.)

In 2020, the Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit backed by President Donald Trump to overturn Joe Biden's election victory, ending a desperate attempt to get legal issues that were rejected by state and federal judges before the nation's highest court.

In 2021, Anne Rice, author of best-selling gothic novels including "Interview With the Vampire," died at age 80 due to complications from a stroke.

In 2022, NASA's Orion capsule returned from the moon, parachuting into the Pacific off Mexico to conclude a dramatic 25-day test flight.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Rita Moreno is 92. Pop singer David Gates (Bread) is 83. Actor Donna Mills is 83. Former Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., is 82. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is 80. Singer Brenda Lee is 79. Actor Lynda Day George is 79. Music producer Tony Brown is 77. Actor Teri Garr is 76. Movie director Susan Seidelman is 72. Actor Bess Armstrong is 70. Singer Jermaine Jackson is 69. Rock musician Mike Mesaros (The Smithereens) is 66. Rock musician Nikki Sixx (Motley Crue) is 65. Rock musician Darryl Jones (The Rolling Stones) is 62. Actor Ben Browder is 61. Singer-musician Justin Currie (Del Amitri) is 59. Rock musician David Schools (Hard Working Americans, Gov't Mule, Widespread Panic) is 59. Actor Gary Dourdan (DOOR'-dan) is 57. Actor-comedian Mo'Nique is 56. Actor Max Martini is 54. Rapper-actor Yasiin Bey (formerly Mos Def) is 50. Actor Rider Strong is 44. Actor Xosha (ZOH'-shah) Roquemore is 39. Actor Karla Souza is 37. Actor Hailee Steinfeld is 27.