

Groton Daily Independent

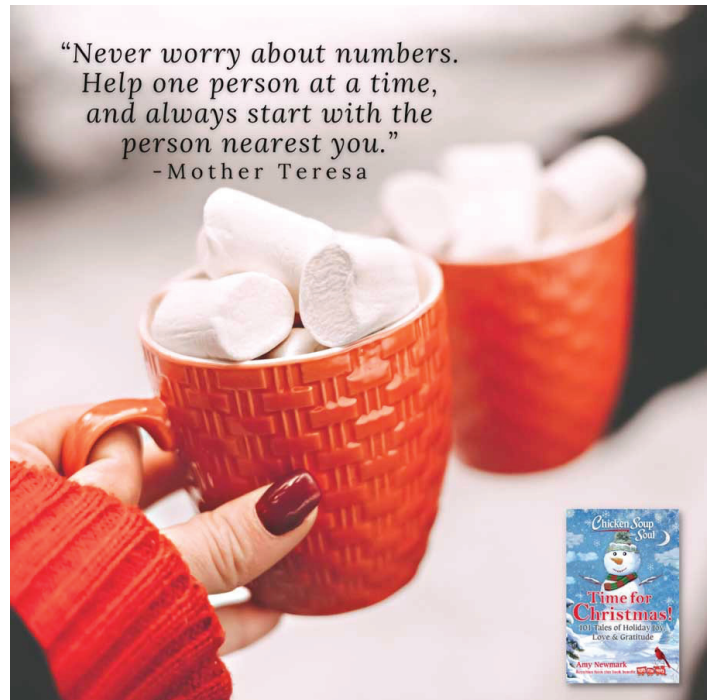
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Tuesday, Dec. 12

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.

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



*"Never worry about numbers.
Help one person at a time,
and always start with the
person nearest you."
- Mother Teresa*

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

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

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The US Air Force announced disciplinary measures against 15 personnel yesterday, spanning ranks from staff sergeant to colonel, due to their failure to address questionable intelligence-related activities by accused leaker Jack Teixeira.

A federal civil trial began yesterday in Washington, DC, to determine punitive damages former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani (R) must pay two election workers for defamation. Eight jurors were selected for the four-day trial, which could require Giuliani to pay up to \$43M to

the two women.

Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny, who has been serving time in a penal colony east of Moscow on an array of charges, is reportedly missing. The 47-year-old was due to appear via video for a court hearing yesterday but failed to show up. His attorneys said they have been unable to get in touch with him for six days, while two penal colonies where Navalny was believed to be claimed he was not listed as an inmate.

"Barbie," "Oppenheimer," and "Succession" lead film and television nominees for 2024 Golden Globe Awards (Jan. 7)

Shohei Ohtani to defer \$680M of his record-breaking \$700M contract until 2024, allowing the Los Angeles Dodgers to sign other star players due to a lowered payroll.

Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" tops Billboard's Hot 100 for second straight week, more than 65 years after its original release.

Jury rules against Google in antitrust case brought by Epic Games, maker of the popular video game Fortnite, finding the Google Play app store and its billing requirements constitute an illegal monopoly.

BAE Systems receives first funding award made under last year's CHIPS Act, will be used to increase production of computer chips used in F-15 and F-35 jets. New York to establish a \$10B chip research center at the University of Albany.

Paleontologists discover a well-preserved, 6-foot-long pliosaur skull in seaside cliffs along England's Jurassic Coast. Research suggests ancient Egyptians kept baboons in captivity, mummified their remains upon death; the animals were viewed as representatives of the moon god Thoth.

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.4%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.2%) as investors look ahead to Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting, which begins today (More)

Macy's shares up 20% after \$5.8B buyout offer from Arkhouse Management and Brigade Capital Management. Occidental Petroleum to buy Permian oil producer CrownRock for \$12B, including debt; deal expected to close in 2024.

Hasbro to lay off 1,100 people, or 20% of its workforce, amid weak toy sales during holiday season. Smile-DirectClub, provider of telehealth dentistry services and once valued at \$8.9B, ceases operations after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in September.

Report claims Israel used US-supplied white phosphorus munitions in an October attack in southern Lebanon that injured at least nine civilians. Roughly 1.9 Palestinians have been displaced in Gaza from the Israel-Hamas war, UN says

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](https://www.gdilive.com)

Groton Area
Tigers
GT

Any interest in any of these basketball games on [GDILIVE.COM](https://www.gdilive.com)?
They are \$25 each.

West Central Girls C
West Central Girls JV

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

Groton school board continues opt-out discussion

The Groton Area School Board is edging toward a decision about whether to impose an additional tax levy or make significant cuts.

Discussion continued Monday evening about whether the school board wants to opt out of tax levy limitation. Currently, the district offsets a drop in state funding by transferring \$700,000 per year from the capital outlay fund to the general fund.

The capital outlay fund is set aside for facility improvements or repairs, acquisitions of new property or large pieces of equipment or construction projects. The general fund pays for teacher salaries and benefits, books, transportation expenses, utilities, classroom supplies, counselors, paraprofessionals, office staff, librarians, coaches and more.

With the transfer of capital outlay funds to the general fund, there is less money to do capital projects and make improvements at the schools.

"People are asking us to take care of these things," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. "And we need to have room (in the budget) to do them."

The district has a list of potential projects in its five-year capital outlay plan. Some of the items included are high school sidewalk repairs, playground equipment upgrades, replacing flooring in the middle school science lab, replacing lockers, upgrading lighting, repainting rooms and upgrading technology. It also includes renovations of the high school band room, the 1957 English classroom, the 1969 gymnasium public restrooms, the stage and more.

Transferring the funds is also not transparent for the public, Schwan said. What the district is bringing in for capital outlay isn't necessarily being used for capital outlay projects.

Schwan presented an overview of the five-year capital outlay projections, along with tax levy amounts from other districts in the state and a summary of teaching positions that have been eliminated or added since 2012.

The district is down seven full-time equivalent positions since 2012, Schwan said. With a total staff of 49 people, that's a significant number of full-time equivalent positions.

Currently, the Groton Area School District has the 13th lowest tax levy for agricultural property (\$3.593/1,000 of value), 11th lowest tax levy for owner-occupied property (\$5.28/1,000 of value) and the eighth lowest tax levy for all other property (\$8.543/1,000 of value). Other districts in the region include Langford with \$3.17 for agriculture, \$5.396 for owner-occupied and \$8.656 for other property; Frederick Area with \$4.404 for agriculture, \$6.731 for owner-occupied property and \$11.231 for other property; and Aberdeen with \$6.492 for agriculture land, \$8.278 for owner-occupied property and \$11.732 for other property.

"The goal is not to have the biggest tax levy," Schwan said. "But it's an objective way to look at where we sit in the tax climate."

While the board has taken a deep dive into district finances through the last four months, members asked for a special meeting to let the public have another opportunity to ask questions.

"There are probably a lot of questions from the public," said board President Deb Gengerke. "Like if we don't do the opt-out, then what?"

Board member Tigh Flihs added he's asked a few people, and many don't even know about the opt-out discussion and budget issues it entails.

"I've purposely asked people, and nobody seems to know about it," he said.

The public needs to be well informed about this issue, including what the consequences would be should the district have to start making cuts, said board member Grant Rix.

It's not as if the district is looking for huge capital projects, he said. The projects on that list are modest and needed.

"These are not extravagant asks," Business Manager Becky Hubsch added. "These are things to keep on going."

If the community wants improvements at the school and continued programs being offered, something

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has to be done. Vice President Marty Weismantel referenced a recent visit to the Harrisburg School District, where there is a large tax levy and a \$3 million opt-out in place.

"Their facility is beautiful, a first rate facility," he said. "The people are willing to pay for what they've got, and they've got beautiful facilities."

The suburbs of Sioux Falls are just a different beast, said Gengerke. However, at the end of the day, when people see different schools that have big facilities, new buses and other improvements, that money to fund those projects come from taxes.

"Almost half of all schools (in South Dakota) have an opt-out. That's a systematic problem," she said. "That's not just a Groton Area problem."

Tripping concern at high school arena discussed

Beverly Sombke asked the school board to do something about a loose grate at the entrance of the high school arena.

Sombke told the board she wanted to get something on the record in order to get a loose grate fixed after falling at a recent basketball game. She chipped a tooth, and it will cost about \$1,500 to get a crown on that tooth.

"I don't want anybody else to... there were people around there willing to help me, and it could have been something so much worse," she said. "I did want something done."

Sombke said she honestly didn't know what had happened until she was told what caused her fall. It was a little grate, maybe six inches. But it could be something that hurts someone else, she said.

Board President Deb Gengerke told Sombke the best resource would be talking to Superintendent Joe Schwan. Keep in touch with him, and he can help guide her through the process.

Schwan added, "Ma'am, I was so glad you weren't hurt worse."

Brenda Waage, who attended the meeting with Sombke, said, "she just has bruises on her hands, her knees, her face."

Sombke added, "Time, patience and lots of ice will fix it."

- The school board viewed an initial proposal for the 2024-2025 school year calendar. The draft calendar would have school beginning for student Aug. 21, 2024 and ending May 15, 2025. Discussion took place about whether students should return from winter break on Jan. 2, 2025 or Jan. 3, 2025. A question was also posed about whether the high school graduation was too early and whether it should be moved from Sunday, May 11, 2025 to either Saturday, May 17 or Sunday, May 18, 2025. The calendar will likely be brought back before the board at its January meeting.

- School board officials chose to move the board's January meeting from Monday, Jan. 8, 2024 to Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. The meeting time would begin at 7 p.m.

- There's been an increased discussion statewide about school consolidation, Superintendent Schwan told the board. At a recent meeting of superintendents in the region and state legislators, discussion veered toward districts having shared administrations to lower costs and possibly close some smaller schools to increase the pool of teachers in the state. "I don't necessarily see that impacting us," Schwan told the board. "...It's an easy thing to say. It's a lot harder thing to do."

- Elizabeth Varin

Gov. Noem Proclaims "Shine a Light, Breaking Bread Week" to Honor Israel and the Jewish People

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem proclaimed the week of December 11, 2023, as "Shine a Light, Breaking Bread Week." This week honors the State of Israel and South Dakota's friendship with the Jewish people.

"South Dakota has a long history of being allied with the State of Israel and the Jewish people," wrote Governor Noem in her proclamation. "Since the October 7 attack on unarmed civilians in Israel, antisemitic incidents have increased here in the U.S."

The State of South Dakota has long stood with the State of Israel. In 2020, Governor Noem issued an Executive Order to prohibit South Dakota Executive Branch Agencies from contracting with entities boycotting Israel. Governor Noem also declared the week of November 28, 2021, "Antisemitism Awareness Week" and proclaimed February 24, 2022, "Israel Relations Day."

"Breaking Bread' embodies the essence of sharing culture, finding common ground, building community, and preserving traditions," continued Governor Noem. "South Dakota remains committed to ensuring all people feel safe to share culture, discuss their beliefs openly in their communities, and are welcomed in our state."

This week – the week of December 11, 2023 – is "Shine a Light, Breaking Bread Week."

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That's Life by Tony Bender: What might have been

There's a poignant moment in the movie "Yesterday" which takes place in a familiar-looking but alternate universe that provides sweet punctuation to John Lennon's life.

I must watch that movie again.

Even when I was a kid, I'd wish and pray for impossible things, because when you're young anything seems possible. And maybe it really is. Maybe we just lose faith along the way. Maybe we just forget how to believe.

Memories were in the news last week. December 7, Pearl Harbor. December 8, 1980, the night Howard Cosell gave a nation news that still causes physical pain. John Lennon, shot dead at 40.

My friend Bob and I were watching Monday Night Football in a basement apartment in Aberdeen, SD. Until I looked it up last week, I hadn't remembered who was playing. My beloved Miami Dolphins won in overtime.

I have a fleeting snapshot in my mind of the look on Bob's face. I'm sure he has one of my shocked expression etched in his memory, too.

Lennon was just "Starting Over," notably one of the best songs on that album. Sixteen years later when my son Dylan was born, I memorialized his birth and quoted "Beautiful Boy" from the album. Lennon was a fascinating intellect, inspired and flawed, thoughtful and funny. He had so much more to give.

I was consumed by music from birth. It's the purest form of communication we have. No surprise that I went on to become a disc jockey. I remember learning from my teenaged Aunt Joan in 1970 that the Beatles were breaking up. A funeral atmosphere, big because they were so big. Uncharted territory, really, like Elvis was uncharted territory. He became so big there was no template to guide him.

We'd lost icons before. Plane crashes, car wrecks, drugs, plain old bad luck, but assassination? The senseless killing of a man who brought so much joy to the world? It's been 43 years and I still haven't reconciled it.

I was driving my kids to daycare on September 11, 2001, when I heard the news on the radio. I knew what it was when the second plane hit, and as I listened to my kids chirping happily I knew that the world they would grow up in would be profoundly different. Things can change in an instant.

It was my birthday.

It drew me back to November 22, 1963. I had been the same age Dylan was on 9/11...

I was five. Sunlight streaked through our living room when a soap opera was interrupted. Did my mother gasp? There was an instantaneous chill. The sunshine became icicles. My mother scooped me up in her arms and hugged me, weeping. I tried to understand, but it was too much and I was too little. What does it feel like when a nation weeps? Indescribable. But I felt it.

Sometimes it felt like the world was out of control when I was growing up. As I matured, I understood more. But how could anyone at any age truly understand? Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy were messengers of hope in 1968. And they killed the messengers. They killed our heroes.

Vietnam. Riots. The world roiled around us. I knew enough history to understand the challenges America had faced and overcome. A Civil War. WWII. When I was born, WWII had been over for a scant 13 years.

As the years went on, I saw how these fearful moments were connected and intertwined. I connected the dots. What was inexplicable and unpredictable was the human factor. Unplanned things. The unscheduled, mistimed, misfiring of addled minds. Lost souls. Shooters.

A few short months after the loss of John Lennon, Ronald Reagan was shot. We learned only later how close we were to losing the 40th president of the United States. Just a couple months after Reagan was shot, so too, was Pope Paul II. Yet, he recovered, too.

I remember the sense of optimism I had as the Pope grew stronger, becoming one of the most transformative popes in a critical time. Great change was underway with the collapse of the USSR and democracy in Poland. After so many losses, wins!

I'm getting better at it. Perspective. Better at celebrating the lives, better at mourning less, better at acceptance. Holding out hope. But I'll forever wonder what might have been.

Statewide Homeless Count to be Conducted in January

Pierre – On Jan. 23, 2024, the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium (SDHHC), an affiliate of South Dakota Housing, will conduct its annual statewide point-in-time (PIT) homeless count. The PIT Count is a national one-day census and estimate of all people experiencing homelessness and fleeing domestic violence.

The PIT is an important source of annual data, providing characteristics of people who are experiencing homelessness. Every year this data is used to measure homelessness on local, state, and national levels. PIT Count data helps policy makers and communities measure progress, identify strengths and gaps in services, increases public awareness of homelessness, and enhances system planning and responses.

The PIT Count is not a perfect instrument but it is the primary tool for showing unmet need in our communities. To help prepare for the count, a virtual Town Hall and training for those wanting to be involved is being held on Dec. 18, 2023, at 3 p.m. CST. To request an invite, please email joseph@sdhda.org.

Volunteers across the state help SDHHC conduct the count of those experiencing homelessness. To be effective, SDHHC divides the state into six count areas with local coordinators in each area who work with agencies and volunteers to conduct the PIT Count. Coordinators and their areas are listed below. We urge communities and projects to contact their local coordinator to inquire as to how they can participate. Federally-funded homeless programs are required to participate in the PIT.

- o City of Sioux Falls; Suzy Smith, suzanne.smith@augie.edu, Augustana Research Institute, or 605-274-5010

- o Rapid City & Region 1; Bennet, Butte, Corson, Custer, Dewey, Fall River, Jackson, Haakon, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Ziebach, Oglala Lakota counties. Amy Richie, amy.richie@voanr.org, Volunteers of America-Northern Rockies (VOA-NR)

- o Region 2; Beadle, Brown, Campbell, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Marshall, McPherson, Potter, Roberts, Spink, Stanley, Sully, Walworth counties. Yvette Heesch, yvette@growsd.org, Grow South Dakota

- o Region 3; Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Clay, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Lyman, Mellette, Sanborn, Todd, Tripp, Union, Yankton, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Jones counties. Melissa Johnson, mjohnson@rocsinc.org, Rural Office of Community Services (ROCS)

- o Region 4; Minnehaha, Grant, Deuel, Codington, Hamlin, Clark, Kingsbury, Brookings, Miner, Lake, Lincoln, Moody, McCook, Turner counties. Jamie Kessler, jkessler@interlakescap.com, Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership (ICAP)

- o Veterans Affairs (VA) staff will collect information for VA programs.

- o West River contact Andrew Havens, andrew.havens@va.gov, 605-490-2794

- o East River contact Kristy Anderson, Kristy.Anderson438@va.gov, 605-336-3230 ext. 6938.

In 2001, the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium was created to help unify the people who provide services to the homeless. Since its initiation, the consortium has received federal funding totaling over \$33 million to provide development, operations and supportive services to a variety of homeless programs across the state.

Farm and ranch innovators to share new ideas at Soil Health Conference

By Stan Wise
South Dakota Soil Health Coalition

PIERRE, SD – Before Cooper Hibbard came home to manage his family’s ranch, he studied ag business, rangeland resources and Spanish at California Polytechnic State University and then worked on ranches all over the world.

That education and experience prepared him to become the fifth generation of his family to manage Sieben Live Stock Company near Helena, MT. His range management practices have increased his operation’s forage productivity and harvest rate by 200 percent during the driest decade in the ranch’s history and allowed him to increase his herd by 20 percent after a recent drought year that saw his neighbors destocking by as much as 40 percent.

“Our stocking rate is certainly increased,” Hibbard said. “I mean, we don't know how many cattle we can run now. That's kind of the stage that we're in right now.”

He’ll share the secrets of his success at the 2024 Soil Health Conference, Jan. 23-24 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Rapid City.

Hibbard calves in June and grazes his cows through the winter.

“In the last seven winters we've been non-selective grazing them and moving them every day. Very high density, short duration grazes, and then rest that field for at least a year. So, it'll see cattle for one day,” he said.

Non-selective grazing involves grazing or trampling nearly all available forage and then allowing the land to rest for a longer period.

“Every single plant is affected. When that happens, all plants are put on a level playing field, and then the plants that are set up for success in that scenario are the plants with the deepest root systems and the most amount of leaf area,” Hibbard said. “Those are, more often than not, your native perennial plants that you want to see.”

Hibbard’s strategy is not only paying off in terms of forage production and stocking rates, but it is also improving his soil.

“Last year we had a bunch of soil health tests done by a third party in our winter zone where we're doing this type of grazing, and our soil organic matter percentage on average was ten and a half percent on native rangeland, which is pretty remarkable,” he said. “You basically end up extending your growing season by selecting these desirable species with the deeper root systems that grow for longer periods of time. They're more drought resilient, and grazing in these tighter densities, a byproduct is that you're laying down a lot of litter. And so you're covering the soil, and so you're moderating the soil temperature, which decreases evaporation, which then extends the growing season more. So you're growing more grass. It just has this really neat, exciting snowball effect.”

Iowa producer and innovator Zack Smith will also speak at the conference. After experiencing years

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of success with minimal tillage and cover crops that resulted in increased soil organic matter and water infiltration, he began to experiment with ways to introduce more diversity into his operation. Those experiments led to the Stock Cropper system.

"The idea was kind of a tangent off that strip intercropping system where you plant corn and soybeans every other eight rows across the field," Smith said.

His system adds a livestock element by including strips of forage which are grazed by autonomous creeping livestock pens that house multiple species.

"Our Stock Cropper system relies on biodiversity. It's important to have more than just one species because they all do different things to the forage and to the soil," he said. "So, we have our Stock Cropper barn that we call the Cluster Cluck 5000. That was the name of our first prototype. Sheep and goats out front, followed by pigs, and then followed by chickens."

While the Stock Cropper system is still under development, Smith has already seen positive results.

"We've been able to substantially reduce inputs onto the farm where we can increase the amount of biodiversity on that experimental chunk of land versus just growing just corn or soybeans," he said.

Both Hibbard and Smith know the importance of protecting agricultural land.

"We have some of the richest soil in the world, and I wish more people treated it as a finite resource rather than an infinite resource," Smith said.

"We really put a lot of value and import on our grazing management because that's the way forward into the future, I think, of how this ranch can be passed down to the sixth generation. It's a way to have the ranch viable and thriving and robust and exciting and magnetic that people want to be a part of," Hibbard said.

Soil Health Conference

The annual Soil Health Conference is hosted by the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition with the help of its partners and sponsors, and it will include many other speakers including noted conservationist Jay Fuhrer, Alderspring Ranch co-founder and CEO Glenn Elzinga, and former National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment Director Jerry Hatfield.

"We've got some great speakers lined up that will give producers an opportunity to learn new things and meet fellow producers from around the country," SDSHC Board Member Brian Johnson said. "There's always an opportunity as a producer to make changes and improve your operation. Why not start here and take something home that could have an impact for generations?"

The conference will also feature breakout sessions, discussion panels, award presentations, student contests, social activities, and networking opportunities.

Smith said that networking is a valuable part of the conference. "The speakers may spark a conversation, but the best things usually happen in between the sessions or in the evenings or just the socializing and the interactions," he said.

Registration for the 2024 Soil Health Conference is \$50 per person. Students may register for the conference at no cost, and they may enter essay and video contests for a chance to win cash prizes. More information may be found at www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/soil-health-conference. Questions may be directed to the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition at 605-280-4190 or sdsoilhealth@gmail.com.



Remembering Honor: A year after blizzard ravaged Rosebud, boy's death raises questions

By Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

MISSION, S.D. – A cracked and peeling wooden sign signals the entrance to St. Thomas Catholic Cemetery in Mission, where Rose Cordier-Beauvais paid her respects.

The November sky was spotless for a visit to the gravesite of her grandson, Honor, who died Dec. 15, 2022, at age 12 during winter snowstorms that ravaged the Rosebud Indian Reservation in south-central South Dakota.

Honor Beauvais was one of six people who died during the 2022 holiday blizzards, which shut down roads and stranded residents, some of whom ran out of propane to heat their homes. Gov. Kristi Noem declared an emergency on Dec. 22 and activated the state's National Guard to haul firewood and remove snow.

The death of Honor, a sixth grader with asthma living with his aunt and uncle on the reservation, has come to encapsulate the challenges and shortcomings of the disaster response, whether from state, federal and tribal officials or the Indian Health Service.

"Nobody ever said they were sorry," said Cordier-Beauvais, 70, who works as business manager for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. "They were too busy trying to get their story straight."

She recounted how Honor was taken to the IHS emergency room in Rosebud on Dec. 14 with flu symptoms and breathing difficulties. He was evaluated, given medicine and released.

He stopped breathing the next day and died, with massive snowdrifts preventing an ambulance from reaching the family's ranch until it was too late.

Cordier-Beauvais, represented by Sioux Falls attorney Brendan Johnson of Robins Kaplan LLP, is pursuing a medical malpractice lawsuit against IHS. The lawsuit is expected to be filed in the next 60 days.

"Honor's death was an avoidable tragedy," Johnson told News Watch. "We will bring all necessary resources to bear to see justice is done, changes are made, and that Honor's death was not in vain."

Indian Health Service officials declined a request for comment through the agency's public affairs office. Cordier-Beauvais contends that her grandson should have been held at the hospital rather than released



Rose Cordier-Beauvais, 70, visits the gravesite of her grandson, Honor Beauvais, at St. Thomas Catholic Cemetery in Mission, S.D. Honor was 12 when he died during winter storms that pounded the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in December 2022. (Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

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“Honor’s death was an avoidable tragedy. We will bring all necessary resources to bear to see justice is done, changes are made, and that Honor’s death was not in vain.”

Brendan Johnson, who is representing Rose Cordier-Beauvais in a wrongful death lawsuit against the IHS.

due to severe weather and the probability that follow-up care would be needed.

She also accused Rosebud tribal officials of inadequate disaster preparedness and a lack of emergency services the night Honor died, when her family’s pleas for help were not enough to prevent tragedy.

Robert Oliver, head of the tribe’s Emergency Preparedness Program at the time, told News Watch that such characterizations are unfair to the difficulties his crews faced.

The Rosebud reservation in Todd County, with about 9,500 residents and one of the nation’s highest poverty rates, received snowfall of 2 to 3 feet, with winds gusting to more than 60

miles an hour.

“It wasn’t us,” said Oliver. “It was the storm.”

Tragedy revives health care scrutiny

The one-year anniversary of Honor’s death comes amid renewed scrutiny of IHS, which provides free health care to enrolled tribal members as part of the government’s treaty obligations to Native Americans.

Those rights were reinforced by an 8th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruling in 2021 after the Rosebud Sioux Tribe sued IHS following the temporary closure of the emergency room at the 35-bed Rosebud Hospital in 2015.

South Dakota’s congressional delegation introduced a bill last year to address staffing, accountability and patient care within the IHS system while instituting new whistleblower protections. That legislation has not advanced past committee.

For Cordier-Beauvais and her family, many of these declarations ring hollow. None will bring back her grandson, who moved from Denver to Rosebud in 2018 with a hopeful outlook that lifted the lives of those around him.

“It was an instant bond,” said Brooki Whipple, Cordier-Beauvais’ daughter, who along with her husband, Gary Whipple, welcomed Honor into their home and treated him like a son.

Brooki Whipple and her sister, Frani Beauvais, joined Cordier-Beauvais at the otherwise empty cemetery in November as another winter loomed. They gathered at Honor’s gravesite, a dirt mound adorned with flowers and decorative stones colored by classmates.

There is no tombstone, but that will come, Cordier-Beauvais said. The past year has been a whirlwind of grief and renewal, including the birth of Gary and Brooki’s son, Link, whom Brooki swaddled in her arms while speaking of Honor.

The hope is that lingering pain from last year’s devastation can be softened by memories of a child who helped bring a family together in the toughest of times.

“Honor was special,” said Brooki Whipple. “We loved him from the moment we met him.”

New life on the reservation

The boy was born Oct. 27, 2010, and given the Lakota name Yuonihan Ihanble. The first word means “to honor” and the second, according to translation, summons a dream “like a poetic whisper, invoking a sense of wonder and imagination.”

His name, then, was Honor Dream. Everyone called him Honor.

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Concepts of home and family came in patches, tailored over time. Honor was one of four children born in Denver to Cordier-Beauvais' son, Robert Beauvais, and his common-law wife, Shennah Jordan. Their relationship unraveled as Robert attended college and worked toward law school, struggling to give the kids the stability he knew they needed.

Family bonds in Rosebud shone through. Along with his younger brother and two sisters, Honor spent summers and holidays in South Dakota with his grandmother, surrounded by cousins and aunts and uncles. Cordier-Beauvais and her clan also traveled to Denver for long weekends or birthdays.

In March 2018, she visited her son in Denver and realized that it would be best for the children to return with her to Rosebud, this time maybe for good. She noted that relatives rallying around parental roles is common in Native culture, keeping kids on a positive path.

"(Robert and Shennah) were having issues and it came out that they going to be separating," said Cordier-Beauvais. "So we had to go get the kids because Robert couldn't take care of them on his own. They were moving out of their apartment. Honor was 7 years old at the time."

Forming a bond with his 'twin'

The plan was for the children to stay with their grandmother in Antelope, a tribal community near Mission. They were enrolled at Todd County Elementary School.

But Honor had his own vision.

He was close to his cousin, Arisele, or "Ari," the daughter of Gary and Brooki Whipple. Honor and Ari both had the middle name Dream and were born two months apart. Soon family members took to calling them "the twins." Honor spent a lot of time at the Whipple Ranch in Two Strike, a few miles north of St. Francis, where Ari attended school at Sapa Un Jesuit Academy.

Gary started out driving Honor to school in Mission and then returning to take his daughter to St. Francis before heading to work. Eventually it was decided that Honor would enroll at Sapa Un and live full-time with Gary and Brooki Whipple, who welcomed him into an active household that also included a dachshund and miniature terrier.

"Honor started bringing more and more stuff to our house," said Gary Whipple, who works as course superintendent at Prairie Hills Square Golf Course in Mission. "Finally one day he was just like, 'I'm living here now.'"

Honor and Ari sang "Happy Birthday" in Lakota at family celebrations and taught younger kids to do the same. He enjoyed video games such as Fortnite and later Call of Duty with Gary but made sure to play LEGO games with younger cousins, not wanting them to feel left out.

Refusing to let asthma slow him down

The spirit that endeared Honor to family members came in a fragile frame. He was smaller than most of



The cemetery in Mission, S.D., where Honor Beauvais was laid to rest on Jan. 7, 2023. He died when emergency services failed to reach him due to massive snowdrifts outside his home. "Nobody ever said they were sorry," said his grandmother, Rose Cordier-Beauvais.

(Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

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Honor Beauvais moved to the Rosebud Indian Reservation from Denver in 2018 and lived with his aunt and uncle in Two Strike, S.D., a few miles north of St. Francis, S.D. "Honor was special," said his aunt, Brooki Whipple. "We loved him from the moment we met him." (Photo: Submitted)

his classmates and struggled with asthma, requiring pediatric care in Colorado before moving to South Dakota. He used an inhaler to deliver medication to his lungs.

"We would have to restrict his outdoor time when the weather got chilly, and we had an air purifier at the house," said Gary Whipple. "He loved the dogs, but we had to keep them out of his room because of the dander."

Honor went full speed on the basketball court, a passion he shared with Ari and Gary while playing for the Sapa Un team. The barn at the Whipple Ranch contained a basketball hoop, safe from the elements and perfect for sharpening skills.

"He would go in there and shoot around and work on his moves," recalls Gary Whipple, who played basketball at St. Francis High School and graduated in 2007. "He saw the potential to be successful on the court and what that looked like. He wanted to be the guy, and he most definitely could have been."

'You always knew he was there'

Honor's understanding of home and heritage took shape at Sapa Un, a Catholic-based academy that stresses Lakota language and culture. Gary Whipple took a part-time job at the school as a physical education teacher, and Honor's personality blossomed.

"He seemed to fit in wherever he wanted to be," said Melissa LaPointe, a Sapa Un teacher and mother to one of Honor's closest friends. "Even though he was quiet, he was always present. You knew he was there. He was engaged in whatever was going on."

As his 12th birthday approached in October 2022, Honor reminded family members that since he was usually in Denver for his birthday, he had never had a proper celebration on the res-

ervation with his friends.

He began to think about being away from his biological parents and pondering his place in the world, as sixth graders sometimes do. Some of his thoughts turned spiritual.

"He started talking to us about God and the purpose of life, watching videos about the Bible and things like that," said Brooki Whipple, who works in the Rosebud Tribe's communications department. "It was sort of curious and cute and funny, but one thing we noticed is that he was starting to tell us that he loved us. He gave random hugs a lot more."

Gary and Brooki Whipple had hosted a Halloween party days earlier and kept the decorations up for a Spooktacular birthday celebration for Honor, with cousins and classmates invited. Video of the occasion shows him surrounded by singing faces as he prepares to blow out the candles.

Gary, as well as Brooki and Ari, had long since concluded that the upheaval of their household was a blessing, not a burden. Their faith in extended family never flickered.

"I taught him how to swim," said Gary. "I taught him how to ride a bike. I taught him how to play basketball. I taught him how to fish. I was teaching him how to drive. Honor just wanted to be around. It didn't matter if we were doing something fun or not. He wanted to hang out. I remember at one point he asked if he could get a loft bed when he was 12, and I was like, 'You're still going to be living with me when you're 12?' And he was like, 'of course.' It was obvious to him. He didn't want to be anywhere else."

Hazardous trip to IHS hospital

The winter storms that ravaged South Dakota in December 2022 didn't come without warning. But few could have predicted the impact on reservations such as Rosebud and Pine Ridge, with limited capacity for emergency response.

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What started as freezing drizzle on Monday, Dec. 12, turned into heavy snowfall and driving winds the following day. Plows struggled to clear roads around Mission and St. Francis, with the National Weather Service warning of "difficult to near-impossible travel conditions."

The weather compounded a hectic week in the Whipple household. Brooki had given birth to Link on Dec. 5, with complications requiring a trip to Sioux Falls for neonatal care.

Honor and Ari stayed with Gary's mother, who lived nearby and could take them to school. When Gary returned on Tuesday, Dec. 13, for Ari's last basketball game and a dinner event at Sapa Un, he sensed something was wrong with Honor.

"I could see it in him," Gary said. "He was not as peppy as he usually was."

Weather conditions worsened the following day, as did Honor's health. He had a bad cough, body aches and fever, and he was finding it hard to breathe.

The Rosebud IHS posted Wednesday, Dec. 14, that it was assessing the status of hospital services for Thursday due to the storm, though the inpatient and emergency departments would remain open. "Please do not travel unless absolutely necessary," the message said.

Gary risked tough driving conditions around midday Wednesday to get Honor to the IHS emergency room, about 5 miles from the ranch. Rose called ahead to stress the urgency of the matter.

"I told them Gary was going to bring in my grandson, who was very sick," she recalled. "I said, 'Please admit him. We don't want him out on the roads.' And they said they would look at him and make the decision when he got there."

'They wanted to get him out'

Honor was evaluated by Dr. Sarah Leeper, who noted he had a history of asthma treated by medication for wheezing and shortness of breath. She also noted his flu symptoms and was told he had likely been exposed to influenza at home or school. He tested negative for COVID-19.

Honor's vital signs were stable, but he had an elevated heart rate of 122 beats a minute. His oxygen saturation was 95%, considered normal, though Gary insists the percentage was lower before they patted Honor on his back to loosen up phlegm.

Honor rated his chest pain as 6 out of 10, which Leeper noted was likely due to muscle strain from repeated coughing or possible lung irritation from the flu. A chest X-ray demonstrated bronchitis and patches of infection in his lungs.

Leeper prescribed Tamiflu for five days and told the family that Honor should continue using his inhaler, adding that they should "return to the ER for new or worsening symptoms." She wrote in the chart: "Careful return to ED (emergency department) instructions given."

Registered nurse Eric Miller documented the discharge at 2:15 p.m. and noted: "Provider informed of discharge vitals – OK to proceed with discharge, aware of lower O2 (saturation)."

"It seemed to me that they wanted to get him out," said Gary Whipple. "They wanted to diagnose him and get him out. Getting back home was a challenge. The wind was blowing the snow into drifts, so I had to take the traction control off and put the truck in four-wheel drive to make a path to get us home."



Gary Whipple (center) formed a special bond with his nephew, Honor, who was the same age as Gary's daughter, Ari. People started calling Honor and Ari "the twins."

(Photo: Submitted)

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Honor Beauvais (center) fit in well with his classmates at Sapa Un Jesuit Academy in St. Francis, S.D., a Catholic-based academy that stresses Lakota language and culture. (Photo: Submitted)

We got stuck at the gate and had to walk to the house.”

Once home, Honor took his medicine and showed signs of improvement. But a few hours later he was back to feeling miserable.

“I was like, ‘Why don’t you play your game?’” Gary recalled. “That’s when I could tell he was getting worse because he just sat there for a little bit and said, ‘No, I think I want to rest.’ And he laid down and he didn’t seem like himself. The coughs were painful for him.”

Health worsened with the weather

The following day, Thursday, Dec. 15, Honor did little more than lay in the recliner with his blanket, racked by coughs. Brooki Whipple talked to her mother on the phone, worried about what the ensuing hours would bring.

Cordier-Beauvais, attending a conference in Rapid City, tried to contact tribal officials to get the road cleared near Whipple Ranch on BIA Highway 1. There was no other way to get her grandson to the ER if needed. Brooki made calls to Winner, 40 miles away, for emergency services, with no luck.

Oliver, whose tribal duties included emergency preparedness and response, was attending the Lakota Nation Invitational basketball tournament in Rapid City along with Scott Herman, the tribal president.

Cordier-Beauvais said her calls to Oliver and Herman went unanswered. At 8:17 p.m., she texted Oliver that Honor’s condition was getting worse and that “he’s not doing well at all. Is there anyone who can go to Whipple Ranch and help my daughter?”

More than 40 minutes later, at 8:58 p.m., Oliver responded via text: “They’re on their way out. Be there in about 25 minutes or so.” He was referring to a snow plow redirected from Rosebud Sioux Tribal Airport, about 6 miles away and traveling 20 miles an hour.

Rose responded three minutes later: “Hurry. My grandson’s not breathing!”

‘We felt him getting cold’

The scene at the Whipple Ranch deteriorated into panic.

Attempts to get Honor to the bathroom were interrupted by what appeared to be a seizure as he collapsed on a rug in the living room, not far from the family’s Christmas tree.

“We were feeling his legs while he was in the recliner to make sure he was OK, and we felt him getting cold,” said Brooki. “On the way to the bathroom, he collapsed on the floor, and I watched as he stopped breathing.”

At 8:57 p.m., Gary and Brooki Whipple called Rosebud Sioux Tribe 911 and spoke with dispatcher Samantha Spotted Tail, who advised them to start CPR.

By then Cordier-Beauvais and Frani Beauvais had gotten word to Shorty Jordan, a tribal employee who was acting independently that night, to plow BIA Highway 1 near the ranch in Two Strike. But snow was still drifting.

At 9:20 p.m. Spotted Tail contacted the Rosebud Ambulance Service and was informed that “medics are stuck on the road.”

Oliver said one of the tribe’s vehicles had to tow the ambulance to reach the ranch, which is offset from the highway. Time was not on their side.

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'Somebody's baby is going to die'

Gary Whipple was performing CPR when paramedics arrived around 9:50 p.m. Honor was still not breathing. Dark brown fluid from his nose and mouth left a stain on the rug.

The EMTs continued resuscitation efforts as they loaded him into the ambulance and headed to the hospital 3 miles away. Gary rode along with the boy he considered his son.

"I just felt sick," he said. "I felt nauseous. I felt pain. I have bad anxiety, and I spent most of that ambulance ride trying to battle a panic attack. And when we got to the hospital, I kind of collapsed. My legs felt like they couldn't hold me up. I remember sitting in a chair and just praying and praying. Then a doctor came out and pulled me aside and said, 'He's gone.'"

Resuscitation efforts at the hospital lasted 12 minutes. Honor was declared dead at 10:26 p.m. An autopsy later revealed the cause of death as acute bronchial pneumonia due to Influenza A.

Gary was too shaken to call Brooki, so he asked the doctor to do it. Her sadness quickly turned to anger as she pondered what could have gone differently that night.

"I know it was hard," said Brooki. "It was a really bad storm. But there are so many things that could have prevented this from happening. The tribe has gotten money from the federal government that could have been used to purchase equipment or have a better emergency planning system like they have in other cities and reservations. If you don't prepare for these things, somebody's going to die somewhere. Somebody's baby is going to die."

State, tribal officials defend actions

Oliver doesn't deny that better machinery could have made a difference. But he said it's unfair to blame tribal officials for a large-scale extended blizzard that replaced snowdrifts as quickly as crews removed them.

"This was a storm that dumped a lot of snow really fast," said Oliver, who is now in charge of dam safety for the tribe. "It was wet snow, heavy snow. And the wind swept everything back in after roads were cleared earlier that day."

As for the plow operator who failed to get roads cleared to Whipple Ranch in time for the ambulance, Oliver said the man experienced rough days in the aftermath of Honor's death.

"He was hurting," said Oliver. "He was sad. He said, 'I don't know if I can do this.' Nobody knows that side of it. They act like no one has feelings. We did our best, and everybody was angered because we couldn't do it. Our equipment started breaking down in the cold."

On Dec. 16, the day after Honor died, Herman posted a presidential address video to Facebook from The Monument arena in Rapid City, where basketball was still being played. He announced that the tribal council had issued a disaster declaration and reached out to state and federal officials for equipment and other resources.

"We are aware of the many challenges this weather has brought upon our community," Herman said in the video. "We know that clearing the roads is a priority, because it makes access to all the other services



"(Honor) seemed to fit in wherever he wanted to be," said Melissa LaPointe, a Sapa Un teacher and mother to one of Honor's closest friends. "He was engaged in whatever was going on." (Photo: Stu Whitney /

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"I taught him how to swim. I taught him how to ride a bike. ... I was teaching him how to drive. Honor just wanted to be around. It didn't matter if we were doing something fun or not. He wanted to hang out."

Gary Whipple, who welcomed Honor Beauvais into his home and treated him like a son

possible."

Herman and other tribal officials expressed frustration at the response from Noem and the Department of Public Safety as the storm raged, claiming the governor should have called in the National Guard earlier or sent heavy-duty equipment. Ian Fury, Noem's chief of communications, dismissed those claims at the time as part of a "false narrative."

DPS released a timeline that showed a coordination call regarding the storm with all the state's tribes on Dec. 12. It said Rosebud officials were connected to a snow removal contractor on Dec. 17 through the Office of Emergency Management and that the tribe indicated later that day that it had "no other resource requests."

One thing that Rose and tribal officials agree

on is that Honor should not have been released from the hospital Dec. 14, given the severity of weather conditions. Oliver said the tribe reached out to IHS in the days following Honor's death and asked them to keep patients longer if possible.

"They should have just kept him because of the conditions," said Oliver. "The hospital was trying to release a lot of people from there and send them home. I mean, how were they supposed to get home? How were people supposed to come get them? That was bad judgment."

Celebration of healing and hope

Fallout from the blizzards continued through the end of December 2022, delaying Honor's funeral until the new year. There was a Jan. 6 caravan starting at the Rosebud Casino and an evening service at Fr. Paul Hall church in Mission, followed by the funeral the next day.

A card handed out at the service showed Honor in various stages of joy: swimming with his cousins, playing basketball, catching a fish and frolicking at the beach.

"Live your life, laugh again, enjoy yourself, be free," read the accompanying poem. "Then I know with every breath you take, you'll be taking one from me."

On Oct. 27, 2023, the day that would have been Honor's 13th birthday, his classmates threw him a party. They painted stones with themes from his life and laid them next to the gravesite while sharing stories and singing "Happy Birthday."

Rising above the burial mound was a medicine wheel, a sacred symbol of knowledge and hope, and healing for those who seek it.

Honor's friends then gathered at the home of Melissa LaPointe, his former teacher, where they played games and feasted on some of favorites: Fanta orange pop, chicken nuggets, ramen noodles, Jolly Rancher candy.

It was a bittersweet occasion for Cordier-Beauvais, whose pleasure at seeing her grandson celebrated was tempered by lingering resentment and her belief that his death could have been prevented.

From the time he moved from Denver and the reservation became his home, Honor made his presence felt. He still does.

The plan was to brighten his future by surrounding him with love, family and faith. It soon became apparent that the lives of those around him would be the ones most profoundly impacted, by allowing a young boy to dream.

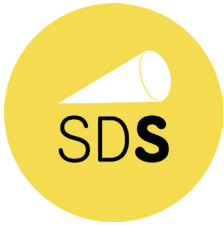
— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.

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Logan Ringgenberg has enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard. Logan is the newest addition to the Det. 1, 740th Transportation Company, enlisting as a Motor Transport Operator (88M). He qualified for 100% State Tuition Assistance, along with the GI Bill. Welcoming Logan is South Dakota Army National Guard Recruiting NCO SFC Brent Wienk. (Courtesy Photo)



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'Good taste and decency' standard for vanity license plates to be snuffed by settlement

ACLU, advocate sued state over 'REZWEED' plate denial

BY: JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 11, 2023 5:12 PM

The Department of Revenue's Motor Vehicle Division will no longer serve as an arbiter of good taste and decency in its review of personalized license plates, according to a settlement agreement filed with the U.S. District Court of South Dakota.

The consent decree and stipulation document saying as much was filed late last week in a lawsuit against the division by business owner Lyndon Hart and the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota.

Hart is an enrolled member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and the owner of a business in Flandreau called "Rez Weed Indeed." He was denied a personalized plate reading "REZWEED" in May 2022, but the division reversed itself in September of that year.

Hart sued last month anyway, noting that the division maintained the right to recall previously issued plates based on "connotations offensive to good taste and decency."

The consent decree, signed by Hart and the state on Friday, still needs approval from U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange. Once it's signed, the division will repeal the "good taste and decency" language within seven days. The document acknowledges that denying plates based on a subjective "good taste and decency" standard is unconstitutional.

The document explicitly notes that Hart's plate will not be recalled, and that he is entitled to keep and renew two other vanity plates, "REZSMOK" and "REZBUD," without fear of a recall.

It also says that anyone denied a vanity plate under the "good taste and decency" standard may now reapply for a plate, and that any updates to division policy on plates will be "narrowly tailored and viewpoint neutral to advance the State's significant interests consistent with the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America."

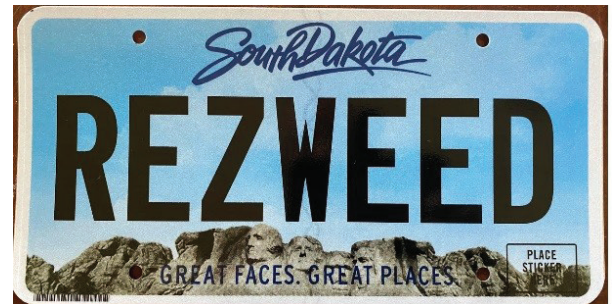
The settlement was filed about a month after Hart asked for a preliminary injunction that aimed to stop the state from enforcing its "good taste" standards while the case was pending.

The injunction documents note that the state's vanity plate denials have been inconsistently applied. "BEERMOM" was denied, the motion says, but "BEERMAN" was approved.

Hart also noted an apparent pro-Christian bias in the division's decision-making.

"Defendants regularly approved personalized plates that conveyed a message in support of God or Jesus—1GOD, 1TRUGOD, LIV\$GOD, LUV4GOD, GODBLSS, JESUS, JESUS4U—but regularly denied plates that reference the Devil or Satan—SATAN, S8N, SIX66, TRIPL6, 666DOA, and DEV1L," the motion says.

The document also points out that a previous division director named Deb Hillmer had urged the Legislature to repeal the "good taste" standard in 2008 over its constitutional problems. Hillmer was backed



A personalized license plate requested and eventually approved for South Dakota resident Lynn Hart. (Courtesy of Lynn Hart)

Hart)

by Dan Mosteller, the former superintendent of the Highway Patrol.

Stephanie Amiotte, ACLU of South Dakota legal director, issued a statement Monday celebrating the ruling as a victory for free speech.

"While it's tempting for some to classify this as an insignificant issue, this is about so much more than just a license plate," the statement reads. "It's about our First Amendment rights and we won't allow the state to chip away our constitutional rights like this one piece at a time. We're very happy we were able to obtain a complete victory for Mr. Hart and for the freedom of speech of all South Dakotans."

The Division of Motor Vehicles did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It's unclear from the language of the settlement if the takedown of the "good taste and decency" standard leaves any room for the denial of plates. ACLU spokesperson Janna Farley says the organization can't comment on hypotheticals, such as the possibility of plates with profanity.

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

Nonprofit launches zebra mussel study and accuses state of 'capitulation'

BY: SETH TUPPER - DECEMBER 11, 2023 5:42 PM

A nonprofit is launching a study on the economic impact of the zebra mussel invasion in South Dakota and accusing state government of a lackluster response to the problem.

The South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, based in Sioux Falls, said Monday it will spearhead a \$107,000 study. It's designed to provide legislators and other government leaders information to better protect the state's lakes and rivers, the association said.

The state has been "throwing up its hands in capitulation," according to association board member Deb Soholt, a former state senator.

"The state was not wanting to do this type of study," she said in a news release.

Soholt said other states are doing more than South Dakota to stop zebra mussels from spreading.

"We believe it is important to conduct the needed research to understand the economic impact, so policymakers have the necessary information to do both containment and mitigation," Soholt said.

In response, Nick Harrington, communications manager for the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks, said in an email to South Dakota Searchlight, "GFP has significantly enhanced efforts to slow the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in recent years, both educating anglers and boaters to clean, drain, dry every time they are on the water as well as physically inspecting boats prior to and/or after loading."

Last week, the department announced the detection of zebra mussels in Lake Oahe, one of the dams on the Missouri River and a major source of recreation, hydropower and water for the state.

According to the association, there are 22 lakes or rivers in South Dakota infested with zebra mussels,



Zebra mussels. (Amy Benson/U.S. Geological Survey)

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which were first detected in Lewis & Clark Lake in 2015.

Zebra mussels are invasive, fingernail-sized mollusks that probably arrived in the Great Lakes in the 1980s via ballast water that was discharged by large ships from Europe, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS says zebra mussels negatively impact ecosystems in many ways: They filter out algae that native species need for food, clog water intakes and attach to — and incapacitate — native mussels.

The South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association describes zebra mussels as “a major threat to irrigation, hydropower, recreational boating, fishing, tourism, water supplies and more.”

The association’s economic impact study is being conducted at the University of South Dakota in partnership with South Dakota State University. It’s funded by the association, East River Water Development District, Lake Kampeska Water Project District, James River Water Development District, Vermillion Basin Water Development District and \$12,000 of in-kind contributions from USD.

Assisting in the study is Nanette Nelson, a research economist with the University of Montana. Her 2019 Montana study predicted that if zebra mussels were to colonize all the water bodies in that state, they would cause up to \$122 million in mitigation expenses, up to \$112 million in lost revenue and up to \$497 million in lost property value.

“It is critical we understand the economic impact,” Soholt said of the impending South Dakota study, “and we expect the study will show us South Dakota needs to take this much more seriously than it is now.”

Zebra mussel detections in South Dakota
Lewis & Clark Lake, 2015
Missouri River (below Gavins Point), 2016
McCook Lake, 2016
Lake Yankton, 2018
Lake Sharpe, 2019
Lake Francis Case, 2019
Pickerel Lake, 2020
Lake Cochrane, 2020
Lake Kampeska, 2020
Dahme Quarry, 2020
Lake Mitchell, 2021
Pactola Lake, 2022
Enemy Swim Lake, 2022
Blue Dog Lake, 2022
South Rush Lake, 2022
Clear Lake (Marshall County), 2022
James River, 2023
Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, 2023
Roy Lake, 2023
Big Sioux River, 2023
Big Stone Lake, 2023
Lake Oahe, 2023

— Sources: sdeastwanted.sd.gov, South Dakota Lakes & Streams Association

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

COMMENTARY

Rapid City hotel owners apologize for statements about Native Americans

RETSEL CORPORATION

EDITOR'S NOTE: South Dakota Searchlight is publishing this letter at the request of Grand Gateway Hotel in Rapid City, which agreed as part of a consent decree to write the letter and send it to the media.



The Grand Gateway Hotel in Rapid City, pictured on Dec. 11, 2023. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

—
We extend our sincere apology to all for the statements made by Connie Uhre on March 19-20, 2022, regarding Native Americans. Ms. Uhre's comments were not consistent with the values or policies of our company or of our businesses, the Grand Gateway Hotel and Cheers Sports Lounge.

We deeply regret the pain or harm Ms. Uhre's statements have caused within our Native American community. We want to make clear that we welcome all Native Americans to the Grand Gateway Hotel and Cheers Sports Lounge.

In acknowledging that Ms. Uhre's comments were wrong, we also want to acknowledge the remarkable Native American families who live and work within our community. We treasure our many relationships with Tribal members over the years. And we know, based on those relationships, that the Native American community is made up of hardworking individuals who are dedicated to their families and their culture.

We are privileged and fortunate to have many friends, employees, and neighbors who are Tribal members. The values of inclusivity, respect, and unity are shared, and we wish to assure our patrons that our businesses are committed to these values.

We have a deep history and relationship with the tribes and their members for over 45 years, and we look forward to continuing that relationship far into the future.

Sincerely,

Chad Uhre, director and owner

Josh Uhre, director and owner

Judd Uhre, owner

Leslie Sherry, director and owner

Nicholas Uhre, director, owner and manager

Connie Uhre, former president, former director, former owner

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US Supreme Court asked to quickly rule on Trump claims of presidential immunity

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY - DECEMBER 11, 2023 3:08 PM

WASHINGTON — Department of Justice Special Counsel Jack Smith asked the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday to expedite a decision on former President Donald Trump's claims of presidential immunity in the 2020 election interference case.

Smith asked the justices to rule on a matter that ordinarily would first go to a lower federal appeals court, arguing that another layer of appellate action would likely mean the Supreme Court wouldn't hear the case until its term beginning in fall 2024, delaying the trial even further.

Such a delay would push a Supreme Court decision into the heat of a general election, when Trump is favored to again be the Republican candidate for president.

A definitive answer from the Supreme Court would keep the trial slated to begin March 4, 2024, on schedule, Smith said.

"The United States recognizes that this is an extraordinary request," Smith wrote. "This is an extraordinary case."

Late Monday, the Supreme Court said the justices would consider the request from prosecutors and asked Trump to respond by Dec. 20.

In a statement from the Trump campaign, an unnamed spokesperson repeated Trump's position that the prosecution is politically motivated.

"Crooked Joe Biden's henchman, Deranged Jack Smith is so obsessed with interfering in the 2024 Presidential Election with the goal of preventing President Trump from retaking the Oval Office, as the President is poised to do, that Smith is willing to try for a Hail Mary by racing to the Supreme Court and attempting to bypass the appellate process," the spokesperson said.

District court ruling

The case, one of four criminal proceedings the former president faces as he campaigns for another term in the White House, involves claims he sought to illegally overturn his reelection loss in 2020.

Earlier this month, U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan denied Trump's motion to dismiss the case based on the argument that as a former president, he is protected from criminal prosecution and that he was already acquitted by the U.S. Senate in an impeachment trial.

Trump appealed that ruling last week to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, an intermediate venue between the district court and the Supreme Court, and asked the trial court to pause proceedings while the appeal is ongoing.

Trump's legal team in early October filed a motion to dismiss the case based on presidential immunity.

The scheduling situation is similar to what courts faced as President Richard Nixon's 1974 trial date on charges related to the Watergate scandal approached, Smith said Monday. In that case, the Supreme Court accepted prosecutors' argument and expedited the appeal, he wrote, adding that the high court should make a similar ruling for Trump.

"It is of paramount public importance that respondent's claims of immunity be resolved as expeditiously as possible — and, if respondent is not immune, that he receive a fair and speedy trial on these charges," Smith wrote. "The public, respondent, and the government are entitled to nothing less."

Prosecutors also asked the D.C. Circuit Appeals Court on Monday to expedite Trump's appeal in that court if the Supreme Court declines to rule on the issue.

Election interference and other criminal charges

A federal grand jury indicted Trump in August on four counts for his alleged role in knowingly attempting



Special Counsel Jack Smith delivers remarks on an unsealed indictment against former President Donald Trump at the Justice Department on June 9, 2023, in Washington, D.C. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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to subvert the 2020 presidential election results through a series of illegal actions and false statements that culminated in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The charges filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia included conspiracy to defraud the U.S.; conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding; obstruction of, and attempt to obstruct, an official proceeding; and conspiracy against rights.

The 45-page indictment details false statements that Trump and unnamed co-conspirators made about election results in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and the subsequent fake electors scheme the group devised for those states.

The indictment also detailed Trump's pressure campaign on former Vice President Mike Pence to "enlist" him in overturning election results.

Trump is facing four criminal cases as well as civil proceedings over his business matters in New York state as he leads in several polls ahead of the 2024 Republican presidential primary season. With less than five weeks left before the Iowa first-in-the-nation GOP presidential caucuses, a Des Moines Register/NBC News/Medicacom poll released Monday found Trump is the first choice of 51% of caucus-goers surveyed.

In addition to federal election fraud charges in Washington, D.C. scheduled for trial in March, Trump is facing another potential March criminal trial in New York state for alleged hush money payments to an adult film star.

The former president also faces a federal criminal trial in Florida in May over felony charges alleging he removed classified documents from the White House at the end of his presidency and improperly stored them at Mar-a-Lago, his South Florida estate.

A trial date has not been set for a Georgia indictment alleging that Trump and several co-defendants engaged in racketeering and criminal organization to interfere with 2020 presidential election results.

Attorneys for Trump did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment Monday.

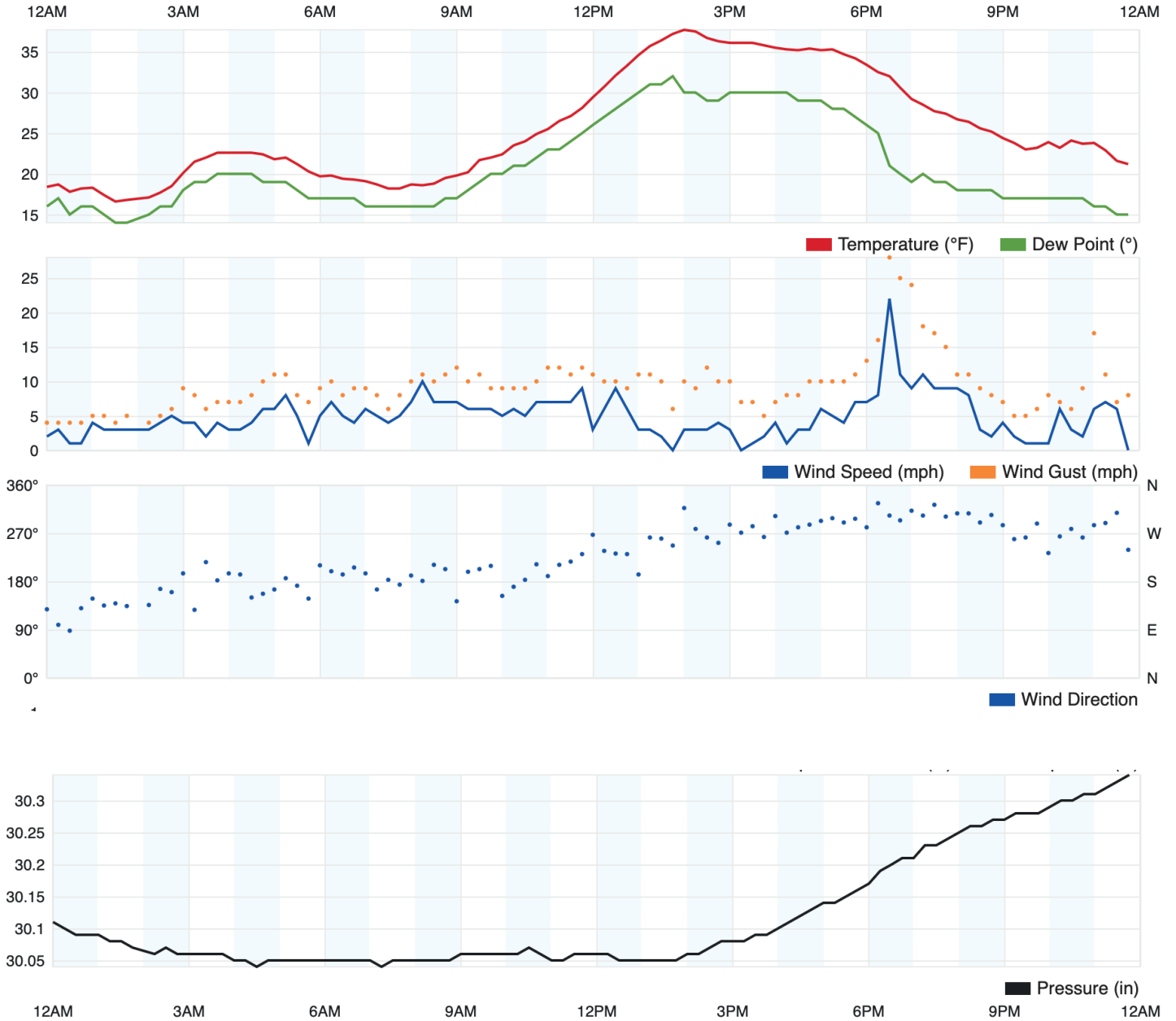
Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs







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| Tue Dec 12 | Wed Dec 13 | Thu Dec 14 | Fri Dec 15 | Sat Dec 16 | Sun Dec 17 | Mon Dec 18 |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29°F 18°F | 37°F 25°F | 46°F 32°F | 39°F 21°F | 38°F 26°F | 41°F 24°F | 41°F 25°F |
| WNW 8 MPH | SSW 9 MPH | S 17 MPH | W 17 MPH | SSW 14 MPH | SSW 14 MPH | NE 10 MPH |

Seasonable Today, then Back to Well Above Normal Temperatures

| <u>Today</u> | <u>Wednesday</u> | <u>Thursday</u> |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Highs: 26-36°F | Highs: 37-45°F | Highs: 43-50°F |
| Increasing clouds. Downslope winds along the Sisseton Hills tonight | Clear. Gusts to 40 mph along the Prairie Coteau overnight | Warmest day of the week, breezy |

December 12, 2023 4:28 AM  NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

High pressure settles over the region today and Wednesday with generally light winds except overnight along the Coteau. Look for the warmest temperatures of the week on Thursday as breezy conditions become more widespread.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 38 °F at 1:50 PM

Low Temp: 17 °F at 1:30 AM

Wind: :02:03 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 49 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 54 in 1924

Record Low: -28 in 1893

Average High: 30

Average Low: 9

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.23

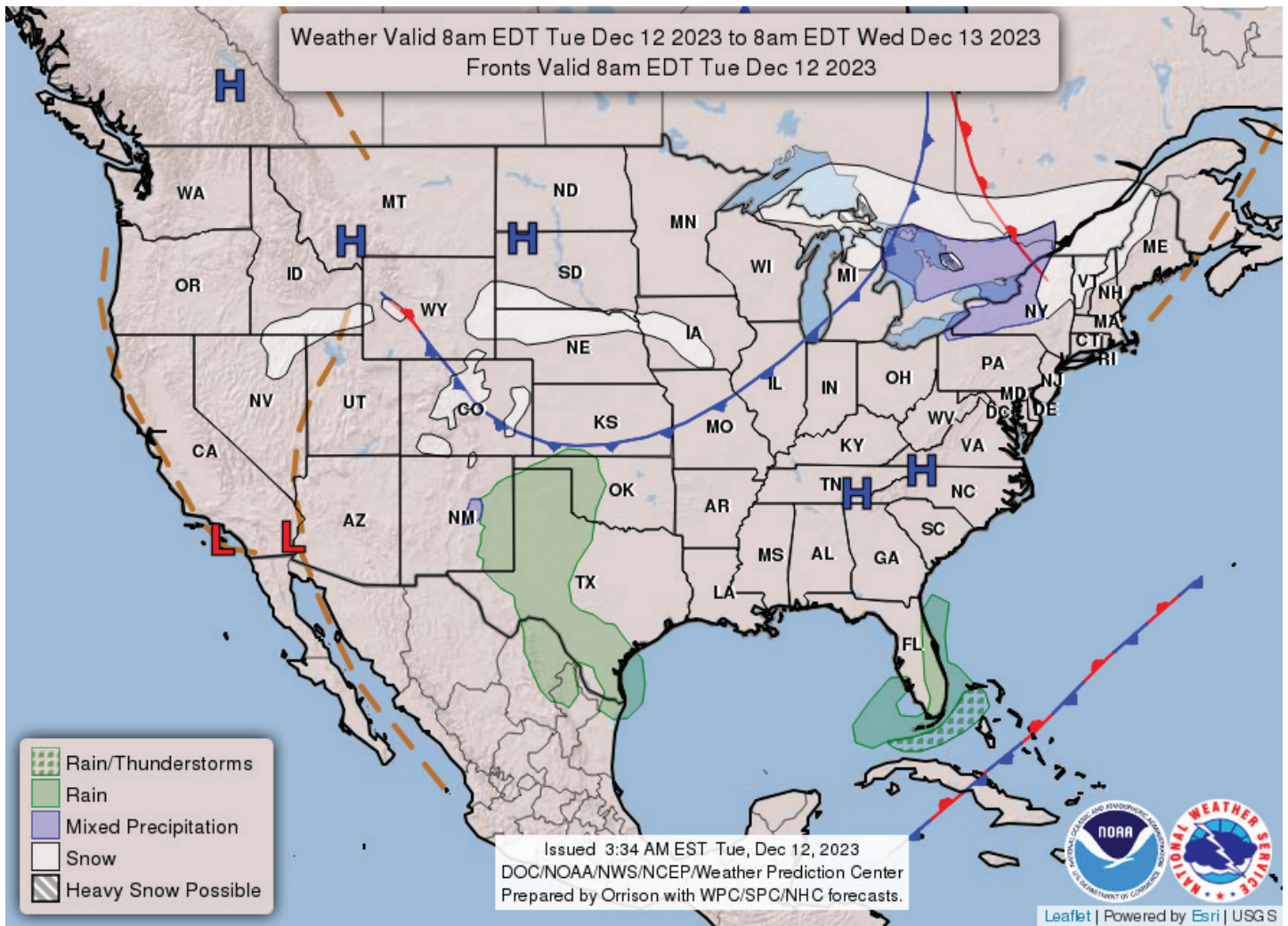
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.44

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:50:58 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:01:13 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 12, 1968: An intense blizzard visited most of South Dakota and Minnesota on the 12th and 13th of December. The storm began in the western part of South Dakota on the morning of the 12th then spread into the eastern part of the state and west central Minnesota by that afternoon, where it continued into the morning of the 13th. Freezing rain preceded snow, and in west central Minnesota, with thunder and lightning as well. Winds of over 50 mph caused blowing and drifting snow, which occasionally reduced visibilities to near zero. Gusts reached 70 mph in many places. Temperatures were falling to near zero during the day also resulted in dangerously low wind chills, particularly in Minnesota. The eastern half of South Dakota into west central Minnesota experienced the most severe blizzard conditions. Many schools were closed, and most other activities were greatly curtailed.

Automobile accidents were numerous across the area. Multiple utility lines were downed, and power and telephone outages were numerous due to the high winds. Power outages from less than an hour up to 12 hours were common across Minnesota. Snowfall ranged from around one inch in western South Dakota, to five inches in eastern South Dakota, to five to ten inches in west central Minnesota. One death in South Dakota was attributed to the storm when a man died of exposure to the cold near Allen in southwest South Dakota. In Minnesota, one man was found frozen to death near his car after it had run into the ditch several miles northwest of Boyd in Lac Qui Parle County. Another man was killed by a train when his vehicle became stalled on a railroad crossing at Hancock. 5 inches of snow fell at Watertown, Sisseton, and Webster with 6 inches at Clear Lake.

1882 - Portland, OR, was drenched with 7.66 inches of rain, a record 24 hour total for that location. (12th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1960 - The first of three Middle Atlantic snowstorms produced a foot of snow at Baltimore MD. A pre-winter blizzard struck the northeastern U.S. producing wind gusts as high as 51 mph, along with 16 inches of snow at Nantucket MA, and 20 inches at Newark NJ. (David Ludlum)

1967: From December 12th through the 20th, Flagstaff, Arizona, a series of snowstorms buries Flagstaff with nearly 85 inches of snow.

1969 - The worst tornado of record for western Washington State tracked south of Seattle, traveling five miles, from Des Moines to Kent. The tornado, 50 to 200 yards in width, began as a waterspout over Puget Sound. One person was injured and the tornado caused half a million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - While a developing winter storm began to spread snow across New Mexico into Colorado, high winds ushered unseasonably cold air into the southwestern states. Winds in California gusted to 60 mph in the Sacramento River Delta, and in the San Bernardino Valley. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Cold arctic air spread from the Great Lakes Region to the Appalachian Region. Twenty-five cities, mostly in the northeastern U.S., reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 12 degrees below zero at Albany NY was their coldest reading of record for so early in the season. Saranac Lake NY was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 28 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A winter storm produced snow from northern Mississippi to the Middle Atlantic Coast, with 10.5 inches reported at Powhatan VA. Heavy snow whitened the Black Hills of South Dakota, with 36 inches reported at Deer Mountain. Thirteen cities in the north central U.S., from Minnesota to Texas, reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth MN and Yankton SD with morning lows of 22 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995 - A severe coastal storm is blamed for five deaths and loss of power to over one million people in Oregon and Washington. Winds at Sea Lion Caves near Florence topped out at 119 mph before problems developed with the anemometer. In Newport, a gust of 107 mph occurred downtown, while Astoria and Cape Blanco also had gusts of over 100 mph. Astoria's air pressure dropped as low as 28.53 inches, an all-time record (and comparable to the central pressure of a Category 2 hurricane!). Gusts in the Willamette Valley exceeded 60 mph.

2008 - A significant ice storm wreaked havoc across New York and New England on December 12, disrupting electricity and leaving over 1 million homes and businesses without power. New Hampshire alone had as many as 320,000 residents without power, which according to reports it was described as the worst outages in 30 years (Reuters). Four fatalities were reported and parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Maine declared a state of emergency (BBC News).

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT KIND OF DAY WILL IT BE?

As you look forward to Christmas, what special memories will you take from the day that will remain with you after it's over? Will it be a "horrible day," a "holiday" or a "holy day?"

For some, it will be a "horrible" day. It will be a day when families gather and feuds erupt, unwanted gifts are exchanged, stomachs are stuffed, alcohol generated hangovers will dull minds and memories, and promises to "never do this again" are made. Not ever!

Or, will it be a holiday? Families traveling many miles to get together to share problems and pains that brought them closer together, share joyous memories of special events that united them in love and laughter, introducing a new-born child or one who will soon be the next in-law uniting two "love-birds."

Would it not be special, however, if we made it a "holy day?" A day of worship and praise, a day when we set aside time to share and emphasize the gift of our new birth through Christ?

Paul wrote some inspiring words about the gift of our new birth made possible because of the birth of Jesus. "You have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you."

This "new nature" means that it is possible for us to have a new life through His Son, our Savior, and the hope that one day we will be like Him and spend eternity with Him.

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for the gift of Jesus Who gives us a new life and the promise of joy, peace, and presence that comes with the assurance of salvation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Colossians 3:10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.



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: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.11.23

18 39 42 47 52 5

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,800,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 2 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.11.23

13 14 19 31 34 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 17 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

4 7 8 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$87,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 17 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.11.23

10 12 27 40 65 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.11.23

1 24 27 31 62 20

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$500,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Baltic 58, Dell Rapids 49
Freeman 59, Kimball/White Lake 53
Northwestern 62, Britton-Hecla 59
Tea Area 58, Tri-Valley 36

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Arlington 52, Iroquois-Lake Preston 47
DeSmet 50, Wolsey-Wessington 44
Faulkton 41, Redfield 33
Florence-Henry 57, Waubay/Summit 29
Great Plains Lutheran 53, Tri-State, N.D. 40
Northwestern 54, Britton-Hecla 47

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

Three people die in a crash that authorities discovered while investigating a stolen vehicle

CANTON, S.D. (AP) — Three people died and one was injured in an automobile crash south of Sioux Falls that authorities discovered while investigating a stolen vehicle.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office said in a statement that it got a report around 5 a.m. Saturday of a vehicle stolen from a farm. A supervisor from the farm suspected that the person who stole the vehicle had been involved in an accident.

A search of nearby roads led to an accident scene. A deputy discovered a pickup truck that had left the road and rolled multiple times. Two individuals were dead when the deputy arrived. The third died at the scene a short time later.

The sheriff's office said the fourth person appeared to have left the scene and stolen a vehicle from a nearby farm following the accident. Authorities found the stolen vehicle and the individual hours later at a home in Beresford. He was taken to a local hospital due to his injuries.

The investigation is ongoing.

The news release didn't say whether the pickup truck that rolled was the same vehicle that was reported stolen. Officials with the sheriff's office did not immediately return a call seeking clarification.

Suicide bomber attacks police station in northwest Pakistan, killing 23 officers and wounding 32

By RIAZ KHAN AND MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — A suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vehicle at a police station's main gate in northwest Pakistan early Tuesday, killing at least 23 troops and wounding 32 others, and causing a part of the building to collapse upon impact, the military and officials said.

The suicide attack — one of the deadliest attacks since January — led to "multiple casualties," Pakistan's army said in a statement. It added that six militants also opened fire and a shootout ensued for hours between them and security forces before "the terrorists" were gunned down. Local police officials also

confirmed all six attackers were dead.

Separately, the statement said that "troops killed 27 insurgents" in multiple operations in the same region.

The death toll from Tuesday's attack was likely to rise as some of the officers were in critical condition, authorities said. The bodies of the 23 security forces killed were transferred to a hospital, Mohammad Adnan, a senior police official told reporters.

The attack targeted the Daraban police station in Dera Ismail Khan, a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, local police officer Kamal said. The province is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

The newly formed militant group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, or TJP — believed to be an offshoot of the TTP — claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying it targeted the officers who were at the police station. The statement also claimed that 20 officers were killed. However, this couldn't be independently verified.

A larger number of security forces from across the country have had a constant presence lately at the Daraban police station where they were conducting intelligence-based operations against militants in the area with help from local police, said Khan.

Pakistan's President Arif Alvi denounced the attack and conveyed his condolences to the families of those who were "martyred". In a statement, he said "their sacrifices would not go to waste" and that such attacks cannot weaken the resolve of security forces.

Pakistan's caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti denounced the onslaught in a statement, calling it an act of "terrorism."

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has witnessed a rise in violence with several deadly incursions by militants this year. In January, at least 101 people were killed, mostly police officers, when a suicide bomber disguised as a policeman attacked a mosque in the northwestern city of Peshawar.

The Pakistani Taliban have stepped up attacks on security forces since 2022. Authorities say the insurgents have become emboldened while living openly in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of that country in 2021.

The TTP, though a separate group, is closely allied with the Afghan Taliban.

Dera Ismail Khan is located near South Waziristan, a former sanctuary for militants. Pakistan's army carried out multiple operations against militants there after some attacked an army-run school, killing more than 150 people, mostly school children, in 2014.

Live updates | Israel plans to keep fighting as other countries call for a cease-fire in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel pressed ahead Tuesday with an offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers that it says could go on for weeks or months. Ahead of a non-binding vote at the United Nations later Tuesday, Israel and the United States faced global calls for a cease-fire in Gaza.

More than 17,700 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, around two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-controlled territory. About 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where United Nations agencies say there is no safe place to flee. With only a trickle of humanitarian aid reaching a small portion of Gaza, residents face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

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. 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.

Currently:

— A missile strikes a Norwegian-flagged tanker in Red Sea off Yemen in apparent expansion of rebel attacks.

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— Palestinians hope a vote in the U.N. General Assembly will show wide support for a Gaza cease-fire.
— Iraq scrambles to contain fighting between U.S. troops and Iran-backed groups, fearing Gaza spillover.
— Biden vows to keep standing with Israel and calls the "surge of antisemitism" around the globe "sickening."

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

Here's what's happening in the war:

ISRAELI FORCES HAVE STORMED A HOSPITAL IN NORTHERN GAZA, HEALTH MINISTRY SAYS

CAIRO — A spokesman for Gaza's Health Ministry says Israeli forces have stormed a hospital in northern Gaza.

Ashraf al-Qidra said the troops forced all the men in Kamal Adwan Hospital, including medics, to gather in the courtyard after entering the facility on Tuesday. He called on the U.N. and the International Committee of the Red Cross to intervene.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. The army says it is rounding up men in northern Gaza as it searches for Hamas fighters. Photos and video circulated online show detainees stripped to their underwear, bound and blindfolded. Some who have been released say they were beaten and denied food and water.

The U.N. humanitarian office says the hospital has 65 patients, including 12 children in intensive care and six newborns in incubators. Some 3,000 displaced people are sheltering there, all awaiting evacuation because of severe shortages of food, water and electricity.

Most of the population of northern Gaza fled weeks ago when Israel ordered a full evacuation. Ground troops invaded in late October after a blistering three-week air campaign. Israel accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields.

Tens of thousands of people remain in the north, where they have been almost entirely cut off from humanitarian aid for weeks. The health system in the north has largely collapsed.

A SURGEON IS SHOT FROM OUTSIDE A NORTH GAZA HOSPITAL, DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS SAYS

CAIRO — A surgeon was wounded after being shot from outside a hospital in northern Gaza that is surrounded by Israeli forces, Doctors Without Borders said. The aid group said the shooting occurred Monday at Al-Awda Hospital, and that five hospital staff at Al-Awda Hospital, including two of its own doctors, have been killed while caring for patients since the start of the war.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have remained in northern Gaza, even after Israel's evacuation orders and as airstrikes have leveled entire neighborhoods. Very little humanitarian aid has been allowed into northern Gaza, and the health system has all but collapsed.

The United Nations humanitarian office, known as OCHA, said a convoy delivering medical supplies to the north for the first time in more than a week came under fire on the way to another hospital over the weekend.

The convoy evacuated 19 patients but was delayed for inspections by Israeli forces on the way south. OCHA said one patient died and a paramedic was detained for hours.

A HOUSHI MISSILE HITS A TANKER NEAR YEMEN

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A missile suspected fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels slammed into a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, a key maritime chokepoint, authorities said Tuesday.

The assault on the oil and chemical tanker, Strinda, expands a campaign by the Iranian-backed rebels targeting ships near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait by striking a ship that has no clear ties to Israel. That potentially imperils cargo and energy shipments coming through the Suez Canal and further widen the international impact of the Israel-Hamas war now raging in the Gaza Strip.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree issued a video statement claiming the rebels only fired on the vessel when it "rejected all warning calls."

The Strinda was coming from Malaysia and was bound for the Suez Canal onward to Italy with its cargo

of palm oil, Belsnes said. Saree alleged without offering any evidence the ship was bound for Israel. "All crew members are unhurt and safe," said Geir Belsnes, the CEO of the Strinda's operator J. Ludwig Mowinckels Rederi. "The vessel is now proceeding to a safe port."

COP28 climate talks enter last day with no agreement in sight on fossil fuels

By JON GAMBRELL, JAMEY KEATEN, SIBI ARASU and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A stark standoff between countries that want a dramatic phase-out to fossil fuels causing damaging warming and those that don't crushed hopes for an on-time finish to a critical climate summit Tuesday.

The United Nations-led summit known as COP28 was scheduled to end around midday after nearly two weeks of speeches, demonstrations and negotiations. But the climate talks almost always run long, and Monday's release of a draft agreement angered countries that insist on a commitment for rapid phase-out of coal, oil and gas.

Instead, the draft called for countries to reduce "consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner."

Majid al-Suwaidi, COP28 Director-General, said Monday night's draft was meant to get countries to start talking and presenting what are deal-killers for them, which are called "red lines."

"The text we released was a starting point for discussions," he said at a news conference midday on Tuesday. "When we released it, we knew opinions were polarized, but what we didn't know was where each country's red lines were."

"We spent last night talking, taking in that feedback, and that has put us in a position to draft a new text," he said.

A new draft was promised to come out on Tuesday, but much of the critical work in the Dubai-based talks keeps getting delayed.

A senior negotiator for a developing nation who did not want to be named so as to not impact negotiations said the fossil fuel phase-out language would not be in the next version.

Al-Suwaidi gave conflicting comments about the future of the fossil fuel phase-out language, which at one point he said "doesn't work."

"It's important that we have the right language when it comes to fossil fuels. It's important that we think about how we get that balance. There are those who want phased out. There are those who want phased down," al-Suwaidi said. "The point is, is to get a consensus."

"We've said as a presidency, we think fossil fuel language needs to be part of that," al-Suwaidi said. "Now we need the parties to say, how do they land? We've spent a year knowing that that language doesn't work."

On one side are countries such as Saudi Arabia that won't accept phase-out language, while European countries and small island nations say it is unacceptable to leave those words out. Countries wanting phase-out are in a tough position because they may have to accept either a weak deal or no deal, neither of which is good for them, said Alden Meyer, a veteran climate negotiations observer for European think-tank E3G.

But Meyer thinks the blowback from phase-out supporters may be the start of strengthening a proposed deal, leaving Saudi Arabia and a few other Gulf states "as the last ones standing in the way of a more ambitious deal. We're not there yet. There's more work to be done."

The key is finding language that won't make someone block a deal because a final agreement has to be by consensus.

"It's a game of chicken," said CEO of Climate Analytics and longtime climate talks observer Bill Hare. He said the European countries and Pacific Island nations are threatening to walk out if there aren't changes to the text.

Tina Stege, climate envoy for the Marshall Islands, ridiculed the document as "a meaningless wish list" that "questions the science" and said it doesn't address the Paris agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) to stave off the worst effects of climate change. Earth is on its way

to smashing the record for hottest year, endangering human health and leading to ever more costly and deadly extreme weather.

"There is no justice in a result from this COP that condemns my country's future," said Stege, whose country is one of the many island nations most at risk from rising seas.

Joseph Sikulu of Pacific Climate Warriors teared up while trying to express his emotions over the draft text. "We didn't come here to sign our death sentence," he said.

Europeans also pushed for a stronger document.

"We have been working overnight within the EU and with our partners to drive up the ambition of the text in a balanced way," German climate envoy Jennifer Morgan said. "We need to work intensively together to find a text the world can coalesce around — one that gives everyone clarity on the direction of travel: away from the fossil fuel era."

Veteran COP observer Meena Raman of environmental activism group Friends of the Earth's Malaysia chapter blasted industrialized nations, which caused the problem with historical emissions that stay in the atmosphere for hundreds of years. And countries like the United States, Canada and Norway are expanding oil production, she said.

"They don't want to talk about historical responsibility but talk about keeping 1.5 alive," Raman said. "It's really playing to the gallery. Fossil fuel expansion is already happening in the global north."

Activists said they feared that potential objections from major oil producers, such as Saudi Arabia, had watered down the text. The head of OPEC, the powerful oil cartel, was reported to have written to member countries last week urging them to block any language to phase out or phase down fossil fuels.

"This text that we saw yesterday is sinking the lifeboat of humanity," activist Vanessa Nakate said.

"I think there's a lot of work that the COP28 presidency needs to do to make this better because the first attempt was really bad," said activist Romain Ioualalen of Oil Change International. "If there isn't an outcome on ... phasing out fossil fuels, this COP will be a failure and the COP President will not be seen as the hero."

In the 21-page document, the words oil and natural gas did not appear, and the word coal appeared twice. It also had a single mention of carbon capture, a technology touted by some to reduce emissions although it's untested at scale.

COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber told a plenary session on Monday that "the time to decide is now."

"We must still close many gaps. We don't have time to waste," he said.

On that point, critics agreed. Rachel Cleetus of the Union of Concerned Scientists urged negotiators to keep working.

"Please do not shut down this COP before we get the job done," she said.

5 big promises made at annual UN climate talks and what has happened since

By GAURAV SAINI, Press Trust of India and SIBI ARASU, Associated Press Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — When United Nations climate talks wrap up at some point this week in Dubai, big promises will likely be made about how the world is going to combat climate change, caused by the burning of fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal.

Negotiators are debating how fast fossil fuels should be reduced and how a major transition to green energy would be paid for, raising the possibility of a historic agreement.

Previous summits have ended with funds established to help developing countries transition to green energies, pledges to slash pollution and promises to keep people most vulnerable at the center of policy discussions.

But have countries stuck to their word?

Ahead of whatever decisions come from this year's negotiations, here is a look at five big promises from nearly 30 years of talks, and what's happened since.

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EMISSIONS CUTS IN KYOTO

The third climate summit took place in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997 — one of the warmest years recorded in the 20th century.

Known as the Kyoto Protocol, the agreement asked 41 high-emitting countries across the world and the European Union to cut their emissions by a little more than 5% compared to 1990 levels. Emissions cuts can come from many places, from deploying green energies like wind and solar that don't produce emissions to making things that do, like vehicles with combustible engines, run more cleanly.

Despite the agreement to cut emissions, it was only in 2005 that countries agreed to finally act on the Kyoto Protocol. The United States and China — the two highest emitters both then and now — didn't sign the agreement.

In terms of sticking to the promises made, Kyoto wasn't successful. Emissions have increased dramatically since then. At the time, 1997 was the hottest year on record since pre-industrial times. 1998 broke that record, as have more than a dozen years since then.

But Kyoto is still considered a landmark moment in the fight against climate change because it was first time so many countries recognized the problem and pledged to act on it.

COPENHAGEN'S CLIMATE CASH

By the time the 2009 conference in Denmark came around, the world was capping off its warmest decade on record — which has since been broken.

The summit is widely regarded as a failure for the impasse between developed and developing countries on slashing emissions and whether poorer nations could use fossil fuels to grow their economies. Still, it did see one major pledge: money for countries to transition to clean energy.

Rich countries promised to channel \$100 billion a year to developing countries for green technologies by 2020. But they didn't reach \$100 billion by the start of the 2020s, drawing criticism from developing states and environmentalists alike.

In 2022, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development said rich countries might have finally met and even exceeded the \$100 billion goal. But Oxfam, a group focused on anti-poverty efforts, said it's likely that 70% of the funds were in the form of loans that actually increased the debt crisis in developing countries.

And as climate change worsens, experts say the funds promised are not enough. Research published by climate economist Nicholas Stern found that developing countries likely need \$2 trillion for climate action every year by 2030.

THE PARIS AGREEMENT

It wasn't until 2015 that a global pact to fight climate change was adopted by nearly 200 nations, which called on the world to collectively slash greenhouse gases. But they decided it would be non-binding, so countries that didn't comply couldn't be sanctioned.

The Paris Agreement is widely considered the single biggest U.N. achievement in efforts to confront climate change. It was agreed upon exactly eight years ago on Dec. 12 to a standing ovation at the plenary. Nations agreed to keep warming "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.8 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, and ideally no higher than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Paris' legacy continues, with the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees still central to climate discussions. Scientists agree that the 1.5 threshold needs to be upheld because every tenth of a degree of warming brings even more disastrous consequences, in the form of extreme weather events, for an already hot planet. The world hasn't exceeded the limit set in the Paris agreement — it has warmed around 1.1 or 1.2 degrees Celsius (2 to 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) since the early 1800s — but is currently well on its way there, unless drastic emissions cuts are made quickly.

GLASGOW AND COAL

Six years after Paris, global warming had hit such a critical point that negotiators were looking to recommit to the goal of capping warming to the levels agreed in 2015.

Average temperatures were already 1.1 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than pre-industrial times.

The Glasgow summit was postponed until 2021 as the world was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. It included mass protests headlined by climate activist Greta Thunberg, who helped lead a global movement of youth activists to demand more action from leaders.

After last-minute disagreements over the language of the final document, countries agreed to “phase-down” coal, less strong than the original idea of a “phase-out.” India and China, two heavily coal-reliant emerging economies, pushed to water the language down.

The burning of coal is responsible for more emissions than any other fossil fuel, approximately 40% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Burning of oil and gas are also major sources of emissions.

So far, countries have failed to deliver on the Glasgow deal. Emissions from coal have slightly increased and major coal-using countries have yet to begin moving away from the dirtiest of fossil fuels.

India is a case in point. It’s dependent on coal for more than 70% of power generation, and plans a major expansion of coal-based power generation capacity over the next 16 months.

LOSS AND DAMAGE IN SHARM EL-SHEIKH

At last year’s climate talks in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, countries for the first time agreed to create a fund to help poorer nations recover from the impacts of climate change.

Coming a few months after devastating flooding in Pakistan that killed nearly 2,000 people and caused losses of over \$3.2 trillion, COP27 delegates decided to set up the loss and damage fund so that destroyed homes, flooded land and lost income from crops damaged by climate change would be compensated.

After disagreements around what the fund should look like, the fund was formally created on the first day of this year’s talks in Dubai. Over \$700 million has already been pledged. The pledges — and the amounts the countries choose to commit — are voluntary.

Climate experts say the pledges are just a fraction of the billions of dollars needed, as climate-driven weather extremes such as cyclones, rising sea levels, floods and droughts are increasing as temperatures rise.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article is part of a series produced under the India Climate Journalism Program, a collaboration between The Associated Press, the Stanley Center for Peace and Security and the Press Trust of India.

A missile fired by Yemen’s Houthi rebels strikes a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A missile fired by Yemen’s Houthi rebels slammed into a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen near a key maritime chokepoint, the rebels and authorities said Tuesday.

The assault on the oil and chemical tanker Strinda expands a campaign by the Iranian-backed rebels targeting ships close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait into apparently now striking those that have no clear ties to Israel. That potentially imperils cargo and energy shipments coming through the Suez Canal and further widens the international impact of the Israel-Hamas war now raging in the Gaza Strip.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree issued a video statement saying the rebels only fired on the vessel when it “rejected all warning calls.”

The U.S. military’s Central Command issued a statement Tuesday saying an anti-ship cruise missile “launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen” hit the Strinda.

“There were no U.S. ships in the vicinity at the time of the attack, but the USS Mason responded ... and is currently rendering assistance,” Central Command said. The Mason is an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer that has been involved in several of the recent incidents off Yemen.

The private intelligence firms Ambrey and Dryad Global had earlier confirmed the attack happened near the crucial Bab el-Mandeb Strait separating East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

Geir Belsnes, the CEO of the Strinda’s operator, J. Ludwig Mowinckels Rederi, also confirmed the attack took place.

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"All crew members are unhurt and safe," Belsnes said. "The vessel is now proceeding to a safe port."

The Strinda was coming from Malaysia and was bound for the Suez Canal and then on to Italy with a cargo of palm oil, Belsnes said. Saree alleged without offering any evidence that the ship was bound for Israel.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, earlier reported a fire aboard an unidentified vessel off Mokha, Yemen, with all the crew aboard being safe. The coordinates of that fire correspond to the last known location of the Strinda based off satellite tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press.

The Houthis have carried out a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and also launched drones and missiles targeting Israel. In recent days, they have threatened to attack any vessel they believe is either going to or coming from Israel, though there was no immediate apparent link between the Strinda and Israel.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, said over the weekend that Israel has called on its Western allies to address the threats from Yemen and would give them "some time" to organize a response. But he said if the threats persist, "we will act to remove this blockade."

Analysts suggest the Houthis hope to shore up waning popular support after years of civil war in Yemen between it and Saudi-backed forces.

France and the United States have stopped short of saying their ships were targeted in rebel attacks, but have said Houthi drones have headed toward their ships and were shot down in self-defense. Washington so far has declined to directly respond to the attacks, as has Israel, whose military continues to describe the ships as not having links to their country.

Global shipping has increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even during a brief pause in fighting during which Hamas exchanged hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The collapse of the truce and the resumption of a punishing Israeli ground offensive and airstrikes on Gaza have raised the risk of more sea attacks.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is only 29 kilometers (18 miles) wide at its narrowest point, limiting traffic to two channels for inbound and outbound shipments, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Nearly 10% of all oil traded at sea passes through it.

In November, Houthis seized a vehicle transport ship linked to Israel in the Red Sea off Yemen. The rebels still hold the vessel near the port city of Hodeida. Separately, a container ship owned by an Israeli billionaire came under attack by a suspected Iranian drone in the Indian Ocean.

A separate, tentative cease-fire between the Houthis and a Saudi-led coalition fighting on behalf of Yemen's exiled government has held for months despite that country's long war. That's raised concerns that any wider conflict in the sea — or a potential reprisal strike from Western forces — could reignite those tensions in the Arab world's poorest nation.

In 2016, the U.S. launched Tomahawk cruise missiles that destroyed three coastal radar sites in Houthi-controlled territory to retaliate for missiles being fired at U.S. Navy ships at the time.

Backlash to House testimony shines spotlight on new generation of Ivy League presidents

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The university presidents called before a congressional hearing on antisemitism last week had more in common than strife on their campuses: The leaders of the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard and MIT were all women who were relatively new in their positions.

In that sense, they represented the changing face of leadership at top-tier universities, with a record number of women leading Ivy League schools.

Now Penn's president has resigned over a backlash to comments that she said did not go far enough to condemn hate against Jewish students. And Harvard's president is facing calls to step down from donors and some lawmakers.

While the Israel-Hamas war has deepened rifts at campuses across the country, the three leaders were

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invited to testify as the public faces of universities embroiled in protest and complaints of antisemitism. The Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce chose the three presidents because their schools "have been at the center of the rise in antisemitic protests," a committee spokesperson said in a statement.

The presidents drew fire for carefully worded responses to a line of questioning from New York Republican Elise Stefanik, who repeatedly asked whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate the schools' rules.

"If the speech turns into conduct it can be harassment, yes," Magill said. Pressed further, Magill told Stefanik, "It is a context-dependent decision, congresswoman." Gay gave a similar response, saying that when "speech crosses into conduct, that violates our policies."

Some observers pointed out the dynamics when three women — one Black and one Jewish — were placed before a group of GOP lawmakers eager for a political fight.

Questions of bias surfaced again when billionaire Bill Ackman, a Harvard alumnus pushing for Gay's resignation, suggested on X, formerly Twitter, that she was hired to fulfill diversity and equity goals.

Civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton said Ackman's comments set back inclusion efforts only months after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in higher education in a case involving Harvard. "Now we have one of the richest men in America attacking a Black woman whose academic credentials are impeccable," he said.

In some ways, the three women brought before the House committee represent a new era of Ivy League leadership, which has long been dominated by men, most of them white.

Before Magill's resignation, women led six of the eight Ivy League universities, all but Princeton and Yale. In the last two years, Columbia and Dartmouth each hired women for the top job for the first time.

The shift has mostly been limited to the upper tiers of higher education, however. Men still outnumber women two-to-one in college presidencies, and women of color account for just 1 in 10 presidents, according to a survey by the American Council on Education this year.

That backdrop is sure to be on the minds of Harvard's governing leaders as they weigh Gay's future. Some commenters have noted that firing Harvard's first Black president would bring its own political backlash, especially for something that some view as a political misstep.

Firing Gay could also be seen as bowing to Republican lawmakers who have long had attacked elite universities as hubs of liberal "woke-ism." That message was delivered to Harvard leaders in a petition signed by more than 600 faculty members calling to keep Gay in command.

The petition urges Harvard's governing body to resist political pressures "that are at odds with Harvard's commitment to academic freedom." It's seen not as a defense of Gay's actions but as an attempt to insulate the school from the intrusion of political pressure.

"We have lawmakers getting intimately involved in trying to dictate governance on campus, and this seems unacceptable," said Melani Cammett, a professor of international affairs who helped organize the petition. Harvard needs to reckon with campus polarization, she added, but "that's not something that should be controlled by external actors."

Faculty aim to counter a letter from 70 members of Congress, most of them Republican, calling for the resignation of Gay and the other two presidents at the hearing.

Those backing the faculty petition include some professors who have been critical of Gay. Among them is Laurence Tribe, a legal scholar who described Gay's testimony as "hesitant, formulaic, and bizarrely evasive."

Still, he endorsed the petition. "It's dangerous for universities to be readily bullied into micromanaging their policies," he said in an interview. But his view on Gay hasn't changed.

"I think she now has a great deal to prove, and I'm not at all sure that she will be able to prove it," he said. "I don't think she is out of the woods by any means."

Harvard's highest governing body was scheduled to meet Monday and had not issued a public statement since the hearing. On Thursday, MIT's governing body issued a statement declaring "full and unreserved

support" for President Sally Kornbluth, who is Jewish and whose testimony also drew scathing criticism.

Turkey suspends all league games after club president punches referee at a top-flight match

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — The Turkish Football Federation has suspended all league games in the country after a club president punched the referee in the face at the end of a top-flight match.

MKE Ankaragucu president Faruk Koca attacked referee Halil Umut Meler on the pitch late Monday after the final whistle, following a 1-1 draw in a Super Lig game against Caykur Rizespor.

The referee, who fell to the ground, was also kicked in a melee that occurred after fans also invaded the pitch after Rizespor scored a last-minute equalizer.

The federation announced it suspended all league games indefinitely after an emergency meeting held to discuss the violence.

Meler was hospitalized with a slight fracture near his eye but was not in a serious condition. He was expected to be discharged on Wednesday.

Koca, who was considered to be at risk of a heart attack, was also hospitalized overnight. He was ordered arrested pending trial on charges of injuring a public official after questioning by prosecutors, Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc announced on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

Two suspects accused of kicking Meler were also arrested while three others were freed from custody on condition that they report regularly to police.

During his questioning, Koca denied causing any injury, insisting that he merely slapped the referee, according to HaberTurk television. The club president also blamed the incident on Meler, whom he accused of "wrongful decisions" and provocative acts, the station reported, citing unnamed judicial officials.

"This attack is unfortunate and shameful in the name of football," federation chief Mehmet Buyukeksi said after the emergency meeting.

"We say enough is enough," he added, insisting that all involved in the violence would be punished.

Buyukeksi also blamed the attack on a culture of contempt toward referees in Turkey.

"Everyone who has targeted referees and encouraged them to commit crimes is complicit in this despicable attack," he said. "The irresponsible statements of club presidents, managers, coaches and television commentators targeting referees have opened the way for this attack."

Speaking to reporters after visiting Meler in hospital, Buyukeksi said he hoped the incident would become a "milestone" for change for soccer in Turkey, which has been selected to co-host the 2032 European Championship with Italy.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also condemned the attack.

"Sports means peace and brotherhood. The sport is incompatible with violence. We will never allow violence to take place in Turkish sports," he wrote on X.

Violence in soccer is commonplace in Turkey and some other European countries despite efforts to crack down on it.

On Monday, Greece announced that all top-flight soccer matches would be played without fans in the stadiums for the next two months following a sport-related riot last week that left a police officer with life-threatening injuries.

Israel and the US face growing isolation over Gaza as offensive grinds on with no end in sight

By NAJIB JOBAIN, WAFAA SHURAF A and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel and the United States were increasingly isolated as they faced global calls for a cease-fire in Gaza, including a non-binding vote expected to pass at the United Nations later on Tuesday. Israel has pressed ahead with an offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers that it says could go on for weeks or months.

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The war ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel has already brought unprecedented death and destruction to the impoverished coastal enclave, with more than 18,000 Palestinians killed, mostly women and minors, and over 80% of the population of 2.3 million having fled their homes.

Much of northern Gaza has been obliterated, and hundreds of thousands have fled to ever-shrinking so-called safe zones in the south. The health care system and humanitarian aid operations have collapsed in large parts of Gaza, and aid workers have warned of starvation and the spread of disease among displaced people in overcrowded shelters and tent camps.

Strikes overnight and into Tuesday in southern Gaza — in an area where civilians have been told to seek shelter — killed at least 23 people, according to an Associated Press reporter at a nearby hospital.

In central Gaza, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah received the bodies of 33 people killed in strikes overnight, including 16 women and four children, according to hospital records. Many were killed in strikes that hit residential buildings in the built-up Maghazi refugee camp nearby.

In northern Gaza, the aid group Doctors Without Borders said a surgeon in the Al-Awda hospital was wounded Monday by a shot fired from outside the facility, which it says has been under "total siege" by Israeli forces for a week. There was no immediate comment from the military.

In a briefing with The Associated Press on Monday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant refused to commit to a firm timeline, but signaled that the current phase of heavy ground fighting and airstrikes could stretch on for weeks and that further military activity could continue for months.

He said the next phase would be lower-intensity fighting against "pockets of resistance." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain security control over Gaza indefinitely.

The U.N. secretary-general and Arab states have rallied much of the international community behind calls for an immediate cease-fire. But the U.S. vetoed those efforts at the U.N. Security Council last week as it rushed tank munitions to Israel to allow it to maintain the offensive.

A non-binding vote on a similar resolution at the General Assembly scheduled for Tuesday would be largely symbolic.

CRUSHING HAMAS SEEN AS 'TALL ORDER'

Israel and its main ally, the U.S., argue that any cease-fire that leaves Hamas in power, even over a small part of the devastated territory, would mean victory for the militant group, which has governed Gaza since 2007 and has pledged to destroy Israel.

But many experts consider Israel's aims to be unrealistic, pointing to Hamas' deep base of support in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank, where it is seen by many Palestinians as resisting Israel's decades-old military rule.

"Destroying Hamas, even its military capability — Israeli leaders' chief war aim — will be a tall order without decimating what remains of Gaza," said the Crisis Group, an international think tank, in a report over the weekend that also called for an immediate cease-fire.

Gallant said Israel has already inflicted heavy damage on Hamas, killing half the group's battalion commanders and destroying many tunnels, command centers and other facilities.

The Israeli military said Tuesday that its aircraft targeted rocket launching posts throughout Gaza and that ground troops has found 250 rockets, mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenade launchers in a raid.

Israeli officials have said some 7,000 Hamas militants — roughly one-quarter of the group's estimated fighting force — have been killed and that 500 militants have been detained in Gaza the past month, claims that could not be verified. At least 104 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the Gaza ground offensive, the army says.

Gallant said that in northern Gaza, Hamas has been reduced to "islands of resistance," while in the south, where Israel expanded ground operations earlier this month, "they are still organized militarily."

Hamas says it still has thousands of reserve fighters — another unverified claim — and on Monday it fired a barrage of rockets that wounded one person and damaged cars and buildings in a Tel Aviv suburb. The attack set off sirens in the city, where Gallant's office and the military headquarters are located.

Lebanon's Hezbollah has repeatedly traded fire with Israel, and other Iran-backed groups across the region

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have attacked U.S. targets, threatening to widen the conflict. Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have targeted Israeli shipping, attacked a tanker in the Red Sea with no clear ties to the country overnight.

CIVILIAN PLIGHT WORSENS

Israel launched the campaign after Hamas broke through its defenses and militants streamed into the south on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and seizing about 240 others. More than 100 hostages, mostly women and children, were freed during a cease-fire last month in exchange for Israel's release of 240 Palestinian prisoners.

Two months of airstrikes, coupled with a fierce ground invasion, have resulted in the deaths of over 18,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Hamas-run territory. They do not give a breakdown of civilians and combatants but say roughly two-thirds of the dead are women and minors.

The actual toll is likely higher, as thousands are missing and feared dead under the rubble, and efforts to maintain the count have been hindered by the collapse of the health sector in the north.

Israel blames civilian casualties on Hamas, saying it positions fighters, tunnels and rocket launchers in dense urban areas, using civilians as human shields.

With Israel allowing little aid into Gaza and the U.N. largely unable to distribute it amid the fighting, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

Israel has urged people to flee to what it says are safe areas in the south, and fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis — Gaza's second largest — has pushed tens of thousands toward the city of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt.

But Israel has also continued to strike what it says are militant targets in so-called safe zones. Most of the 23 dead brought into the Rafah hospital overnight were from three families, hospital records show.

China's Xi visits Vietnam weeks after it strengthened ties with the US and Japan

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Vietnam on Tuesday seeking to further deepen ties with the Southeast Asian nation, weeks after it elevated its diplomatic relations with Western-aligned countries.

In his first visit since 2017, Xi will meet with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, President Vo Van Thuong and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry said.

"This reflects Beijing's concerns about Hanoi's advances with the West," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow with the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. "Concerns that Vietnam may join an anti-China alliance and gang up against China."

The Chinese leader received a red carpet welcome as Chinh greeted him on the tarmac. Dozens of Chinese and Vietnamese nationals gathered at the airport, waving Chinese and Vietnamese flags to welcome Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, who accompanied him on the visit.

Xi's visit marks 15 years of China being a "comprehensive strategic partner" of Vietnam, the highest official designation for a diplomatic relationship.

Vietnam plays an increasingly important strategic role in security and the economy in Southeast Asia.

Ideologically, Vietnam is closer to Beijing. It is run by a Communist Party with strong ties to China. But in recent months, Vietnam has signaled closer ties with Western countries.

In September, U.S. President Joe Biden visited Vietnam to mark the U.S. being elevated to the same diplomatic status as China. Biden asserted that the stronger ties were not about countering China, though U.S. diplomacy across Asia and the Pacific has been focused on improving defense ties with countries to do just that.

In November, Japan and Vietnam boosted their economic and security ties, citing a "free and open Indo-Pacific," with Japan being given the same diplomatic status as China and the U.S.. Japan has been rapidly developing closer ties with Vietnam and is its third-largest foreign investor.

Experts say Vietnam is hedging against its large neighbor and its geographical claims.

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"You can see that they're flexible and balancing big powers," said Nguyen Thanh Trung, a professor of Vietnamese studies at Fulbright University Vietnam.

Vietnam is one of several countries to clash with China in the disputed South China Sea, particularly on two archipelagos, the Spratlys and the Paracel Islands. It has faced off with China's coast guard in the past in the disputed waters. Vietnam usually does not publicize the confrontations.

In October, Xi told the Vietnamese president that amid "changing international landscapes" the two nations should continue to develop their "traditional friendship."

The two spoke after attending China's Belt and Road Forum. Vietnam is likely to sign some infrastructure agreements with Beijing, as it has paid close attention to the development of the Chinese-built high-speed rail in Laos, completed in 2021.

"The Vietnamese prime minister wants to focus on more infrastructure," said Nguyen, the professor. "He thinks it's key to economic growth."

China has been Vietnam's largest trading partner for several years, with a bilateral trade turnover of \$175.6 billion in 2022. Imports from China, including crucial inputs for Vietnam's manufacturing sector, make up 67%, according to Vietnam customs data cited by Vietnamese state media.

However, the trade is at a deficit in China's favor.

China has over \$26 billion invested in Vietnam, with more than 4,000 active projects.

Xi's 2017 visit to Vietnam was for an Asia-Pacific economic summit in the coastal city of Danang.

Zelenskyy will arrive on Capitol Hill to grim mood as Biden's aid package for Ukraine risks collapse

By LISA MASCARO and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will arrive on Capitol Hill to a darker mood than when he swooped in last winter for a hero's welcome, as the Russian invasion is grinding into a third year and U.S. funding hangs in balance.

Zelenskyy's visit Tuesday comes as President Joe Biden's request for an additional \$110 billion U.S. aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs is at serious risk of collapse in Congress. Republicans are insisting on strict U.S.-Mexico border security changes that Democrats decry as draconian in exchange for the overseas aid.

"It is maddening," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a close ally of Biden, of the stalemate. "A very bad message to the world, to the Ukrainian people."

The White House said the time was right for Zelenskyy's trip to Washington as Biden pushes lawmakers to approve the aid package before the year-end holidays. But the mood turned grim at the Capitol on the eve of his arrival.

Zelenskyy will meet privately with senators and new House Speaker Mike Johnson, then talk with Biden at the White House as the once robust bipartisan support for Ukraine was slipping further out of reach.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's high-stakes meetings, the White House late Monday pointed to newly declassified intelligence that shows Ukraine has inflicted heavy losses on Russia in recent fighting along the Avdiivka-Novopavlivka axis — including 13,000 casualties and over 220 combat vehicle losses. The Ukrainian holdout in the country's partly-occupied east has been the center of some of the fiercest fighting in recent weeks.

U.S. intelligence officials have determined that the Russians think if they can achieve a military deadlock through the winter it will drain Western support for Ukraine and ultimately give Russia the advantage, despite the fact that Russians have sustained heavy losses and have been slowed by persistent shortages of trained personnel, munitions, and equipment.

"Russia is determined to press forward with its offensive despite its losses. It is more critical now than ever that we maintain our support for Ukraine so they can continue to hold the line and regain their territory," said White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. She added that Russian President Vladimir Putin "is clearly watching what happens in Congress — and we need Congress to act

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this month to support Ukraine in its time of need.”

Republicans in Congress, fueled by Johnson’s far-right flank in the House, have taken on an increasingly isolationist stance in U.S. foreign policy, demanding changes to American border and immigration policies in exchange for any funds to battle Putin’s war in Ukraine.

Biden has expressed a willingness to engage with the Republicans as migrant crossings have hit record highs along the U.S.-Mexico border, but Democrats in his own party oppose the proposals for expedited deportations and strict asylum standards as a return to Trump-era hostility towards migrants.

With talks at a standstill, one chief Republican negotiator, Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, said there was nothing Zelenskyy could say during his visit with the senators to sway the outcome.

“Hey, pay attention to us, but not your own country? No,” Lankford told reporters. “We’ve got to be able to deal with all these things together.”

Zelenskyy, who visited Washington just months ago in September when the aid package was first being considered, is making his third trip to the Capitol since the war broke out in February 2022.

His surprise arrival days before Christmas last December was Zelenskyy’s first wartime trip out of Ukraine and he received thunderous applause in Congress. Lawmakers sported the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine, and Zelenskyy, delivering a speech that drew on the parallels to World War II as he thanked Americans for their support, presented the country’s flag signed by frontline troops to then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

But 2023 brought a new power center of hard-right Republicans, many aligned with Donald Trump, the former president who is now the GOP front-runner in the 2024 race for the White House.

New Speaker Johnson, on the job since October when Republicans ousted their previous leader Kevin McCarthy, has spoken publicly in favor of aiding Ukraine, as has Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell. But it’s not certain they can steer an aid package through the House’s right flank.

Republican Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Zelenskyy has an opportunity to impress on Johnson in their private talk “the moral clarity and why is Ukraine important.”

He said Zelenskyy could shake up the stalemate in Congress by reminding Johnson and the senators, “If we abandon our NATO allies and Ukraine, like we did in Afghanistan, we’re just going to invite more aggression and embolden and empower our adversaries.”

Zelenskyy kicked off the quick visit to Washington on Monday, warning in a speech at a defense university that Russia may be fighting in Ukraine but its “real target is freedom” in America and around the world.

“If there’s anyone inspired by unresolved issues on Capitol Hill, it’s just Putin and his sick clique,” Zelenskyy told an audience of military leaders and students at the National Defense University on Monday.

He noted that on this day 82 years ago the U.S. went to combat in Europe, as then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the declaration of war against Germany. Now, he said, though the U.S. has no troops on the ground in Ukraine, it is supplying critically needed weapons and equipment.

Of the new \$110 billion national security package, \$61.4 billion would go toward Ukraine — with about half, some \$30 billion, going to the Defense Department to replenish weaponry it is supplying to Ukraine, and the other half for humanitarian assistance and to help the Ukrainian government function with emergency responders, public works and other operations.

The package includes another nearly \$14 billion for Israel as it fights Hamas and \$14 billion for U.S. border security. Additional funds would go for national security needs in the Asia-Pacific region.

The U.S. has already provided Ukraine \$111 billion for its fight against Russia’s 2022 invasion.

“Putin still aims to conquer the country of Ukraine and subjugate its people,” Watson said.

The White House has been more engaged with Congress, with Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas in some discussions, according to a person familiar with the talks and granted anonymity to discuss them. But Republicans said the Democrats did not respond to their latest offer.

Border security talks have focused on making it more difficult for migrants to claim asylum and releasing fewer migrants temporarily into the U.S. while they await proceedings to determine if they can remain

more permanently.

Republicans have also proposed allowing the president to shutter parts of the border when crossings reach high numbers, as they have for the past two years. One White House idea would expand the ability to conduct expedited deportations, drawing alarm from immigrant advocates.

As border talks drag, Biden's budget director said last week 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.

According to the Defense Department, there is about \$4.8 billion remaining in presidential drawdown authority, which pulls weapons from existing U.S. stockpiles and sends them quickly to the war front, and about \$1.1 billion left in funding to replenish the U.S. military stockpiles.

Battle over creating new court centers on equality in Mississippi's majority-Black capital city

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The constitutional right of equal treatment under the law is at the center of a monthslong legal fight over a state-run court in part of Mississippi's majority-Black capital city of Jackson.

A federal judge is set to hear arguments Dec. 19 over the Capitol Complex Improvement District Court, which is scheduled to be created Jan. 1.

The new court would be led by a state-appointed judge and prosecutors, and it would be the equivalent of a municipal court, handling misdemeanor cases. Municipal judges and prosecutors in Mississippi are typically appointed by local elected officials, but legislators who created the CCID Court said it was part of a package to fight crime.

The Justice Department says the new court would continue Mississippi's long history of trying to suppress Black people's right to participate in government.

"Just like many past efforts to undermine Black political power, (the law) singles out the majority-Black City of Jackson for loss of local control of its judicial system and ability to self-govern and enforce its own municipal laws," wrote Kristen Clarke, assistant attorney general for the department's Civil Rights Division, and Todd Gee, the U.S. attorney for south Mississippi, in a Dec. 5 federal court filing.

The state's Republican attorney general disagrees, saying in a separate filing Thursday that the NAACP and Jackson residents who are suing the state have failed to prove they would be harmed.

Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch and Rex Shannon, a special assistant state attorney general, wrote on behalf of Fitch, Mississippi Public Safety Commissioner Sean Tindell and Capitol Police Chief Bo Luckey that blocking creation of the new court would cause irreparable harm.

"The Legislature established the CCID Court to address Jackson's clearly-recognized, ongoing public-safety and criminal-justice emergencies," Fitch and Shannon wrote. "Those emergencies gravely affect not just those living in Jackson, but all Mississippians."

Plaintiffs are asking U.S. District Judge Henry Wingate to block creation of the new court in the district that includes state government buildings downtown and some residential and business areas, including predominantly white neighborhoods.

The court would consider misdemeanor cases, with a judge appointed by the state Supreme Court chief justice and prosecutors appointed by the state attorney general — both of whom are white and politically conservative.

Opponents say the new court would affect not only people who live or work in the district but also those who are ticketed for speeding or other misdemeanor violations there.

Mississippi legislators voted during the spring to expand the territory for the state-run Capitol Police to patrol inside Jackson. They also voted to authorize the chief justice to appoint four judges to serve alongside the four elected circuit court judges in Hinds County, where Jackson is located, and to create the Capitol Complex Improvement District Court.

Opponents of the changes said Republican Gov. Tate Reeves and the Republican-controlled and majority-white Legislature were usurping local autonomy in Jackson and Hinds County, which are both majority-

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Black and governed by Democrats.

Justice Department officials wrote that creating a new municipal-level court with a state-appointed judge and prosecutors unconstitutionally treats Jackson residents differently from other Mississippi residents.

Frank Figgers, a lifelong Jackson resident who is Black and describes himself as a community activist and NAACP member, wrote in a Nov. 13 court filing that the chief justice and the attorney general "are not accountable to me as a voter."

Chief Justice Mike Randolph is elected from a district that does not include Jackson. Fitch won a second term during the Nov. 7 statewide election, but she trailed her Democratic challenger in Hinds County.

"In light of the long history of racism in Mississippi, my vote is the best means I have to ensure that public officials will treat me and my community fairly and equally," Figgers wrote, adding that Fitch and Randolph "don't need my vote, and as far as I can tell, they have made no attempt to understand my community."

Mark Nelson, an attorney representing Randolph, responded in a Nov. 16 filing, asking Wingate to strike "disgraceful" statements by Figgers and other NAACP members from court records.

"Accusations of racism unsupported by facts or evidence are harassment and scandalous," Nelson wrote.

In September, the state Supreme Court struck down the part of the same law dealing with appointed circuit court judges to handle felony cases and civil lawsuits. Justices noted that Mississippi law allows the chief justice to appoint judges for specific reasons, such as dealing with a backlog of cases. But they wrote that they saw "nothing special or unique" about the four appointed circuit judges in the law this year. Randolph recused himself from that case.

Hong Kong leader praises election turnout as voter numbers hit record low

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong leader John Lee on Tuesday praised the 27.5% voter turnout in the city's weekend election, a record low since the territory returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Sunday's district council election was the first held under new rules introduced under Beijing's direction that effectively shut out all pro-democracy candidates.

"The turnout of 1.2 million voters has indicated that they supported the election, they supported the principles," Lee said at a news conference.

"It is important that we focus our attention on the outcome of the election, and the outcome will mean a constructive district council, rather than what used to be a destructive one," he said.

Sunday's turnout was significantly less than the record 71.2% of Hong Kong's 4.3 million registered voters who participated in the last election, held at the height of anti-government protests in 2019, which the pro-democracy camp won by a landslide.

Lee said there was resistance to Sunday's election from prospective candidates who were rejected under the new rules for being not qualified or lacking the principles of "patriots" administering Hong Kong.

"There are still some people who somehow are still immersed in the wrong idea of trying to make the district council a political platform for their own political means, achieving their own gains rather than the district's gain," he said.

The district councils, which primarily handle municipal matters such as organizing construction projects and public facilities, were Hong Kong's last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public.

But under the new electoral rules introduced under a Beijing order that only "patriots" should administer the city, candidates must secure endorsements from at least nine members of government-appointed committees that are mostly packed with Beijing loyalists, making it virtually impossible for any pro-democracy candidates to run.

An amendment passed in July also slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from about 90% to about 20%.

"The de facto boycott indicates low public acceptance of the new electoral arrangement and its democratic representativeness," Dominic Chiu, senior analyst at research firm Eurasia Group, wrote in a note.

Chiu said the low turnout represents a silent protest against the shrinking of civil liberties in the city following Beijing's imposition of a tough national security law that makes it difficult to express opposition.

"Against this backdrop, the public took the elections as a rare opportunity to make their opposition to the new normal known — by not turning up to vote," he said.

Since the introduction of the law, many prominent pro-democracy activists have been arrested or have fled the territory.

Journalists tackle a political what-if: What might a second Trump presidency look like?

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Even before anyone has cast a vote in a 2024 presidential primary, the attention of many political journalists has shifted to Jan. 20, 2025.

There has been a flurry of recent stories about the implications of a potential second presidency for Donald Trump, and his team's planning for Inauguration Day and beyond. Polls show his continued dominance over Republican rivals and the likelihood of a close general election.

The New York Times reporting team of Charlie Savage, Jonathan Swan and Maggie Haberman has been mining that topic since the summer, and last week wrote in depth about the former president's authoritarian impulses, and the possibility of fewer checks on his power. On Sunday, they examined whether Trump would leave NATO.

A special issue of The Atlantic magazine released last week collected essays by 24 writers on how a Trump presidency would affect things like foreign policy, immigration, journalism and climate change. Editor Jeffrey Goldberg wrote that people should read every one, "though perhaps not in one sitting, for reasons of mental hygiene."

Among several other pieces:

1. The Washington Post outlined plans by Trump and allies to use the federal government to punish opponents, and Editor-at-large Robert Kagan suggested that a Trump dictatorship was "increasingly inevitable."
2. The Associated Press has written extensively about the implications of Trump's campaign rhetoric. Also, detailed planning by conservative groups for a second Trump term was outlined by AP.
3. Politico's Jack Shafer wrote about Trump's "recipe for a shockingly raw power grab."
4. Axios collected speculation on the possible staffing of a second Trump administration. Can you say Vice President Tucker Carlson?

TOO MUCH? EVEN TRUMP'S PEOPLE PRESCRIBE CAUTION

The volume of stories had reached the point where the Trump campaign at the end of last week sent a memo calling on allies and former aides to cool it, saying messages about a potential second term from anyone but the former president and his team were "an unwelcomed distraction."

"The stakes are high," said David Halbfinger, politics editor at the Times. "We saw on Jan. 6 of 2021, when we cover politics, we don't just cover elections. We cover democracy now. Everybody has to take their jobs seriously, and it's good to see that everybody is."

For decades, journalists have been criticized for concentrating too much on the "horse race" aspect of politics: who's winning, who's losing and the machinations of campaigns. With the Republican and Democratic nomination processes uncompetitive so far, there's less taste for it.

Much of the recent reporting is an emphatic example of what New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen calls "stakes journalism," or examining the potential consequences of an election.

As Trump talks about retribution and his challengers fail to dent his popularity, the story line about threats to democracy "becomes more and more plausible," Rosen said. "Horse race coverage feels more and more trivial. At least it does to me."

At the same time, reporters have discovered the extent to which Trump allies have been specifically planning for a return to power, Halbfinger said. Journalists have learned — or should learn — to take seriously what the former president says while campaigning.

"The skeptics who might have consoled themselves about the first term of Trump, saying that he's too incompetent to get things done, they can't console themselves by saying Trump and his people don't know what they're doing this time," he said. "They've learned a lot and they're preparing."

Goldberg said in an interview that he began thinking of The Atlantic's special issue when reporting this summer for a piece on General Mark Milley's actions in the waning days of the Trump administration. He said he saw the value of putting in one place all of the potential impacts of Trump 2.0 — in what The Atlantic labels "a warning."

While he has no specific metrics about reader response, Goldberg said "I didn't think it would be so galvanizing."

MORE SUCH COVERAGE? OR IS IT BIASED?

Rosen and Margaret Sullivan, who hosts the podcast "American Crisis: Can Journalism Save Democracy?", have repeatedly urged for more of this coverage. Journalists should report "with far more vigor — and repetition — than they do about Biden being 80 years old," Sullivan wrote last month in a column for The Guardian.

Both Sullivan and Rosen said they were encouraged by the recent reporting. Not surprisingly, that's not the case among Trump supporters.

Jordan Boyd said in the Federalist last week that corporate media was trying to "gaslight Americans" and are leading a coordinated effort to paint a potential 2024 Trump victory as the beginning of a cruel and unyielding dictatorship.

There's a "whole new level of panic" in the media about polls that have shown Trump matching up well against President Joe Biden, said Tim Graham, director of media analysis at the conservative watchdog group Media Research Center.

"There's a frustration with, 'Why can't we destroy this guy?'" Graham said. "I think everyone figured that 91 indictments would do the trick and it did the opposite."

The question remains whether the new reporting will be noticed by people who rely mostly on conservative media.

"I'm just not sure it's sinking in to the public in general," said Sullivan, incoming executive director of a journalism ethics center at Columbia University. "There's a lot of people who understand there's a threat to democracy that comes with a second Trump presidency and there are a lot of people who continue to think that it's a normal presidential contest. I don't think that's the case."

Goldberg said he hopes people hand a copy of The Atlantic to "their on-the-fence uncle" over the holidays.

"We have to do whatever we think is right and we have to try as hard as we can to advance the ideas that we think are true and good," he said. "If people listen, great. And if people don't listen, we still have to do it. That's our role. We also want to be able to tell our grandchildren that we tried hard."

Whitmer's fight for abortion rights helped turn Michigan blue. She's eyeing national impact now

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Ten years ago, as Michigan's Republican-led Legislature was on the verge of passing one of the nation's most restrictive anti-abortion laws at the time, a 42-year-old state senator from East Lansing took to the Senate floor to speak out against what she knew was about to happen.

Minutes into her speech, Democrat Gretchen Whitmer tossed aside her prepared remarks and revealed for the first time publicly that she had been raped while attending college. Had she become pregnant, Whitmer said, she would not have been able to afford an abortion under the proposed law.

The bill, which Whitmer had derisively called "rape insurance" because it required women to declare when buying health insurance whether they expected to receive an abortion, passed anyway. But Whitmer, now in her second term as Michigan's governor after winning reelection by nearly 11 percentage points in 2022, this week removed the requirement from state law with the stroke of a pen after Michigan's Democratic-controlled Legislature sent her a bill tossing it aside.

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"It's kind of a stunning full-circle moment where it does reinforce that these fights are worth having and they're winnable, even if sometimes it takes a little longer than it should," Whitmer said Monday in an interview with The Associated Press.

Whitmer recalled the hundreds of calls and emails she received after her 2013 speech as a turning point for her, the moment when she realized how much people care about protecting a woman's right to choose whether she should have an abortion. It's a lesson she hopes to drive home all over the country as one of the nation's leading abortion rights advocates during what could prove to be a pivotal election year for the issue in 2024.

"The voters speak loud and clear," she said. "And so I do think that in this moment, in this country, this is an important, crucial issue for a lot of people."

Abortion rights moved to the political forefront after the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022 overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that had long preserved them as a constitutional right. The court gave states the power to decide for themselves whether abortion should be legal.

Conservative states across the country moved quickly to enact abortion bans in various forms, leading to a wave of legal fights in places such as Texas, where a pregnant woman whose fetus has a fatal condition was forced to leave the state this week to obtain an abortion. Some Republicans, including several contenders for the GOP presidential nomination, have also called for a national abortion ban.

The political fallout at the ballot box has mostly gone in the opposite direction. Democrats did better than expected in last year's midterms, limiting their House losses and maintaining a narrow Senate majority, and defending abortion rights worked in Democrats' favor in several states again this year. When constitutional questions about abortion rights appeared on the ballot, even voters in Republican-leaning states from Kansas to Ohio rejected GOP-backed efforts to curb them.

Whitmer says Democrats have won in Michigan by running unapologetically on the issue. Her party controls all levels of state government for the first time in 40 years after flipping both chambers of the Legislature last November.

That success was fueled by a citizen-led ballot initiative to enshrine abortion rights in the state Constitution in the wake of the Supreme Court decision. Whitmer and other Michigan Democrats emphasized their support for the initiative in their 2022 election campaigns.

President Joe Biden's reelection campaign views the defense of abortion rights as a winning issue for Democrats in 2024. They are quick to make note of boasts by former President Donald Trump that his appointment of three conservative Supreme Court justices instigated the court's reversal.

Biden himself is less outspoken on the issue than other members of his party, and occasionally seems personally conflicted.

"I happen to be a practicing Catholic. I'm not big on abortion," he said during a June fundraiser. "But guess what? *Roe v. Wade* got it right."

Biden's hesitancy comes as his reelection campaign faces vulnerabilities. Michigan was a critical component of the so-called blue wall of states, including Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, that Biden returned to the Democratic column, helping him win the White House in 2020.

The president's support in the state has wavered since the 2020 election, however, and a CNN poll released Monday showed that only 35% of respondents approved of the job he's been doing.

Michigan is also home to one of the largest Arab-American and Muslim communities in the nation, and many of their leaders have been vocal about saying that his pro-Israel stance on the war that began with an attack by Hamas on Oct. 7 could jeopardize his chances to win in Michigan again.

Whitmer, who is co-chair of Biden's reelection campaign and has herself been frequently mentioned as a future presidential candidate, deflected questions Monday about his chances in Michigan, insisting that she was only going to "focus on reproductive rights today."

Whitmer also said she understands that talking about abortion is "not comfortable for everyone." But she said the chances of Republicans pushing for a federal ban on abortion should be taken seriously.

For her, that's reason enough to talk about abortion rights early, often and unequivocally.

"The prospect of a national abortion ban is real," she said. Using other words to talk about reproductive

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rights or being overly cautious about the issue, she said, "dilutes the importance of the moment."

In June, Whitmer launched a "Fight Like Hell" federal PAC to raise money for Democratic candidates who are "unapologetic in their fight for working people and their basic freedoms" heading into the 2024 election. The PAC will support candidates for Congress and other offices but also will provide financial support for Biden's reelection bid.

Since winning full legislative control, Michigan Democrats have struck down the state's 1931 abortion ban, prohibited Michigan companies from firing or retaliating against workers for receiving an abortion and lifted regulations on abortion clinics.

For Whitmer, those successes help justify her decision a decade ago to discuss abortion in such personal terms.

"I think about my daughters who I was so worried to hear that their mom had been raped when they were 10 and 11 years old," Whitmer said. "And now they're 20 and 21, and I know they're proud to see that I've stayed in this fight, and I'm trying to make life better for other women."

US inflation likely cooled again last month as Fed prepares to assess interest rates

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — This year's steady slowdown in U.S. inflation likely continued in November, though the latest data may also point to steadily higher prices in some areas of the economy.

Tuesday's inflation report from the Labor Department is expected to show that businesses kept overall prices unchanged for a second straight month.

Falling gas prices, in particular, are thought to have offset a rise in food costs from October to November. And compared with a year earlier, inflation is expected to ease to 3.1% from 3.2% in October, according to a survey of economists by FactSet.

But a closely watched category called "core prices," which excludes volatile food and energy costs, is predicted to rise 0.3% from October to November — a monthly pace that far outpaces the Federal Reserve's 2% annual inflation target. On a year-over-year basis, core prices are expected to increase 4%, the same as in October.

The Fed considers core prices to be a better guide to the likely path of inflation. Analysts say that increases in the costs of hotel rooms, airfares and possibly used cars might have accelerated core prices in November.

Gas prices, by contrast, have tumbled since September, having reached a national average of about \$3.35 a gallon in mid-November, from a peak of \$5 about a year and a half ago, according to AAA. The national average has since fallen further and hit \$3.15 a gallon Monday.

Grocery store inflation has proved especially persistent and a drain on many households' finances. Food prices remain about 25% higher than they were two years ago.

If core prices did rise 4% in November from a year earlier for a second straight month, it would provide support for the Fed's expected decision Wednesday to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged for a third straight time. Chair Jerome Powell and other Fed officials have welcomed inflation's steady fall from 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.2% in October. But they have cautioned that the pace of price increases is still too high for the Fed to let down its guard.

As a result, even if the central bank is done raising rates, it's expected to keep its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, at a peak for at least several more months.

Powell has even warned that the Fed might decide to raise rates again if it deems it necessary to defeat high inflation. The Fed raised its key short-term rate 11 times starting in March 2022, to 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years. Its goal has been to increase the costs of mortgages, auto loans, business borrowing and other credit to slow spending enough to further cool inflation.

Inflation has eased much faster this year than economists and Fed officials had expected. According to a

separate inflation gauge that the Fed prefers, core prices rose 3.5% in October compared with 12 months earlier. That was less than the central bank's forecast of 3.7% for the final three months of this year.

Inflation's steady decline has sparked speculation about interest rate cuts next year, with some economists floating the potential for cuts as early as March. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge has increased at an annual pace of just 2.5% in the past six months.

But Powell has so far brushed aside the idea that the Fed might cut rates anytime soon. He is expected to say so again Wednesday.

"It would be premature," Powell said earlier this month, "to speculate" on the possibility of Fed rate cuts.

How the 2016 election could factor into the case accusing Trump of trying to overturn the 2020 race

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — To hear his lawyers tell it, Donald Trump was alarmed by Russia's interference in the 2016 election, motivated as president to focus on cybersecurity and had a good-faith basis four years later to worry that foreign actors had again meddled in the race.

But to federal prosecutors, 2016 is significant as the year that Trump spread misinformation about voter fraud and proved himself resistant to accepting the outcome of elections that might not go his way.

Even though a trial set for next year in Washington is centered on Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election, lawyers on both sides have signaled their desire — for totally different purposes — to draw attention to the tumultuous presidential contest four years earlier as a way to help explain his state of mind after his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

"When we're talking about someone's belief or mental state, there is usually no one piece of evidence that is dispositive," said David Aaron, a former Justice Department national security prosecutor. "There's usually multiple data points that each side will argue indicates one mental state or the other."

The callback to the 2016 race is perhaps not surprising given the history-making events of that year, when Russian operatives interfered in the election with what U.S. officials say was a goal of getting Trump elected over his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton. The meddling and its aftermath thrust the topic of election security and faith in democratic processes to the forefront of American discourse.

It will ultimately be up to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to determine what evidence is admissible at trial and what materials defense lawyers are entitled to get from prosecutors as part of the information-sharing process known as discovery. Special counsel Jack Smith's team says information about the 2016 election being sought by the defense is "wholly irrelevant" to the current case while telling Trump's lawyers and the judge that it wants to present evidence about Trump's history of claiming fraud.

The interest in 2016 was laid bare in recent court filings, including one in which defense lawyers made a long-shot request to force prosecutors to turn over all materials, including a classified version of a U.S. intelligence assessment, related to Russian interference and influence operations in that election.

They say the intelligence community's 2017 assessment that Russia's meddling in the race reflected a "significant escalation" by the Kremlin has direct bearing on Trump's confidence, or lack thereof, in the security of the 2020 election and helps explain the basis for him to have been "skeptical about the absence of foreign influence" in that year's race.

They also contend that actions he took as president, including a 2018 executive order imposing sanctions for foreign election interference, show he took the subject seriously. And they argue that the intelligence community assessment that Russia in 2016 sowed public discord shows Trump is not responsible for creating the environment prosecutors are now trying to "blame" him for.

"This evidence rebuts the position of the Special Counsel's Office that President Trump's actions between November 2020 and January 2021 were motivated by a desire to maintain office and undertaken with specific intent and unlawful purpose," defense lawyers wrote.

The motion, which glosses over the fact that Trump was the intended beneficiary of Russian interference in 2016 and that Trump as president often sought to minimize that assessment, is pending. Even if it's

unlikely Trump's lawyers will be able to persuade Chutkan to order prosecutors to produce the materials, the request opens a window into a line of defense the team could raise.

In a response, federal prosecutors said they were not in possession of the classified information being demanded and that the request was part of an effort to delay the case. They also say there's no evidence the 2020 race was tainted by foreign interference.

Meanwhile, Smith's team sees 2016 as relevant for other reasons.

The prosecutors say they want the jury to hear Trump's "historical record" of sowing doubt in election results, including in 2016, when he claimed without evidence before Election Day that there had been widespread fraud and refused during a debate with Clinton to promise to respect the results of the election.

The behavior started even earlier, Smith's team notes, when Trump falsely claimed during the 2012 election that voting machines had switched votes from Republican candidate Mitt Romney to Democrat Barack Obama.

"The defendant's false claims about the 2012 and 2016 elections are admissible because they demonstrate the defendant's common plan of falsely blaming fraud for election results he does not like, as well as his motive, intent, and plan to obstruct the certification of the 2020 election results and illegitimately retain power," prosecutors wrote.

Although the federal rules of evidence don't permit prosecutors to present evidence of prior bad acts to prove a person's character, they can do so to establish intent, motive or preparation — which is what prosecutors say they want to do here.

Such evidence could be compelling for a jury to the extent it shows Trump's effort to undo the 2020 results was part of a long-running pattern of behavior, said Tamara Lave, a professor at the University of Miami law school.

"When Trump takes the stand or when the lawyers argue, 'He didn't mean this, he was just saying this, that's just Trump's way, he's just over the top,' the government gets to say, 'No, that's not what's going on here. You've seen this over and over and over again. And so the fact that it's been going on for so long is an indication that there's nothing accidental about it,'" she added.

Lauren Ouziel, a former federal prosecutor and a professor at Temple University's law school, said she expected prosecutors to be able to use Trump's prior statements at trial, but it will be up to jurors to decide how meaningful the evidence is.

"Prosecutors like to use an analogy of bricks in a wall: 'We're going to give you evidence brick by brick, and by the end of the trial, it'll all fit together,'" she said. "And I would call this some of the bricks."

As COP28 nears finish, critics say proposal 'doesn't even come close' to what's needed on climate

By JON GAMBRELL, JAMEY KEATEN, SIBI ARASU and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Negotiators from around the world haggled deep into the night to try to strike a deal to halt global warming at United Nations climate talks, with Western powers and vulnerable developing countries worried that a proposed text fell far short of goals to save the planet.

A new draft released Monday of what's known as the global stocktake — the part of talks that assesses where the world is at with its climate goals and how it can reach them — called for countries to reduce "consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner."

The release triggered a frenzy of fine-tuning by government envoys and rapid analysis by advocacy groups, just hours before the planned late morning finish to the talks on Tuesday — even though many observers expect the finale to run over time, as is common at the annual U.N. talks.

Bangladesh climate envoy Saber Chowdhury said a revised text would be presented Tuesday morning that takes into account the many comments from participants.

"It'll be new. To what extent it's improved remains to be seen," he said shortly after the session ended at around 2 a.m.

In a closed-door meeting late Monday, some country delegation chiefs needed COP28 President Sultan

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al-Jaber's frequent calling of the goal to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times his "north star," saying the president's proposal misses that star.

"It is not enough to say 1.5, we have to do 1.5. We have to deliver accordingly," Norway minister Espen Barth Eide said.

Some Pacific Island nations argued the text amounted to a death sentence.

The proposed text "doesn't even come close to delivering 1.5 as a north star," Tuvalu's delegation chief Seve Paeniu said. "For us this is a matter of survival. We cannot put loopholes in our children's futures."

Small island nations are some of the most vulnerable places in a world of rising temperatures and seas. Final decisions by COPs have to be by consensus. Activists said they feared that potential objections from fossil fuel countries, such as Saudi Arabia, had watered down the text.

United States climate envoy John Kerry says the language on fossil fuels in the text "does not meet the test" of keeping 1.5 alive.

"I, like most of you here, refuse to be part of a charade" of not phasing out fossil fuels, Kerry said. "This is a war for survival."

Kerry's remarks received a round of applause from the room. But when he left the meeting, climate activists confronted Kerry, calling for more action, saying their future was at stake.

"Young voters like me who want to vote for Biden and who want to vote Democratic are not feeling that our voices are being heard and that we need a transition away and out of fossil fuels," said activist Elizabeth Morrison.

Zhao Yingmin, China's vice minister for Ecology and Environment, said at the meeting that "the draft fails to address the concerns of developing countries on some key issues" and in particular the idea that greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025.

Saudi Arabia's Noura Alissa said the deal "must work for all."

"It must be relevant, it must make to sense to accelerate action for every single country in this room, not some over others," she said.

Philda Nani Kereng of Botswana said her country "is a developing country ... it's still, you know, exploiting natural resources for economic development, for livelihood improvement, for job creation and so forth."

Talking about what the outcome of the talks should be, she said "we are very careful to make sure that it's not going to sort of stop us from developing our people."

"We need to find a solution that has maximum ambition and maximum equity," South Africa minister Barbara Creecy said as negotiators broke well after midnight. "One without the other will not solve the conundrum we face."

A combination of activists and delegation members lined the entry into the special late-evening meeting Monday of heads of delegations, with their arms raised in unity as delegations walked through, creating a tunnel-like effect. A few activists told delegates passing by: "You are our last hope. We count on you."

In the 21-page document, the words oil and natural gas did not appear, and the word coal appeared twice. It also had a single mention of carbon capture, a technology touted by some to reduce emissions although it's untested at scale.

Activists said the text was written by the COP28 presidency, run by an Emirati oil company CEO — Al-Jaber — and pounced on its perceived shortcomings. It fell fall short of a widespread push to phase out fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal altogether.

Al-Jaber skipped a planned news conference and headed straight into a meeting with delegates just after 6:30 p.m. It was the second time for him to cancel a press briefing on Monday.

"We have a text and we need to agree on the text," al-Jaber said. "The time for discussion is coming to an end and there's no time for hesitation. The time to decide is now."

He added: "We must still close many gaps. We don't have time to waste."

Critics said there was a lot to do.

"COP28 is now on the verge of complete failure," former U.S. Vice President and climate activist Al Gore posted on X. "The world desperately needs to phase out fossil fuels as quickly as possible, but this obsequious draft reads as if OPEC dictated it word for word. ... It is deeply offensive to all who have taken

this process seriously.”

Jean Su from the Center for Biological Diversity said the text “moves disastrously backward from original language offering a phaseout of fossil fuels.”

“If this race-to-the-bottom monstrosity gets enshrined as the final word, this crucial COP will be a failure,” Su said.

But Mohamed Adow of Power Shift Africa said the “text lays the ground for transformational change.”

“This is the first COP where the word fossil fuels are actually included in the draft decision. This is the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era,” he said.

Also on Monday, the latest draft on the Global Goal on Adaptation — the text on how countries, especially vulnerable ones, can adapt to weather extremes and climate harms — was released on Monday.

Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, a senior advisor for adaptation and resilience at the U.N. Foundation said “the new text doesn’t have the strength that we were hoping to see.”

Israeli defense chief resists pressure to halt Gaza offensive, says campaign will ‘take time’

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, WAFAA SHURAFU and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel’s defense minister on Monday pushed back against international calls to wrap up the country’s military offensive in the Gaza Strip, saying the current phase of the operation against the Hamas militant group will “take time.”

Yoav Gallant, a member of Israel’s three-man war cabinet, remained unswayed by a growing chorus of criticism over the widespread damage and heavy civilian death toll caused by the two-month military campaign. The U.N. secretary-general and leading Arab states have called for an immediate cease-fire. The United States has urged Israel to reduce civilian casualties, though it has provided unwavering diplomatic and military support.

Israel launched the campaign after Hamas militants stormed across its southern border on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and kidnapping about 240 others.

Two months of airstrikes, coupled with a fierce ground invasion, have resulted in the deaths of over 17,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Hamas-run territory. They do not give a breakdown between civilians and combatants but say that roughly two-thirds of the dead have been women and minors. Nearly 85% of the territory’s 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes.

In a briefing with The Associated Press, Gallant refused to commit to any firm deadlines, but he signaled that the current phase, characterized by heavy ground fighting backed up by air power, could stretch on for weeks and that further military activity could continue for months.

“We are going to defend ourselves. I am fighting for Israel’s future,” he said.

Gallant said the next phase would be lower-intensity fighting against “pockets of resistance” and would require Israeli troops to maintain their freedom of operation. “That’s a sign the next phase has begun,” he said.

Gallant spoke as Israeli forces battled militants in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where the military opened a new line of attack last week. Battles were also still underway in parts of Gaza City and the urban Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble and many thousands of civilians are still trapped by the fighting.

Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and gets back all of the hostages. It says Hamas still has 117 hostages and the remains of 20 people who died in captivity or during the initial attack. More than 100 captives were freed last month during a weeklong truce.

Gallant keeps a framed picture on the desk of his spacious office with pictures of all the children taken hostage. All but two are marked with small hearts, signaling their release from captivity.

HEAVY FIGHTING

In central Gaza, an Israeli airstrike overnight flattened a residential building where some 80 people were

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staying in the Maghazi refugee camp, residents said.

Ahmed al-Qarah, a neighbor who was digging through the rubble for survivors, said he knew of only six people who made it out. "The rest are under the building," he said. At a nearby hospital, family members sobbed over the bodies of several of the dead from the strike.

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

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

Gallant blamed Hamas for the heavy civilian death toll, saying that the militant group maintains a network of tunnels underneath schools, streets and hospitals.

He claimed that Israel has inflicted heavy damage on Hamas, killing half of the group's battalion commanders and destroying many tunnels, command centers and weapons facilities.

Israeli officials have said some 7,000 Hamas militants — roughly one-quarter of the group's fighting force — have been killed throughout the war and that 500 militants have been detained in Gaza the past month. The claims could not be independently verified. Israel says 104 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza ground offensive.

The result, he said, is that in the northern Gaza Strip, Hamas has been reduced to "islands of resistance" acting on the whims of local commanders.

In southern Gaza, he said the situation is different. "They are still organized militarily," he said.

Gallant also said Israel has recovered "hundreds of terabytes" of information about Hamas from computers its troops have seized.

Despite the reported battlefield setbacks, Hamas on Monday fired a barrage of rockets that set off sirens in Tel Aviv, where Gallant's office and Israeli military headquarters are located.

One person was lightly wounded, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service. Israel's Channel 12 television broadcast footage of a cratered road and damage to cars and buildings in a suburb.

HARROWING JOURNEY

The U.N. humanitarian office, known as OCHA, described a harrowing journey through the battle zone in northern Gaza by a U.N. and Red Crescent convoy over the weekend that made the first delivery of medical supplies to the north in more than a week. It said an ambulance and U.N. truck were hit by gunfire on the way to Al-Ahly Hospital to drop off the supplies.

The convoy then evacuated 19 patients but was delayed for inspections by Israeli forces on the way south. OCHA said one patient died, and a paramedic was detained for hours, interrogated and reportedly beaten.

The fighting in Jabaliya has trapped hundreds of staff, patients and displaced people inside hospitals, most of which are unable to function.

Two staff members were killed over the weekend by clashes outside Al-Awda Hospital, OCHA said. Shelling and live ammunition hit Al-Yemen Al-Saeed Hospital, killing an unknown number of displaced people sheltering inside, it said. It did not say which side was behind the fire.

HARSH CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH

With Israel allowing little aid into Gaza and the U.N. largely unable to distribute it amid the fighting, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

Israel said it will start conducting inspections of aid trucks Tuesday at its Kerem Shalom crossing, a step meant to increase the amount of relief entering Gaza. Currently, Israel's Nitzana crossing is the only inspection point in operation. All trucks then enter from Egypt through the Rafah crossing. Aid workers, however, say they are largely unable to distribute aid beyond the Rafah area because of the fighting elsewhere.

Israel has urged people to flee to what it says are safe areas in the south. The fighting in and around Khan Younis has pushed tens of thousands toward the town of Rafah and other areas along the border with Egypt.

Still, airstrikes have continued even in areas to which Palestinians are told to flee.

A strike in Rafah early Monday heavily damaged a residential building, killing at least nine people, all but

one of them women, according to Associated Press reporters who saw the bodies at the hospital.

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, the group's 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 shelters where hundreds share a single toilet, diarrhea is widespread, particularly among children, he said.

Heart of Hawaii's historic Lahaina, burned in wildfire, reopens to residents and business owners

By LINDSEY WASSON and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — The heart of Lahaina, the historic town on the Hawaiian island of Maui that burned in a deadly wildfire that killed at least 100 people, reopened Monday to residents and business owners holding day passes.

The renewed access marks an important emotional milestone for victims of the Aug. 8 fire, but much work remains to be done to safely clear properties of burned debris and rebuild.

The reopened areas include Banyan Tree Park, home to a 150-year-old tree that burned in the fire but that is now sprouting new leaves, Lahaina's public library, an elementary school and popular restaurants.

An oceanfront section of Front Street, where the fire ripped through a traffic jam of cars trying to escape town, reopened Friday.

Authorities are continuing to recommend that people entering scorched lots wear protective gear to shield them from hazards.

On Sunday, the state Department of Health released test results confirming the ash and dust left by the fire is toxic and that arsenic is the biggest concern. Arsenic is a heavy metal that adheres to wildfire dust and ash, the department said.

The tests examined ash samples collected Nov. 7-8 from 100 properties built from the 1900s to the 2000s. Samples also showed high levels of lead, which was used to paint houses built before 1978.

The clean up is still in its early stages. For the past few months, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been removing batteries, propane tanks, pesticides and other hazards from the town's more than 2,000 destroyed buildings.

Residents and business owners have been able to visit their properties after the EPA has finished clearing their lots. In some cases, residents — often wearing white full-body suits, masks and gloves — have found family heirlooms and mementos after sifting through the charred rubble of their homes.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin hauling away the remaining debris and take it to a landfill after it gets permission from property owners.

The EPA and the state's health department have installed 53 air monitors in Lahaina and Upcountry Maui, where a separate fire burned homes in early August. The department is urging people to avoid outdoor activity when monitor levels show elevated air pollution and to close windows and doors.

What to know about abortion lawsuits being heard in US courts this week

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

When the U.S. Supreme Court undid the nationwide right to abortion last year, it did not remove the issue from the courts.

Instead, it opened a new frontier of litigation, with states passing their own restrictions and opponents challenging them in courts across the country.

This week, at least four state supreme courts are dealing with abortion cases, including a Texas ruling Monday that rejected a woman's individual request for access to an abortion because of pregnancy complications.

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Some things to know about the cases:

TEXAS WOMAN ENDS QUEST FOR ABORTION IN-STATE

Most of the lawsuits that have been filed against bans and restrictions are seeking to secure general access to abortion.

But last week, a Texas woman experiencing serious pregnancy complications decided not to wait for those challenges to be resolved. Saying that her condition poses a risk to her health and future fertility, she asked a court for permission to obtain an abortion immediately.

A state district judge issued an order on Thursday allowing Kate Cox to receive an abortion. The state attorney general filed an appeal, arguing that Cox's situation does not meet the criteria for an exception. He also warned that anyone providing the abortion could still face legal consequences. On Friday, the state's Supreme Court put the lower-court ruling on hold.

On Monday, before the top court had issued a final ruling, her lawyers announced that she had gone to another state for an abortion. Later in the day, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against her.

Texas doctors had told the 31-year-old Cox that their hands were tied — despite the Texas law's exception for when a woman's life is at risk — and that she would have to wait for the fetus to die or carry the pregnancy to term.

A pregnant woman in Kentucky is also seeking immediate access to an abortion, but the claim she filed Friday does not cite exceptions to that state's law; rather it argues that the ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy violates the state constitution.

ARIZONA'S DUELING LAWS

Before Arizona was a state, it had a ban on abortion that was overridden by the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which established a nationwide right to abortion. Just before *Roe* was undone last year, lawmakers passed a separate ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

There's been confusion and litigation over which law applies. Currently, abortions are available during the first 15 weeks of pregnancy, based on a court ruling last year that said doctors can't be prosecuted for providing abortions during this time frame.

The Arizona Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments Tuesday on whether the pre-statehood ban of 1864 — which would prohibit abortions at any stage of pregnancy — should apply.

Meanwhile, Arizona abortion rights supporters are pushing to get a ballot question before voters next year that would undo both bans. Advocates in other states are attempting to put similar questions on the ballot following the success of such a measure in Ohio last month.

A BATTLE BETWEEN LOCAL AND STATE LAWS IN NEW MEXICO

New Mexico is one of seven states that allows abortions to be obtained at all stages of pregnancy, and it's become a major destination for people from states with bans, especially neighboring Texas.

That hasn't stopped some conservative city and county governments in the blue state from passing local abortion bans.

The state's Democratic attorney general is challenging those bans, saying they violate the state constitution's provision prohibiting discrimination based on sex and pregnancy status.

Most of the local laws have been put on hold by the New Mexico Supreme Court while it considers the issue. The court will hear arguments on the challenge on Wednesday.

LEGAL WRANGLING IN WYOMING

Two hearings before courts in Wyoming this week could shape litigation on the legality of abortion.

In July, Teton County District Court Judge Melissa Owens paused enforcement of a ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy while she weighs whether to hold a trial on a challenge to the ban.

Owens is holding a hearing Thursday to choose between a trial or making a decision more quickly based on legal arguments put before her.

Prior to that, the state Supreme Court — whose five members were all appointed by Republican governors — will hear arguments Tuesday on whether to let two lawmakers and Right to Life of Wyoming intervene in the case. They contend that Republican state Attorney General Bridget Hill should defend the ban with

evidence, not just legal arguments.

Hill said in a court filing that while she doesn't object to parties being added, the case should be decided solely on the legal arguments.

The state has just one clinic that provides abortions with both medication and surgery. The Casper clinic opened in April, after a nearly yearlong delay because of damage from an arson attack. A second, in Jackson, which provides only medication abortion, has said it is closing this week because of high rent and other costs.

CHANGING LAWS IN MICHIGAN

On Monday, Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed the last piece of a legislative package known as the Reproductive Health Act. The package aims to reinforce and safeguard abortion rights in Michigan after voters last year approved a ballot initiative enshrining the right in the state's constitution.

The bill repeals a law that had banned insurance coverage for abortion without purchase of a separate rider. The law, coined "rape insurance" by opponents, was passed exactly 10 years ago by a state Legislature that was controlled by Republicans.

Palestinians hope a vote in the UN General Assembly will show wide support for a Gaza cease-fire

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Palestinians are hoping that a vote Tuesday in the U.N. General Assembly on a nonbinding resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire will demonstrate widespread global support for ending the Israel-Hamas war, now in its third month.

After the United States vetoed a resolution in the Security Council on Friday demanding a humanitarian cease-fire, Arab and Islamic nations called for an emergency session of the 193-member General Assembly on Tuesday afternoon to vote on a resolution making the same demand.

Unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding. But as U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Monday, the assembly's messages "are also very important" and reflect world opinion.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, told The Associated Press on Sunday that the defeated resolution in the Security Council was cosponsored by 103 countries, and he is hoping for more cosponsors and a high vote for the General Assembly resolution on Tuesday.

In the first U.N. response to the Gaza war, the General Assembly on Oct. 27 called for a "humanitarian truce" in Gaza leading to a cessation of hostilities. The vote was 120-14 with 45 abstentions.

After four failures, the Security Council on Nov. 15 adopted its first resolution after the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, calling for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses" in Gaza to address the escalating crisis for Palestinian civilians during Israel's aerial and ground attacks.

That vote in the 15-member council was 12-0 with the United States, United Kingdom and Russia abstaining. The U.S. and U.K. said they abstained because the resolution did not condemn Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel in which about 1,200 people were killed and 240 abducted, and Russia because of its failure to demand a humanitarian cease-fire, which Israel and the United States oppose.

As the death toll in Gaza has mounted during Israel's campaign to obliterate Hamas, calls for a cease-fire have escalated, and on Friday the U.S. was isolated in its support for Israel in the Security Council, where the vote was 13-1 with the United Kingdom abstaining.

The Security Council meeting and vote last Friday were a response to a letter from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked Article 99 of the U.N. Charter, which enables a U.N. chief to raise threats he sees to international peace and security. He warned of a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged the council to demand a humanitarian cease-fire.

Guterres said he raised Article 99 — which hadn't been used at the U.N. since 1971 — because "there is a high risk of the total collapse of the humanitarian support system in Gaza." The U.N. anticipates this would result in "a complete breakdown of public order and increased pressure for mass displacement into

Egypt," he warned.

Gaza is at "a breaking point" and desperate people are at serious risk of starvation, Guterres said, stressing that Hamas' brutality against Israelis on Oct. 7 "can never justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people."

Like the Security Council resolution, the draft General Assembly resolution makes no mention of Hamas or the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel.

It expresses "grave concern over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population" and says Palestinian and Israeli people must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law.

In addition to an immediate humanitarian cease-fire, the draft demands that all parties comply with international humanitarian law, "notably with regard to the protection of civilians," and calls for "the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access."

Epic Games wins antitrust lawsuit against Google over barriers to its Android app store

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal court jury has decided that Google's Android app store has been protected by anticompetitive barriers that have damaged smartphone consumers and software developers, dealing a blow to a major pillar of a technology empire.

The unanimous verdict reached Monday came after just three hours of deliberation following a four-week trial revolving around a lucrative payment system within Google's Play Store. The store is the main place where hundreds of millions of people around the world download and install apps that work on smartphones powered by Google's Android software.

Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game, filed a lawsuit against Google three years ago, alleging that the internet search giant has been abusing its power to shield its Play Store from competition in order to protect a gold mine that makes billions of dollars annually. Just as Apple does for its iPhone app store, Google collects a commission ranging from 15% to 30% on digital transactions completed within apps.

Apple prevailed in a similar case that Epic brought against the iPhone app store. But that 2021 trial was decided by a federal judge in a ruling that is under appeal at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The nine-person jury in the Play Store case apparently saw things through a different lens, even though Google technically allows Android apps to be downloaded from different stores — an option that Apple prohibits on the iPhone.

Just before the Play Store trial started, Google sought to avoid having a jury determine the outcome, only to have its request rejected by U.S. District Judge James Donato. Now it will be up to Donato to determine what steps Google will have to take to unwind its illegal behavior in the Play Store. The judge indicated he will hold hearings on the issue during the second week of January.

Epic CEO Tim Sweeney broke into a wide grin after the verdict was read and slapped his lawyers on the back and also shook the hand of a Google attorney, whom he thanked for his professional attitude during the proceedings.

"Victory over Google!" Sweeney wrote in a post on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. In a company post, Epic hailed the verdict as "a win for all app developers and consumers around the world."

Google plans to appeal the verdict, according to a statement from Wilson White, the company's vice president of government affairs and public policy.

"Android and Google Play provide more choice and openness than any other major mobile platform," White said.

Depending on how the judge enforces the jury's verdict, Google could lose billions of dollars in annual profit generated from its Play Store commissions. The company's main source of revenue — digital advertising tied mostly to its search engine, Gmail and other services — won't be directly affected by the

trial's outcome.

The jury reached its decision after listening to two hours of closing arguments from the lawyers on the opposing sides of the case.

Epic lawyer Gary Bornstein depicted Google as a ruthless bully that deploys a "bribe and block" strategy to discourage competition against its Play Store for Android apps. Google lawyer Jonathan Kravis attacked Epic as a self-interested game maker trying to use the courts to save itself money while undermining an ecosystem that has spawned billions of Android smartphones to compete against Apple and its iPhone.

Much of the lawyers' dueling arguments touched upon the testimony from a litany of witnesses who came to court during the trial.

The key witnesses included Google CEO Sundar Pichai, who sometimes seemed like a professor explaining complex topics while standing behind a lectern because of a health issue, and Sweeney, who painted himself as a video game lover on a mission to take down a greedy tech titan.

In his closing argument for Epic, Bornstein railed against Google for exploiting its power over the Android software in a way that "has led to higher prices for developers and consumers, as well as less innovation and quality."

Google has staunchly defended the commissions as a way to help recoup the more than \$40 billion that it has poured into building into the Android software that it has been giving away since 2007 to manufacturers to compete against the iPhone.

"Android phones cannot compete against the iPhone without a great app store on them," Kravis asserted in his closing argument. "The competition between the app stores is tied to the competition between the phones."

But Bornstein ridiculed the notion of Google and Android competing against Apple and its incompatible iPhone software system. "Apple is not the 'get out of jail for free' card that Google wants it to be," Bornstein told the jury.

Google also pointed to rival Android app stores such as the one that Samsung installs on its popular smartphones as evidence of a free market. Combined with the rival app stores pre-installed on devices made by other companies, more than 60% of Android phones offer alternative outlets for Android apps.

Epic, though, presented evidence asserting the notion that Google welcomes competition as a pretense, citing the hundreds of billions of dollars it has doled out to companies, such as game maker Activision Blizzard, to discourage them from opening rival app stores. Besides making these payments, Bornstein also urged the jury to consider the Google "scare screens" that pop up, warning consumers of potential security threats when they try to download Android apps from some of the alternatives to the Play Store.

"These are classic anticompetitive strategies used by dominant firms to protect their monopolies," Bornstein said.

Google's empire could be further undermined by another major antitrust trial in Washington that will be decided by a federal judge after hearing final arguments in May. That trial has cast a spotlight on Google's cozy relationship with Apple in online search, the technology that turned Google into a household word a few years after two former Stanford University graduate students started the company in a Silicon Valley garage in 1998.

Two Nashville churches, wrecked by tornadoes years apart, lean on each other in storms' wake

By JONATHAN MATTISE, HOLLY MEYER and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — After a March 2020 tornado destroyed the Rev. Jacques Boyd's Nashville church, his friend, the Rev. Vincent Johnson, lent him space to worship in. Nearly four years later, Boyd has offered to return the favor for the exact same reason.

"Whatever we have is available to them," said Boyd, who leads Mount Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, two days after a tornado ripped through Community Baptist Church. "We're walking hand-in-hand with them as sister churches and as pastors being friends, being present with them however that presence looks."

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Although the tornado struck early Saturday evening, Community Baptist was full of people attending an appreciation banquet for Pastor Johnson and his wife Donella Johnson. In a video message to the congregation posted on the church's Facebook page Sunday, Donella Johnson said several members needed emergency surgery. Their injuries included broken hips and femurs.

One of the people injured was George Presley, who suffered a head wound that left him with several staples. He returned to the ruins of the church on Monday and pointed out the Life Center building, where people had been preparing for the banquet.

"When the roof came off, all the water and stuff just started coming in," he said. They took what little cover they could behind tables. Presley was next door in the church itself when the storm decimated that building as well. His wife was in the other building.

Asked how he got injured, Presley said, "I really don't know because when the storm came through it got so black. It just got dark. And all the lights went out. Everything got to shaking and stuff got to falling."

Karen Higgins, whose family has belonged to Community Baptist Church for four generations, was waiting for the banquet to begin when alarms started going off on everyone's phones.

"I was sitting in a chair, but by the time everything was over, I was on the floor," she said in a telephone interview. "I could feel that wind, I'm like, 'Lord, please don't let that wind take me away.' You couldn't take cover if you wanted to take cover, that's how swift it was. You could hear people praying."

Once the storm passed, Higgins said she could hear injured people calling out, "I'm here. I'm here," or "Help me. Help me." The pastor and deacon were calling back, "Are you in there?" she said. "They were picking up boards and stuff. They were getting us out."

"Our church is a family church, a helping church. They will do anything to help anybody," Higgins said.

Timothy Turner, who was catering the banquet, had just driven away from it to go pick up some more chicken when the twister whipped through. Several of his family members and his employees survived the direct hit from inside.

Looking at the destruction Monday, he said he couldn't believe anyone made it out alive, let alone everyone.

"I think those were angels," Turner said. "I don't like to go with luck. I believe in blessings. That was a blessing."

Dyshawn Gardner also stopped by on Monday to look at what remains of the church he has attended since he sang in the youth choir. Gardner started tearing up as he described learning about what had happened through his social media and calling his grandmother with the bad news.

"This has been my home," Gardner said. "I can call my pastor anytime with any problem. He's there, he's open and he's willing to help any day. That's why it's shocking when something like this happens."

Between being a student at Tennessee State University and working two jobs, Gardner said he can't always attend church in person, but when he can't he watches a livestream of the service. He had planned to be at Community Baptist in person on Sunday.

Boyd, the preacher at Mount Bethel, said he knows the toll an event like this can take on a pastor, who is expected to be strong for the rest of the congregation.

"My one piece of advice I gave him was go and seek some therapy and some help and some assistance," Boyd said. "It's a traumatic experience. It's trauma at its finest. We need him to be at his best so the community can continue to be at our best."

Boyd said his and Johnson's careers have followed similar paths: They both attended American Baptist College in Nashville, joined Omega Psi Phi fraternity, they pastor churches in the same city following the deaths of their predecessors — and now they've both had their churches wrecked by tornadoes.

"We talk daily," he said. "We pray daily."

Zelenskyy issues plea for support during Washington visit as Ukraine funding stalls in Congress

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy kicked off a quick visit to Washington on Monday, warning in a speech at a defense university that Russia may be fighting in Ukraine but its “real target is freedom” in America and around the world. He also issued a personal plea for Congress to break its deadlock and approve continued support for Ukraine.

His time in Washington, which will include meetings Tuesday at the White House and with Congress, is part of a last-minute push by the Biden administration to persuade lawmakers to pass a supplemental funding bill, as officials warn that the money for Ukraine is running out. But the mood on Capitol Hill ahead of Zelenskyy’s visit was grim as leading Senate negotiators said they were essentially out of time to strike a deal on U.S.-Mexico border security policies that Republicans have insisted be included in the package.

President Joe Biden has asked Congress for \$61.4 billion for wartime funding for Ukraine as part of a \$110 billion package that also includes money for Israel and other national security priorities. But the request is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security. The U.S. has already provided Ukraine \$111 billion for its fight against Russia’s 2022 invasion.

“If there’s anyone inspired by unresolved issues on Capitol Hill, it’s just (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his sick clique,” Zelenskyy told an audience of military leaders and students at the National Defense University. “Ukrainians haven’t given up and won’t give up. We know what to do. And you can count on Ukraine. And we hope just as much to be able to count on you.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who introduced the Ukrainian president, said America’s commitment to Ukraine is unshakeable and supporting the war is critical to ensuring the security of the U.S. and its allies.

“America’s commitments must be honored. America’s security must be defended. And America’s word must be kept,” Austin said.

He said Zelenskyy is “living proof that a single person’s leadership can help rally an embattled democracy and inspire the free world and change the course of history.”

With Congress in its final week before leaving for the holidays, questions remain as to whether Republicans will be able to come to an agreement on any rounds of future funding for Ukraine or Israel without White House concessions on border security as illegal crossings surge. But any border package also runs the risk of alienating some Democrats.

Sen. James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican who is leading the GOP negotiations, said large disagreements remain in the negotiations and predicted there would be no breakthrough by the end of the week.

Lankford said in recent days he was left out of talks between Senate Democrats and the White House, adding, “It was just a frustrating weekend.”

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who is involved in the talks, said he hoped Zelenskyy’s visit would encourage Republicans to compromise from their policy demands. He acknowledged that Congress approving the funding this year “seems like an uphill climb, but not impossible.”

This is Zelenskyy’s third visit to Washington since the war began, and he appeared at NDU wearing his trademark Army green long-sleeve shirt — emblazoned with “I’M UKRAINIAN.” His lobbying task, however, has gotten increasingly difficult, from the hero’s welcome he received in the Capitol last year to the bitterly divided Congress this year.

He noted that 82 years ago on this day the U.S. went to combat in Europe, as then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the declaration of war against Germany. Now, he said, though the U.S. has no troops on the ground in Ukraine, it is supplying critically needed weapons and equipment.

“Every one of you here understands what it means for a soldier to wait for ammunition, waiting for weeks, months without knowing if support will come at all,” he told the university audience. “When the free world hesitates, that’s when dictatorships celebrate.”

Zelenskyy also met Monday with Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary

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Fund. In a statement, Georgieva said "timely and predictable" financing for Ukraine is critical to sustaining the country's economic gains and its plans to implement financial reforms and maintain financial stability.

According to the Defense Department, there is about \$4.8 billion remaining in presidential drawdown authority, which pulls weapons from existing U.S. stockpiles and sends them quickly to the war front, and about \$1.1 billion left in funding to replenish the U.S. military stockpiles.

John Kirby, the White House National Security Council spokesman, told reporters Monday that Zelenskyy's visit comes at a critical time.

"This is exactly the right time to be having President Zelenskyy in town to have these discussions, because of what's going on in Ukraine, the increased activity we're seeing by the Russian armed forces as winter approaches, but also what's going on on Capitol Hill," said Kirby.

He said Biden will make clear to Zelenskyy when they meet that the White House is standing firm on the supplemental budget request. White House spokesman Andrew Bates said top Office of Management and Budget, National Security Council and White House legislative affairs officials have continued to press the case for the funding.

The AP All-America team is loaded with 5th- and 6th-year players, including LSU's Heisman-winning QB

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Heisman Trophy winner Jayden Daniels from LSU was one of seven players in either their fifth or sixth season of college football selected to The Associated Press All-America team announced Monday.

Daniels, a fifth-year quarterback, won the Heisman and AP player of the year honors last week after accounting for 50 touchdowns and nearly 5,000 yards of offense this season.

He was joined in the backfield by Missouri's Cody Schrader, a sixth-year running back and former Division II player who leads the nation at 124.9 rushing yards per game.

The other sixth-year player of the AP first team was North Carolina State linebacker Payton Wilson, who won the Chuck Bednarik Award as national defensive player of the year.

Kansas State guard Cooper Beebe, edge rushers Laiatu Latu from UCLA and Jalen Green from James Madison, and Texas defensive tackle T'Vondre Sweat were the other fifth-year players to make the first team.

College players who were in school during the 2020 pandemic season were granted an extra year of eligibility and they are still making their presence felt around the country.

Eleven more fifth-year players made the second and third teams and there were eight sixth-year players selected to those teams, including Washington quarterback Michael Penix Jr., the Heisman runner up. Penix and the second-ranked Huskies face No. 3 Texas in the College Football Playoff's Sugar Bowl semifinal on Jan. 1.

Notre Dame offensive tackle Joe Alt and Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. were selected first-team All-Americans for the second straight year. Beebe and Georgia tight end Brock Bowers moved up from second team last season to first this year.

No. 5 Alabama led all teams with three first-team All-Americans, all on the defensive side: cornerbacks Kool-Aid McKinstry and Terrion Arnold and linebacker Dallas Turner.

The Crimson Tide, seeded fourth in the College Football Playoff, faces No. 1 Michigan in the Rose Bowl semifinal on Jan. 1.

First-team All-Americans (by conference)

SEC — 9.

Big Ten — 6.

Pac-12 — 4.

Big 12 — 3.

ACC — 1.

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MAC — 1.

Sun Belt — 1.

Independent — 2.

The AP All-America team was selected by a panel of 18 college Top 25 poll voters.

FIRST TEAM (offense)

Quarterback — Jayden Daniels, fifth-year, LSU.

Running backs — Ollie Gordon II, second-year, Oklahoma State; Cody Schrader, sixth-year, Missouri.

Tackles — Joe Alt, third-year, Notre Dame; Olu Fashanu, fourth-year, Penn State.

Guards — Cooper Beebe, fifth-year, Kansas State; Zak Zinter, fourth-year, Michigan.

Center — Jackson Powers-Johnson, third-year, Oregon.

Tight end — Brock Bowers, third-year, Georgia.

Wide receivers — Malik Nabers, third-year, LSU; Marvin Harrison Jr., third-year, Ohio State; Rome Odunze, fourth-year, Washington.

All-purpose player — Travis Hunter, second-year, Colorado.

Kicker — Graham Nicholson, third-year, Miami (Ohio).

FIRST TEAM (defense)

Edge rushers — Laiatu Latu, fifth-year, UCLA; Jalen Green, fifth-year, James Madison.

Interior linemen — T'Vondre Sweat, fifth-year, Texas; Jer'Zahn Newton, fourth-year, Illinois.

Linebackers — Payton Wilson, sixth-year, North Carolina State; Edgerrin Cooper, fourth-year, Texas A&M; Dallas Turner, third-year, Alabama.

Cornerbacks — Cooper DeJean, third-year, Iowa; Kool-Aid McKinstry, third-year, Alabama.

Safeties — Malaki Starks, second-year, Georgia; Xavier Watts, fourth-year, Notre Dame.

Defensive back — Terrion Arnold, third-year, Alabama.

Punter — Tory Taylor, fourth-year, Iowa.

SECOND TEAM (offense)

Quarterback — Michael Penix Jr., sixth-year, Washington.

Running backs — Audric Esteime, third-year, Notre Dame; Omarion Hampton, second-year, North Carolina.

Tackles — Taliese Fuaga, fourth-year, Oregon State; JC Latham, third-year, Alabama.

Guards — Tate Ratledge, fourth-year, Georgia; Clay Webb, fifth-year, Jacksonville State.

Center — Sedrick Van Pran, fourth-year, Georgia.

Tight ends — Dallin Holker, fifth-year, Colorado State.

Wide receivers — Troy Franklin, third-year, Oregon; Malik Washington, fifth-year, Virginia; Luther Burden III, second-year, Missouri.

All-purpose player — Ashton Jeanty, second-year, Boise State.

Kicker — Jose Pizano, third-year, UNLV.

SECOND TEAM (defense)

Edge rushers — Jonah Elliss, third-year, Utah; Jared Verse, fourth-year, Florida State.

Interior linemen — Byron Murphy II, third-year, Texas; Howard Cross III, fifth-year, Notre Dame.

Linebackers — Jeremiah Trotter Jr., third-year, Clemson; Jason Henderson, third-year, Old Dominion; Jay Higgins, fourth-year, Iowa.

Cornerbacks — Quinyon Mitchell, fourth-year, Toledo; Beanie Bishop Jr., sixth-year, West Virginia.

Safeties — Tyler Nubin, fifth-year, Minnesota; Caleb Downs, first-year, Alabama.

Defensive back — Kris Abrams-Draine, fourth-year, Missouri.

Punter — Matthew Hayball, sixth-year, Vanderbilt.

THIRD TEAM

(offense)

Quarterbacks — Bo Nix, fifth-year, Oregon.

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Running backs — Blake Corum, fourth-year, Michigan; Kimani Vidal, fourth-year, Troy.
Tackles — Javon Foster, sixth-year, Missouri; Troy Fautanu, fifth-year, Washington.
Guards — Christian Haynes, sixth-year, UConn; Luke Kandra, fourth-year, Cincinnati.
Center — Zach Frazier, fourth-year, West Virginia.
Tight end — Ben Sinnott, fourth-year, Kansas State.
Wide receivers — Ricky White, fourth-year, UNLV; Brian Thomas Jr., third-year, LSU; Tetairoa McMillan, second-year, Arizona.
All-purpose player — Xavier Worthy, third-year, Texas.
Kicker — Will Reichard, fifth-year, Alabama.
THIRD TEAM (defense)
Edge rushers — Chop Robinson, third-year, Penn State; Bralen Trice, fifth-year, Washington.
Interior linemen — Kris Jenkins, fourth-year, Michigan; Braden Fiske, sixth-year, Florida State.
Linebackers — Nathaniel Watson, sixth-year, Mississippi State; Edefuan Ulofoshio, sixth-year, Washington; Danny Stutsman, third-year, Oklahoma.
Cornerbacks — Ricardo Hallman, third-year, Wisconsin; T.J. Tampa, fourth-year, Iowa State.
Safeties — Trey Taylor, fifth-year, Air Force; Dillon Thieneman, first-year, Purdue.
Defensive back — Sebastian Castro, fifth-year, Iowa.
Punter — James Ferguson-Reynolds, second-year, Boise State.

Palestinian flag lodged in public Hanukkah menorah in Connecticut sparks outcry

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — A person briefly hung a Palestinian flag from a Hanukkah menorah in a public area, prompting widespread condemnation and a police investigation.

The unidentified person scaled the menorah at a public green near the Yale University campus during a nearby pro-Palestinian rally Saturday and lodged a Palestinian flag between the candles. Police said the menorah was not vandalized and they were not sure if the incident will be categorized as a hate crime.

But the placement of the flag touched a nerve at a time of rising fears of antisemitism since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. In particular, universities across the U.S. have been accused of failing to protect Jewish students.

Public officials denounced the act at a news conference on Monday.

"I'm proud of the group that has come here today to say enough is enough. Not in America, not anywhere, as long as we speak out and stand up," Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal said at the news conference.

Yale President Peter Salovey said in a prepared statement that placing a Palestinian flag on the menorah "conveys a deeply antisemitic message to Jewish residents of New Haven."

Organizers of the protest also condemned the act, which they described in a post on social media as an "antisemitic action of an individual unaffiliated with any of the groups present."

Jake Dressler, an area attorney who witnessed the act, said the person who lodged the flag was criticized by others who were part of the rally on Saturday.

"His fellow protesters were saying, 'Get down, get down. It looks bad for us.' And then within a minute, he ... jumped back up and pulled it down."

'Barbie' leads Golden Globe nominations with 9, followed closely by 'Oppenheimer'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" dominated the Golden Globe Awards nominations with nine nods for the blockbuster film, including best picture musical or comedy as well as acting nominations for Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling and three of its original songs.

It was closely followed by its release date and meme companion Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer,"

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which scored eight nominations, including best picture drama and for actors Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt.

In a statement, Gerwig said she, "can't wait to bring the Barbie party to the Globes."

The revamped group, now a for-profit endeavor with a larger and more diverse voting body, announced nominations Monday for its January awards show, after scandal and several troubled years, including one without a broadcast. Cedric the Entertainer and Wilmer Valderrama presided over the announcements from the Beverly Hilton Hotel, where the show will also take place on Jan. 7.

Films nominated for best motion picture drama included "Oppenheimer," Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon," Bradley Cooper's "Maestro," Celine Song's "Past Lives," Justine Triet's "Anatomy of a Fall" and Jonathan Glazer's "The Zone of Interest."

In the best motion picture musical or comedy category, "Barbie" was joined by "Air," "American Fiction" "The Holdovers," "May December" and "Poor Things."

Yorgos Lanthimos' "Poor Things" and Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" both received seven nominations each. "Poor Things" saw nominations for Lanthimos, its actors Emma Stone, Mark Ruffalo, Willem Dafoe, and Tony McNamara for screenplay. "Killers of the Flower Moon" got nods for Scorsese, for direction and co-writing the screenplay with Eric Roth, and stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro.

Stone, who was also nominated for the Showtime series "The Curse," said in a statement that she was "Feeling extremely bewildered and thankful for it all." She also said her "Poor Things" character Bella Baxter is her favorite.

DiCaprio praised Gladstone in his statement: "She is the soul of our film and helped to bring this sinister and painful part of our nation's history to life," he wrote. The film is about the murders of wealthy Osage individuals in Oklahoma in the early 20th century.

"Barbie" tied for second-most nominations in Globes history with "Cabaret," from 1972. Robert Altman's "Nashville" remains the record-holder with 11 nominations. It went into the morning as a favorite and got a big boost from its three original song nominations, including "I'm Just Ken," and one of the year's new categories, recognizing cinematic and box office achievement. One person who was not nominated was America Ferrera, who delivered the movie's most memorable monologue.

"Succession" was the top-nominated television program, with nine nods including for series stars Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong, Sarah Snook and Kieran Culkin, followed by Hulu's "The Bear."

As always there were some big surprises, like Jennifer Lawrence getting nominated for her bawdy R-rated comedy "No Hard Feelings" for best performance by a female actor in a musical or comedy. She was nominated alongside Robbie, Stone and Fantasia Barrino ("The Color Purple"), Natalie Portman ("May December") and Alma Pöysti ("Fallen Leaves").

Barrino heard the news from her husband who she immediately called back to make sure she wasn't dreaming.

"My voice is shot because I've been screaming, crying and just telling God, 'Thank you.' I almost allowed fear to hinder me from this role, to keep me from this role," she told the AP through tears. She's been on the road for work and said she's excited to go home and experience it with her children.

"The Color Purple" was expected to do better. The adaption of the stage musical got only two nominations total, both for actors, for Barrino and Danielle Brooks for her supporting performance. Left out was Colman Domingo, who was nominated for best drama actor for "Rustin."

Cord Jefferson's comedy "American Fiction" also came up with only two nods, best musical or comedy and for lead actor Jeffrey Wright, who plays a frustrated writer.

"I don't think it's totally healthy to think about these things too much, but they're there, so one does," Wright told the AP Monday. "I'm really pleased that the film is being recognized more so than my own personal recognition."

Sofia Coppola's widely acclaimed "Priscilla" got only one nomination, for actor Cailee Spaeny's portrayal of Priscilla Presley. Her category mates in best female performance in a drama include Gladstone, Annette Bening for "Nyad," Sandra Hüller for "Anatomy of a Fall," Greta Lee for "Past Lives" and Carey Mulligan

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for "Maestro."

The Globes won't have to worry about anyone criticizing its "all male" directors this year, however. Gerwig was nominated as was Celine Song, for her romantic debut "Past Lives," alongside Nolan, Scorsese, Cooper and Lanthimos.

Netflix got the most nominations overall, with 13 total for a slate which included "Maestro," "May December" and "Rustin," followed by Warner Bros., which made "Barbie" and "The Color Purple" with 12.

Ridley Scott's "Napoleon" was not nominated at all. Instead, its star Joaquin Phoenix was recognized for "Beau is Afraid" in the lead actor comedy/musical category, with Wright, Matt Damon ("Air"), Nicolas Cage "Dream Scenario," Timothée Chalamet ("Wonka") and Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers"). Michael Mann's "Ferrari," with Adam Driver, and Wes Anderson's starry "Asteroid City" also got zero nominations.

The voting body has now grown to 300 members, following backlash to a 2021 report in the Los Angeles Times that found that there were zero Black members in the group that was then composed of only 87 foreign journalists.

Perhaps as a result, there were more international films and actors nominated in prominent categories including the Finnish comedy "Fallen Leaves," the courtroom thriller "Anatomy of a Fall" and the harrowing Auschwitz drama "The Zone of Interest."

The 81st Golden Globes will be the first major broadcast of awards season, with a new home on CBS, but no word yet on a host. It's been tumultuous few years behind the scenes in the aftermath of the L.A. Times report, which also exposed ethical lapses like its members accepting lavish gifts and travel from awards publicists and studios.

The Globes had long been one of the highest-profile awards season broadcasts, second only to the Oscars. Before the pandemic, it was still pulling in around 19 million viewers. The show was touted as a boozy, A-list party, whose hosts often took a more irreverent tone than their academy counterparts.

Some years, the HFPA were pilloried for nominating poorly reviewed films with big name talent with hopes of getting them to the show, the most infamous being "The Tourist," with Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp. In the past decade, they've more often overlapped with the Oscars.

This year, NBC's Tuesday night broadcast got its smallest audience ever for the ceremony, with 6.3 million viewers.

Governor wants New Mexico legislators to debate new approach to regulating assault-style weapons

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico could become an early political testing ground for a proposal to make assault-style weapons less deadly.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday said she'll encourage the state's Democratic-led Legislature to consider statewide restrictions that mirror an unconventional proposal from U.S. senators aimed at reducing a shooter's ability to fire off dozens of rounds a second and attach new magazines to keep firing.

The proposed federal Go Safe Act was named after the internal cycling of high-pressure gas in the firearms in question and comes from such senators as New Mexico's Martin Heinrich, a Democrat. If approved, it would mean assault-style weapons would have permanently fixed magazines, limited to 10 rounds for rifles and 15 rounds for some heavy-format pistols.

"I've got a set of lawmakers that are more likely than not to have a fair debate about guns, gun violence, weapons of war and keeping New Mexicans safe than members of Congress are," said Lujan Grisham, a Democrat, at a news conference in the state Capitol. "We will have to see how those votes all shake out."

Bans on assault rifles in several states are under legal challenge after the U.S. Supreme Court in June broadly expanded gun rights in a 6-3 ruling by the conservative majority. The decision overturned a New York law restricting carrying guns in public and affected a half-dozen other states with similar laws. After the ruling, New York and other states have moved to pass new gun restrictions that comply with the decision.

Lujan Grisham recently suspended the right to carry guns at public parks and playgrounds in New Mexico's

largest metro area under an emergency public health order, first issued in response to a spate of shootings that included the death of an 11-year-old boy outside a minor league baseball stadium. The order sparked public protests among gun rights advocates and legal challenges in federal court that are still underway.

The restriction on carrying guns has been scaled back from the initial order in September that broadly suspended the right to carry guns in most public places, which the sheriff and Albuquerque's police chief had refused to enforce.

New Mexico's Legislature convenes in January for a 30-day session focused primarily on budget matters. Other bills can be heard at the discretion of the governor.

Lujan Grisham said her urgent approach to violent crime is spurring more arrests and reining in gunfire. Her effort has come amid new concerns about gun violence after a shooting Friday involving two 16-year-olds that left one of them dead outside a high school basketball game in Albuquerque.

The governor's health order includes directives for gun buybacks, monthly inspections of firearms dealers statewide, reports on gunshot victims at New Mexico hospitals and wastewater testing for illicit substances.

Jurors in a Giuliani damages case hear the threats election workers got after his false claims

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for two Georgia election workers played audio recordings in a Washington courtroom Monday of graphic and racist threats the two women received after Rudy Giuliani falsely accused them of fraud while pushing Donald Trump's baseless claims after the 2020 election.

The recordings were part of the opening statements in a federal case that will determine how much Giuliani might have to pay the women.

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 is the amount of damages, if any, Giuliani must pay.

The women's lawyers estimated that reputational damages could reach \$47 million, and suggested emotional and punitive damages on top of that could be "tens of millions."

Giuliani's lawyer said any award should be much less.

The recordings played by the lawyers Monday included threats accusing the women of treason and threatening to hang them.

The women got hundreds of similar calls, text messages and emails, said attorney Von DuBose. People also showed up at Freeman's home to pound on her door and at her mother's house to make "citizen's arrests," DuBose said.

"Mr. Giuliani and his co-conspirators stole the lives Ms. Moss and Ms. Freeman by destroying their names," DuBose said.

Freeman and Moss's lawyers also played recordings of Giuliani falsely accusing them of sneaking in ballots in suitcases, counting ballots multiple times and tampering with voting machines.

"None of that — none of that — was true," DuBose said.

Trump also repeated the conspiracy theories through his social media accounts, something attorney Michael Gottlieb called "the most powerful amplifier on earth."

The then-president also assailed Freeman and Moss in his speech on Jan. 6, 2021, around the same time people with flags and bullhorns came to Freeman's home. She wasn't there, however, because she had fled after the FBI had told her it wasn't safe. She eventually had to sell her house of 20 years, DuBose said.

Gottlieb asked the jury to award substantial damages to send a message that "In the United States of America, behavior like Rudy Giuliani's is not the inevitable result of politics. It is not acceptable and it will not be tolerated."

Giuliani's attorney, Joseph Sibley, said Freeman and Moss are "good people" who didn't deserve the treatment they received. But he argued there was little evidence Giuliani was directly responsible for the

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threats and harassment directed their way, and the former mayor never encouraged it.

"This is something other people did independent of Mr. Giuliani," Sibley said. He argued that the amount of money they want in damages is the "civil equivalent of the death penalty."

He said he would ask the jury to award an amount they believe is fair, but at a much lower level.

Giuliani did not speak to reporters as he entered Washington's federal courthouse — the same building where Trump is to stand trial in March on criminal charges accusing the former president of scheming to overturn his loss to President Joe Biden.

Giuliani is expected to take the witness stand in his own case, his lawyer said Monday, raising questions about whether his testimony could also put him in jeopardy in a separate criminal case in Georgia that accuses Trump, Giuliani and others of trying to illegally overturn the results of the election in the state.

The legal and financial woes are 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.

In the Georgia criminal case, Giuliani is accused of making false statements to lawmakers during hearings in December 2020. While showing a surveillance video from State Farm Arena in Atlanta, where ballots were counted in the days after the election, Giuliani said election workers committed election fraud. Specifically, he said, Freeman and Moss were "quite obviously surreptitiously passing around USB ports as if they're vials of heroin or cocaine" and it was obvious they were "engaged in surreptitious illegal activity."

The claims about the election workers were quickly debunked by Georgia officials, who found no improper counting of ballots.

Giuliani conceded in July that he made public comments falsely claiming Freeman and Moss committed fraud while counting ballots. But Giuliani argued that the statements were protected by the First Amendment.

Giuliani has pleaded not guilty in the criminal case and maintains he had every right to raise questions about what he believed to be election fraud.

He was also 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.

Overseeing the defamation case is District Judge Beryl Howell, who is well-versed in handling matters related to Trump, having served as chief judge of Washington's federal court for the entirety of Trump's presidency.

Howell, an appointee of former President Barack Obama, asked prospective jurors Monday was: "Have you ever used the phrase 'Lets Go Brandon?'" The phrase is used in right-wing circles to insult Biden.

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.

In emotional testimony before the U.S. House Committee that investigated the U.S. Capitol attack, Moss recounted receiving threatening and racist messages.

In an August decision holding Giuliani liable in the case, Howell said the Trump adviser 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 would be told they must infer that Giuliani was intentionally trying to hide financial documents in the hopes of "artificially deflating his net worth."

Russia targets Kyiv with ballistic missiles as fears increase of attacks on energy infrastructure

By SRDJAN NEDELJKOVIC and YEHOR KONOVALOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile attack on Ukraine's capital early Monday destroyed several homes and left more than 100 households without electricity.

The predawn attack on Kyiv came amid warnings that Russia will step up its attacks on the country's energy infrastructure as winter sets in with freezing temperatures.

A series of loud explosions followed by air raid sirens broke the silence in Kyiv just after 4 a.m. as the city was under its nightly curfew.

Ukraine's military said its air defenses intercepted all eight ballistic missiles. However, falling debris from rockets damaged homes on the ground, leaving one person wounded and three others suffering severe shock, officials said.

AP journalists witnessed some of the destruction in the district of Bortnychi on the southeastern outskirts of Kyiv. A home under construction was ripped apart and nearby buildings were partially damaged, with gaping holes in the roofs and walls.

Victor Demchenko, the owner of the destroyed house, was clearing debris from his property, next to a crater about five meters (16 feet) deep in the backyard. Demchenko said that he was in another part of the city when he heard the explosions.

"Then the neighbor called ... and said all that is left of the house is a crater," he said. "I didn't believe him, so I took the car and drove here. Well, you can see it yourself, there is nothing to be found here."

At another home about two kilometers (a mile) away, Nadia Matvienko was lucky to escape uninjured when her home was damaged in the attack.

"It's like I felt something. I couldn't sleep all night, was turning in my bed back and forth. Then 'bang, bang,' we rushed to the hallway. Next thing we heard is the house being torn apart," she said, wiping away tears as she sat in her home with shattered glass and damaged furniture strewn across the floor.

The attack also left some 120 households in the city without electricity, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said. Ukrainian officials have warned that Russia will target energy infrastructure to cause power outages and blackouts like it did last winter.

In an intelligence update over the weekend, the U.K. Defense Ministry noted that Russia last week used its heavy bomber fleet for the first time since September. It predicted the start of a more concerted campaign aimed at degrading Ukraine's energy infrastructure as winter sets in.

In other developments:

— The Ukrainian air force said it intercepted 18 Russian drones on Monday, mostly over the southern Mykolaiv region.

— A bottleneck for trucks at the Ukrainian-Polish border seemed to ease, at least temporarily, as Ukraine's minister of infrastructure announced transit had been restored after being held up for more than a month by Polish truckers protesting against what they called unfair competition from Ukrainian counterparts. Waldemar Jaszczun, an organizer of the protest, confirmed to the Associated Press that the blockade had been lifted on the road leading to the Dorohusk-Yahodyn border crossing after a decision by the local mayor. Jaszczun said that the protesters will appeal the decision.

— Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy traveled to Washington on Monday from Argentina where he had attended the swearing-in of the country's new president, Javier Milei. Zelenskyy was set to meet with U.S. 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.

Donald Tusk becomes Poland's prime minister with the mission of improving European Union ties

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Donald Tusk, a leader of a centrist party, returned as Poland's prime minister for the first time in nearly a decade after a vote in parliament on Monday, paving the way for a new pro-European Union government following eight years of stormy national conservative rule.

Tusk, a former EU leader who served as European Council president from 2014-2019 and has strong connections in Brussels, is expected to improve Warsaw's standing in the bloc's capital. He was Poland's prime minister from 2007-2014.

Tusk's ascension to power came nearly two months after an election which was won by a coalition of parties ranging from left-wing to moderate conservative. The parties ran on separate tickets, but promised to work together under Tusk's leadership to restore democratic standards and improve ties with allies.

The change of power is felt as hugely consequential for the 38 million citizens of the Central European nation, where collective anger against the Law and Justice party produced a record-high turnout to replace a government many believed was eroding democratic norms.

Law and Justice, which took office in 2015, increased its power over courts and judicial bodies, drawing accusations from the EU and others that it was eroding judicial independence. It also turned taxpayer funded public media into a party mouthpiece.

The vote was 248-201 in support of Tusk in the 460-seat lower house of parliament, the Sejm, with no abstentions.

"Thank you Poland, this is truly a wonderful day," Tusk said in a short speech. "Not only for me, but for all those who throughout these many years deeply believed ... that things would get better."

Tusk is scheduled on Tuesday to give a more substantial speech to parliament, present his Cabinet and face a vote of confidence for his new government. He should then be sworn in by President Andrzej Duda, a step scheduled for Wednesday morning.

The election of Tusk comes after the former government of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki lost a confidence vote in parliament earlier in the day.

The votes marked the ended of eight tumultuous years in which Law and Justice ruled the country with the support of many Poles — but at bitter odds with liberal Poles as well as the 27-nation EU and other Western allies.

Tusk's leadership of the EU's fifth-largest member by population will boost centrist, pro-EU forces at a time when euroskeptics, such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, are gaining strength.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen could hardly contain her elation in congratulating Tusk.

"Your experience and strong commitment to our European values will be precious in forging a stronger Europe, for the benefit of the Polish people," she tweeted. "I look forward to working with you, starting with this week's important" summit, which begins Thursday.

The power transition, coming nearly two months after the election, was delayed for weeks by Duda, who kept his political allies in office as long as possible.

Voters who opted for change, including many young Poles, were eager for the transition to finally arrive, and the parliamentary proceedings have ignited widespread interest, leading to a spike in the number of people watching the parliament's livestream online.

Szymon Holownia, a former reality television personality who leads a party allied with Tusk, became the speaker of parliament last month and has attracted interest as he has tried to encourage discipline in the sometimes raucous assembly.

A Warsaw cinema, which livestreamed Monday's proceedings, drew spectators who munched on popcorn and erupted in laughter as the outgoing prime minister spoke.

"So many disturbing things took place in the past eight years that I'm not surprised by this joy that it's over," said Justyna Lemanska, a young advertising agency employee in the audience.

There is relief for many women who saw reproductive rights eroded and LGBTQ+ people who faced a

government hate campaign that drove some to leave the country.

Law and Justice remains popular with many conservatives thanks to its adherence to traditional Roman Catholic values, and the popularity of social spending policies. The party lowered the retirement age and introduced cash payments to families with children while also increasing pension payments to older people.

The day marked a bitter turn for Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the conservative ruling party leader who has guided Poland for the past eight years but now, at 74, is seeing the huge power he wielded slip away.

Kaczynski has for years accused Tusk, who has good relations with Germany and other countries, of representing the interests of Berlin, though there is no evidence of that.

At the end of the parliamentary session, Kaczynski went up the lectern, turned to Tusk, and said with anger: "You are a German agent, simply a German agent."

Tusk frowned, while Holownia expressed his disappointment that the day ended on a bitter note.

Former President Lech Walesa, who was hospitalized last week with COVID-19 and remains weak, traveled from his home in Gdansk to attend the parliamentary session.

The anti-communist freedom fighter had despaired at what he viewed as the unraveling of democracy under Kaczynski. He appeared in parliament wearing a shirt with the word "Constitution" — a slogan against Law and Justice. He watched the events from a balcony, and was given a standing ovation by Tusk and other political admirers.

Tusk's government will have many challenges to face, including Russia's war across the border in Ukraine.

Tusk plans to fly to Brussels for an EU summit later in the week for discussions critical to Ukraine's future. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Russia's closest ally in the EU, is demanding that Ukraine's membership in the EU and billions of euros in funding meant for the war-torn country be taken off the agenda.

Poland's outgoing government was initially one of Kyiv's strongest allies after Russia invaded Ukraine nearly two years ago, but ties have worsened as economic competition from Ukrainian food producers and truckers has angered Poles who say their livelihoods are threatened.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tweeted his congratulations to Tusk, saying: "When we stand together, both our nations' freedom is unbeatable."

Harvard faculty rallies to the aid of university president criticized for remarks on antisemitism

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of Harvard faculty members are urging the Ivy League university to keep its president, Claudine Gay, in command as she faces calls from some lawmakers and donors to step down over comments at a congressional hearing on antisemitism.

A petition signed by more than 600 faculty members asks the school's governing body to resist political pressures "that are at odds with Harvard's commitment to academic freedom."

Only months into her leadership, Gay came under intense scrutiny following the hearing in which she and two of her peers struggled to answer questions about campus antisemitism. Their academic responses provoked a backlash from Republican opponents, along with alumni and donors who say the university leaders are failing to stand up for Jewish students on their campuses.

Liz Magill resigned as president of the University of Pennsylvania on Saturday amid criticism of her handling of the hearing. Rep. Elise Stefanik, a New York Republican whose questions sparked the episode, saw it as the first domino: "One down. Two to go," she said on X, formerly Twitter.

The spotlight has turned to Gay, a scholar of politics and African American studies who became Harvard's first Black president in July. In a letter to Harvard's governing body, more than 70 mostly Republican members of Congress called for her resignation. Billionaire alumnus Bill Ackman also called for her ouster, saying Gay has done more damage to Harvard's reputation than anyone in its history.

Harvard's highest governing body was scheduled to meet Monday and has not issued a public statement since the hearing. On Thursday, MIT's governing body issued a statement declaring "full and unreserved support" for President Sally Kornbluth, whose testimony also drew scathing criticism.

The faculty petition aims to parry what many of its signers see as a Republican attempt to wield influence over the elite institution. Harvard and the Ivy League have long been a favorite target of GOP lawmakers who see top universities as hubs of liberalism. The petition is seen not necessarily as a defense of Gay but an attempt to insulate the school from the intrusion of political pressure.

"We have lawmakers getting intimately involved in trying to dictate governance on campus, and this seems unacceptable," said Melani Cammett, a professor of international affairs who helped organize the petition. Harvard needs to reckon with campus polarization, she added, but "that's not something that should be controlled by external actors."

Those backing the petition include some professors who have been critical of Gay. Among them is Lawrence Tribe, a legal scholar who described Gay's testimony as "hesitant, formulaic, and bizarrely evasive." He endorsed the petition because "it's dangerous for universities to be readily bullied into micromanaging their policies," he said in an interview. But his view on Gay hasn't changed.

"I think she now has a great deal to prove, and I'm not at all sure that she will be able to prove it," he said. "I don't think she is out of the woods by any means."

Universities across the U.S. have been accused of failing to protect Jewish students amid rising fears of antisemitism worldwide and fallout from Israel's intensifying war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll.

The three presidents were called before the committee to answer those accusations. But their lawyerly answers drew renewed blowback from opponents, focused particularly on a line of questioning from Stefanik, who repeatedly asked whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate the schools' rules.

"If the speech turns into conduct it can be harassment, yes," Magill said. Pressed further, Magill told Stefanik, "It is a context-dependent decision, congresswoman."

Gay gave a similar response, saying that when "speech crosses into conduct, that violates our policies."

Gay later apologized in an interview with The Crimson student newspaper, saying she "got caught up in what had become at that point, an extended, combative exchange about policies and procedures."

"What I should have had the presence of mind to do in that moment was return to my guiding truth, which is that calls for violence against our Jewish community — threats to our Jewish students — have no place at Harvard, and will never go unchallenged," Gay said.

The mother of imprisoned drug lord Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzmán has died in Mexico, official confirms

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The mother of convicted drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán has died in the northern state of Sinaloa, a federal official confirmed Monday.

The official was not authorized to speak on the record, but President Andrés Manuel López Obrador acknowledged her death and offered his "respect" to the family.

Often criticized for his frequent trips — about five so far — to the drug lord's home township of Badiraguato, Sinaloa, López Obrador added in his daily briefing that "any human being who dies deserves respect and consideration for their family."

Local media reported Loera died at a private hospital in Culiacán, Sinaloa, which is home to the cartel of the same name that her son helped to lead for about two decades before his arrest and extradition to the United States in 2017. The hospital declined to comment when contacted by The Associated Press.

Loera reportedly led a quiet life including frequent religious activities, but she rose to fame after she shook hands with López Obrador during an impromptu meeting on his visit to Badiraguato in 2020. She also won the president's support for her request in 2019 to get a visa to visit her son, who is serving a life sentence in the United States.

Lopez Obrador said he helped her "like any mother asking me for support for her son."

In a March 2020 letter, Loera wrote that she was 92 years old at the time, which would have put her current age at 95. In the letter, she pushed for her son to be returned to Mexico to serve out his sentence.

López Obrador has been largely unwilling to speak ill of Mexico's drug lords and their families, saying they "may have been forced to take the wrong path of anti-social activities because of a lack of opportunities" but were deserving of consideration and respect.

The head of Mexico's state media agency, Jenaro Villamil, described Loera as "a simple woman from Sinaloa" who always denied publicly that her son led the most powerful drug cartel in Mexico.

Guzmán led the Sinaloa cartel in bloody drug turf battles that claimed the lives of thousands of Mexicans. He escaped twice from Mexican prisons, one time through a mile-long tunnel running from his cell.

After he was extradited to New York, his three-month trial included tales of grisly killings, political payoffs, cocaine hidden in jalapeno cans and jewel-encrusted guns. He was convicted of running an industrial-scale smuggling operation and now is serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison in Colorado.

Earlier this year, Mexico extradited one of the drug lord's sons, Ovidio Guzmán López, to the U.S. to face drug trafficking, money laundering and other charges. He is believed to have led the Sinaloa cartel's push to produce and export fentanyl to the United States, where it has been blamed for about 70,000 overdose deaths annually.

Iraq scrambles to contain fighting between US troops and Iran-backed groups, fearing Gaza spillover

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Dozens of attacks on U.S. military facilities by Iran-backed factions in Iraq over the past two months as the Israel-Hamas war has raged have forced Baghdad into a balancing act that's becoming more difficult by the day.

A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Friday marked a further escalation as Iraqi officials scramble to contain the ripple effects of the latest Middle East war.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq and a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power in October 2022. At the same time, there are some 2,000 U.S. troops in Iraq under an agreement with Baghdad, mainly to counter the militant Islamic State group.

Baghdad also relies heavily on Washington's sanctions waivers to buy electricity from Iran, and since the 2003 U.S. invasion, Iraq's foreign currency reserves have been housed at the U.S. Federal Reserve, giving the Americans significant control over Iraq's supply of dollars.

Al-Sudani's predecessors also had to walk a delicate line between Tehran and Washington, but the Israel-Hamas war has considerably upped the stakes.

Since the war erupted on Oct. 7, at least 92 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by an umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militants dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The militants say their attacks are in retaliation for Washington's backing of Israel and its military presence in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Sudani has condemned the attacks and U.S. counter-strikes as a violation of his country's sovereignty. He has also ordered authorities to pursue militants involved in the attacks, most of which caused no injuries and only minor damage. His office declined further comment.

Washington has sent messages that its patience is wearing thin.

After the embassy attack, the Pentagon said that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin "made clear (to al-Sudani) that attacks against U.S. forces must stop."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told al-Sudani that Washington expects Iraqi officials to take more action to prevent such attacks, and believes they have the capability to do so, a U.S. official told The Associated Press.

During a recent trip to the region, CIA Director William Burns warned al-Sudani of "harsh consequences" if Iraq doesn't act to stop the attacks, an Iraqi official said.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations.

In a call with the Iraqi premier earlier this month, Blinken said that Americans would take matters into their own hands, arguing that Baghdad had not done enough to pursue the perpetrators, according to two Iraqi officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

Two days later, a U.S. strike on a drone launch site near the Iraqi city of Kirkuk killed five militants. The U.S. and much of the international community have scrambled to prevent the war in the besieged Gaza Strip from expanding across the region.

Analyst Renad Mansour said he believes Iran is making sure the attacks remain below a threshold that would provoke a major U.S. response.

"Both Iran and Iraq have maintained thus far a clear line that, at the moment, Iraq cannot turn into a playground that could destabilize the Sudani government," said Mansour, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House think tank.

He said that's partially due to Iraq's role of passing messages between Washington and Tehran.

Sometimes the messenger is al-Sudani.

In early November, Blinken met with al-Sudani in Baghdad a day before the Iraqi prime minister was set to visit Tehran. Al-Sudani had won a specific promise from the militias that no attacks would be launched during Blinken's visit, according to an Iraqi official and a member of the Kataib Hezbollah militia. Following the visit, al-Sudani carried a message from Blinken to Iran to restrain the militias.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

A week after the Iraqi premier's diplomatic efforts, the United States extended Iraq's sanctions waiver by four months to purchase Iranian electricity. Iran-hawks in Washington criticized the move, saying it would shore up revenue for Tehran while its proxies are at war with Israel.

Mansour says Washington has used the sanctions waiver as "one of its cards" in economy-centered efforts to pressure Iran and Iraq.

Unlike Lebanon's Hezbollah group, seen as Iran's most powerful proxy in the region, Iraq's militias have so far only played a limited role in the conflict.

For now, only small number of militiamen from Iraq are in southern Lebanon, near Israel's northern border, said the official from the Kataib Hezbollah group. He said the Iraqis are working on "battle management" alongside Hezbollah and representatives of Hamas, the militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years and is currently battling Israel.

He said Iran-backed groups in Iraq don't want the conflict to spread across the region, but are prepared to respond with force to any attacks.

Should Iran and allies choose to escalate, al-Sudani's government will likely be unable to rein them in or prevent consequences on Iraqi soil, said Iyad al-Anbar, a political science professor at Baghdad University.

"And this is why all al-Sudani has been able to do is try to bring some calm through statements," said al-Anbar.

Air Force disciplines 15 as IG finds that security failures led to massive classified documents leak

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force has disciplined 15 personnel in connection with the massive classified documents leak by an airman earlier this year, concluding that multiple officials intentionally failed to take required action on his suspicious behavior, the Air Force inspector general reported Monday.

Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira is accused of leaking highly classified military from the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts where he worked.

The punitive actions range from relieving personnel from their positions, including command positions, to non-judicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Teixeira, who's 21, has been behind bars since his April arrest on charges stemming from the most consequential intelligence leak in years. He is charged under the Espionage Act with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. He has pleaded not guilty, and no trial date has been set.

Prosecutors said in a court filing last week that the two sides have not yet engaged in "substantive" plea

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discussions.

Teixeira enlisted in the Air National Guard in 2019. He shared military secrets he illegally collected from his intelligence unit with other Discord users, authorities said — first by typing out classified documents he accessed and then sharing photographs of files that bore SECRET and TOP SECRET markings.

In its investigation of the leaks, the Air Force inspector general found both security gaps occurred in part because personnel had access to classified documents without supervision, and because in instances where Airman 1st Class Teixeira was caught violating security policies none of the personnel who either witnessed the violations or had responsibility for Teixeira took the actions necessary in response.

Teixeira worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks. As such, Teixeira had often unsupervised access as part of a three-person team at night to Top Secret-Secret Compartmentalized facility to perform maintenance inspections. Teixeira remains in the Air National Guard in an unpaid status, Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said.

“At times, members were required to perform preventive maintenance inspections and other tasks, which required individuals to be on their own for hours, unsupervised in other parts of the facility,” the IG found. “Further, no permission controls were in place to monitor print jobs, and there were no business rules for print products. Any night shift member had ample opportunity to access (classified) sites and print a high volume of products without supervision or detection.”

Inside Teixeira’s 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron, members had what the IG described as a “more complete” picture of the breadth of Teixeira’s active unauthorized intelligence-seeking but “intentionally failed to report the full details of these security concerns” because they thought security officials might overreact, the IG found.

For example, in fall 2022 Teixeira was seen writing down notes from a classified document onto a Post-It note. While he was confronted about the note, there was no follow up to ensure the note had been shredded and the incident was not reported to security officers.

It was not until a January 2023 incident that the appropriate security officials were notified, but even then security officials were not briefed on the full scope of the violations.

If any of the personnel had taken the appropriate actions, “the length and depth of the unauthorized and unlawful disclosures by several months,” the IG found.

Those unit officials “who understood their duty to report specific information regarding A1C Teixeira’s intelligence-seeking and insider threat indicators to security officials, intentionally failed to do so.”

But the IG also said the unit’s own policy, which encouraged its tech support service members to attend intelligence briefings “to better understand the mission and the importance of keeping the classified networks operating,” was improper and problematic because it exposed the service members to higher levels of classified material than they needed to know.

The documents released on social media revealed sensitive U.S. intelligence on the Russia-Ukraine war, the Middle East and an array of other topics.

As a result of the security breach, Col. Sean Riley, 102nd Intelligence Wing commander, received administrative action and was relieved of command and the 102nd Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group commander Col. Enrique Dovalo, received administrative action for concerns with unit culture and compliance with policies and standards.

The Air Force also said previously suspended commanders from the 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron and the detachment overseeing administrative support for airmen at the unit mobilized for duty under Title 10 USC were permanently removed.

The Air Force took the intelligence mission from the 102nd after Teixeira’s leaks were discovered and the group’s mission remains reassigned to other units.

Navalny's whereabouts are unknown and a Russian prison says he's no longer there, a spokeswoman says

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — The whereabouts of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny were unknown on Monday as officials at the penal colony where he is serving his sentence told one of his lawyers that he is no longer on the inmate roster, his spokeswoman said.

It had been nearly a week since the spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, had contacted Navalny. Prison officials "refuse to say where they transferred him," she said in posts on X, formerly known as Twitter.

A Navalny lawyer waiting at another penal colony in the region where he could have been transferred was told the facility had no such inmate, Yarmysh said.

"It remains unclear where Alexei is," she wrote.

Navalny has been serving a 19-year term on charges of extremism in a maximum-security prison, Penal Colony No. 6, in the town of Melekhovo in the Vladimir region, about 230 kilometers (140 miles) east of Moscow. He was due to be transferred to a "special security" penal colony, a facility with the highest security level in the Russian penitentiary system.

Russian prison transfers are notorious for taking a long time, sometimes weeks, during which there's no access to prisoners and information about their whereabouts is limited or unavailable. Navalny could be transferred to one of a number of such penal colonies across Russia.

Yarmysh earlier on Monday said that Navalny was due to appear in court that day via video link but did not, and that it has been six days since his lawyers or allies last heard from him.

Navalny, 47, has been behind bars since January 2021. As President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, he campaigned against official corruption and organized major anti-Kremlin protests. His arrest came upon his return to Moscow from Germany, where he recuperated from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Navalny has since been handed three prison terms and spent months in isolation in the penal colony in the Vladimir region for alleged minor infractions.

He has rejected all charges against him as politically motivated.

Last week, Yarmysh said that for three days in a row Navalny's lawyers spent hours at the penal colony waiting for permission to visit him, only to be turned away at the last minute. Letters to the politician were not being delivered, and he didn't appear at scheduled court hearings via video link.

Yarmysh said Friday that the developments were concerning given that Navalny recently fell ill: "He felt dizzy and lay down on the floor. Prison officials rushed to him, unfolded the bed, put Alexei on it and gave him an IV drip. We don't know what caused it, but given that he's being deprived of food, kept in a cell without ventilation and has been offered minimal outdoor time, it looks like fainting out of hunger."

She added that lawyers visited him after the incident and he looked "more or less fine."

Concerns about Navalny reverberated across the globe. White House national security council spokesman John Kirby on Monday said that Navalny "should be released immediately" and "should never have been jailed in the first place."

"And we're going to work with our embassy in Moscow to see how much more we can find out," Kirby said.

The Golden Globe nominees are out. Let the awards season of Barbenheimer begin – Analysis

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Early honors in Hollywood's unfurling awards season have gone to films like Celine Song's tender relationship drama "Past Lives," Jonathan Glazer's piercing Holocaust film "The Zone of Interest" and Martin Scorsese's sprawling Osage murders epic "Killers of the Flower Moon."

But a showdown was always brewing.

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"Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," those summer sensations united in release date if little else, have loomed as perhaps the most potent Oscar contenders of the year. When the Golden Globes on Monday announced picks for its 81st awards, the scandal-plagued, comeback-seeking Globes put their full weight behind the twin phenomena of the movie year.

Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" landed nine nominations, tied for second-most in Globes history. (Only Bob Fosse's "Cabaret" has matched it and Robert Altman's "Nashville" exceeded it.) Its edge over "Oppenheimer" was slight; Christopher Nolan's massive J. Robert Oppenheimer biopic took in eight nominations.

Though the Globes will separate the competition in some categories, keeping "Barbie" in comedy and "Oppenheimer" in drama, the two films will go head-to-head in many key races. Gerwig or Nolan for best director? Ryan Gosling or Robert Downey Jr. for best supporting actor?

Each has their own captivating narratives. Nolan, seen by many as the most talented big-screen artist of his generation, has never won the Oscar for directing, and his films have never won best picture. Gerwig and "Barbie" are at the forefront of a sea change in a long male-dominated Hollywood. Each film managed to do something spectacularly original in a movie industry where sequels and reboots reign — while making a combined \$2.4 billion in the process.

These debates will surely continue until the Academy Awards on March 10. But the Globes on Monday made it clear: Barbenheimer, phase two, has begun.

The central presence of those two films will surely help the Globes, which are seeking stability after years of turmoil. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which was known for some wacky nominations in years past (remember "Salmon Fishing in Yemen"?), has been disbanded.

A new voting body of about 300, more than three times the size of the HFPA, picked this year's nominees. After The Los Angeles Times reported the press association had no Black members, Hollywood boycotted, the 2022 awards weren't broadcast and now the newly for-profit Globes owned by Dick Clark Productions and Eldridge Industries have set up shop at CBS after decades at NBC. (The ceremony is Jan. 7.)

Many questions remain. No host has yet been named, just a litany of reported passes from A-listers. But by the low-bar of Globes respectability, Monday's nominations didn't do anything to bring further scorn. The reception was much as it always was: some low-key celebration from nominees and gentle mockery for an awards show with a checkered history.

The Globes expanded their categories from five to six nominees, which meant far fewer snubs than there might have been. Still, the morning's most surprising omission was "The Color Purple," Blitz Bazawule's Oprah-produced show-stopping musical, which was left out of the best comedy or musical category. (Stars Fantasia Barrino and Danielle Brooks were nevertheless each nominated.)

Films like "The Color Purple" that have not yet opened widely in theaters generally had a tough time. Michael Mann's "Ferrari" and Ava DuVernay's "Origin" were both shut out.

Instead, the Globes closely followed the buzz. That included making room for Time Magazine's Person of the Year, Taylor Swift, in the new cinematic and box office achievement award. (To be eligible, a film must have grossed \$150 million, including \$100 million in the U.S., or been a hit on streaming.) "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" passed that mark, giving the Globes a chance to substantially boost the star power of its broadcast with Swift, a pop star with growing moviemaking ambitions.

That new award follows similar efforts by the Academy Awards, which in 2018 proposed a "popular film" award that prompted an immediate backlash from academy members that torpedoed it. Both broadcasts have seen ratings dwindle in recent years, and strived to get box-office hits into the show. Last year's Globes were watched by just 6.3 million.

This year, though, the Globes and the Oscars probably don't need to tweak anything to get blockbusters into the mix. While a number of acclaimed films have entered the fray — among them "Killers of the Flower Moon" (7 nominations), Yorgos Lanthimos' warped fantasy "Poor Things" (7 nominations), "Past Lives" (5 nominations), Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers" (3 nominations) — nothing has emerged as clear favorite over "Barbie" or "Oppenheimer."

Their road ultimately to best picture at the Oscars may not be as smooth as it currently seems. Not

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since Ben Affleck's "Argo" (2012) has a best picture winner grossed more than \$100 million domestically. In recent years, so-called saviors of cinemas like "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Avatar: The Way of Water" have fizzled as contenders for Hollywood's top award, while smaller, independently produced films like "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and "CODA" have triumphed.

But Monday's nominations suggested, this year, "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" are the movies to beat. Pick your color palette now.

Why Mariah Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas is You' became so popular — and stayed that way

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If anything about Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" annoys you, best to avoid shopping malls now. Or the radio. Maybe music altogether, for that matter.

Her 1994 carol dominates holiday music like nothing else.

The Christmas colossus has reached No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart the past four years in a row — measuring the most popular songs each week by airplay, sales and streaming, not just the holiday-themed — and it's reasonable to assume 2023 will be no different. One expert predicts it will soon exceed \$100 million in earnings. Even its ringtone has sold millions.

"That song is just embedded in history now," says David Foster, the 16-time Grammy-winning composer and producer. "It's embedded in Christmas. When you think of Christmas right now, you think of that song."

Carey's hit is so omnipresent that the Wall Street Journal wrote about retail workers driven batty by how many times it comes on in their stores, including one who retreats to the stockroom every time he hears the distinctive opening bells.

Yet the story behind "All I Want for Christmas is You" is not all holly and mistletoe.

The song's co-authors, Carey and Walter Afanasieff, are in a mystifying feud. The authors of a different song with the same title have sued seeking \$20 million in damages. While Carey calls herself the Queen of Christmas, her bid to trademark that title failed.

CAREY'S SIGNAL ENDS EACH YEAR'S HIBERNATION

Every year on Nov. 1, the song's hibernation ends when Carey posts on social media that "it's time" to play it again. This year's message depicted her being freed from a block of ice to make the declaration.

In both music and lyrics, the song was perfectly engineered for success, says Joe Bennett, musicologist and professor at the Berklee College of Music.

At the time of its release, most new holiday music came from artists past their peak and looking for a new market. In 1994, though, Carey was at the top of her game.

"All I Want for Christmas is You" works as a love and holiday song. Carey sets it up: She doesn't care about all the holiday trappings, she has one thing — one person — on her mind. It's kept vague whether it's a lover or someone she yearns for.

"It's a wishing song and it works narratively," Bennett says. "You can sing it to your beloved if you are together or not together."

She sprinkles in specific holiday references: the Christmas tree, presents, Santa Claus, a stocking upon the fireplace, reindeer, sleigh bells, children singing and, of course, mistletoe.

The instruments and brisk arrangement recall Phil Spector's 1965 album, "A Christmas Gift for You," itself a holiday classic. To top it off, part of the melody slyly references "White Christmas," Bennett says.

"That was my goal, to do something timeless that didn't feel like the '90s," Carey explained in a recent "Good Morning America" interview.

Billboard has produced lists of top seasonal hits since 2010, and "All I Want for Christmas is You" has been No. 1 for 57 of the 62 weeks it has run, said Gary Trust, chart director. The Luminate data company said the song peaked at 387 million streams in 2019, the 25th anniversary of its release.

Precise numbers are hard to come by, but Will Page, Spotify's former chief economist and author of the

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book "Pivot," estimates the song will exceed \$100 million in earnings this holiday season.

"By most objective measures," Bennett says, "it's the most successful Christmas song of all time."

DISPUTE BETWEEN THE WRITERS

As Afanasieff has told it, much of the work on "All I Want for Christmas is You" was done by him and Carey working in a rented house in the summer of 1994. The team had a history, working on Carey's albums "Emotions" and "Music Box."

He started with a boogie-woogie piano, tossing out melodic ideas that Carey would respond to with lyrics.

"It was like a game of ping-pong," he said on last year's podcast, "Hot Takes & Deep Dives with Jess Rothschild" (Afanasieff did not return messages from The Associated Press). "I hit the ball to her, she'd hit it back to me."

Later, working alone, Carey completed the lyrics and Afanasieff recorded all the instruments.

Then things became complicated. Carey was married at the time to Tommy Mottola, head of Sony Music. They broke up in 1997 and her relationship with Afanasieff, who kept working for Mottola, became a casualty of that fractured marriage.

Afanasieff told Rothschild that he and Carey didn't speak for about two decades until she called him around the time of the song's 25th anniversary, asking for the co-writer's permission to use the "All I Want for Christmas is You" lyrics in a children's book.

That business call didn't lead to a thaw. Afanasieff says it seems his contributions have been written out of Carey's telling of the song's creation. No co-writer was mentioned during her "Good Morning America" interview last month.

"I was working on it by myself so I was writing on this little Casio keyboard, writing down words and thinking about, 'What do I think about Christmas? What do I love? What do I want? What do I dream of?'" she says. "And that's what started it."

At the time the song was written, Carey wasn't a keyboard player and didn't know how to write music, Afanasieff has said. Carey's spokeswoman did not respond to an interview request.

Afanasieff sounds almost bewildered by the turn of events. He told Variety in 1999 that every holiday season he has to defend himself against people who don't believe he co-wrote the song. He's even gotten death threats.

"Mariah has been very wonderful, positive and a force of nature," he told Variety's Chris Willman. "She's the one that made the song a hit and she's awesome. But she definitely does not share credit where credit is due. As a result, it has really hurt my reputation and, as a result, has left me with a bittersweet taste in my mouth."

Last month, songwriters Andy Stone and Troy Powers sued Carey and Afanasieff in federal court in California, seeking \$20 million in copyright infringement and citing their own 1989 country song, "All I Want for Christmas is You." They had dropped a previous effort.

Their song has a similar theme, with a narrator desiring a love interest before Christmas comforts. The writers cite an "overwhelming likelihood" that Carey and Afanasieff had heard their song.

The two songs have no musical similarities, Berklee's Bennett says, and the theme is hardly unique. He pointed out Bing Crosby's "You're All I Want for Christmas," Carla Thomas' "All I Want for Christmas is You" and Buck Owens' "All I Want for Christmas, Dear, is You."

Says the musicologist: "It's nonsense."

THE NEXT 'ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU'?

In his podcast appearance, Afanasieff noted how Foster once told him that "All I Want for Christmas is You" was the last song to enter the Christmas canon and "that vault is sealed."

Foster told AP he exaggerated a little, but not a lot. Writing a new holiday song is brutally hard, since you're competing with not just current hits but hundreds of years of songs and memories. The old classics never go away. Only 10 entries on Billboard's last Hot 100 of holiday songs last year were written after "All I Want for Christmas is You."

"I just stay away from them, because they scare me," Foster says. "Lyrically, it's sort of all been done

before — better than I can ever do.”

A holiday album Foster and his wife, Katharine McPhee, released recently sticks with the standards, plus Foster’s own 1989 song, “Grown-Up Christmas List.”

A handful of more contemporary songs have shown potential staying power, like Ariana Grande’s “Santa Tell Me” from 2014, Kelly Clarkson’s “Underneath the Tree” from 2013, Gwen Stefani & Blake Shelton’s “You Make it Feel Like Christmas” from 2017 and Taylor Swift’s “Christmas Tree Farm” from 2019.

While he appreciates Foster’s compliment, Afanasieff told Rothschild that he hoped others don’t take it to heart.

“I urge songwriters every year,” he says. “It’s time to write the next ‘All I Want for Christmas is You.’”

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

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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 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.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, put the blame solely on Biden for inflation and people feeling downtrodden.

"The challenge is rising cost of living," said Youngkin, speaking at a Monday event in Washington hosted by Bloomberg News. "And it's just clear over the course of now the last three years of the Biden economy we have seen inflation really run away from a lot of folks and 60% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck."

Biden's speeches over the past two years have 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 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 argument 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."

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 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.

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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 overwhelmingly 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.

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."

India's Supreme Court upholds government's decision to remove disputed Kashmir's special status

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — India's top court on Monday upheld a 2019 decision by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to strip disputed Jammu and Kashmir's special status as a semi-autonomous region with a separate constitution and inherited protections on land and jobs.

The five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court ruled that the region's special status had been a "temporary provision" and that removing it in 2019 was constitutionally valid.

The unprecedented move also divided the region into two federal territories, Ladakh and Jammu-Kashmir, both ruled directly by the central government without a legislature of their own. It was the first time in the history of India that a region's statehood was downgraded to a federally administered territory.

As a result, the Muslim-majority region is now run by unelected government officials and has lost its flag, criminal code and constitution.

But Chief Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud said the government has promised to restore Jammu-Kashmir's statehood and should do so as soon as possible. Ladakh, however, will remain a federal territory.

He also ordered the country's election commission to hold legislative polls in the region by Sept. 30.

The ruling is expected to boost the electoral prospects of Modi's governing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party in national polls next year. The 2019 move resonated in much of India, where the Modi government was cheered by supporters for fulfilling a long-held Hindu nationalist pledge to scrap the Muslim-majority region's special status.

But the judgment will disappoint many in Kashmir, including the region's main pro-India Kashmiri politicians who had petitioned the Supreme Court to reverse the deeply unpopular decision, which was imposed under an unprecedented security and communication clampdown that lasted many months.

When Britain divided its Indian colony into a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan in 1947, the status of what was then the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was left undecided. India and Pakistan soon began a war over Kashmir, which ended with both countries controlling parts of the territory, divided by a heavily militarized frontier.

A 1948 United Nations resolution called for a referendum in Kashmir giving the territory's people the choice of joining either Pakistan or India, but it never happened. The part of Kashmir controlled by India was granted semi-autonomy and special privileges in exchange for accepting Indian rule.

Kashmiri discontent with India started taking root as successive Indian governments breached the pact of Kashmir's autonomy. Local governments were toppled one after another and largely peaceful movements against Indian control were harshly suppressed. Kashmiri dissidents launched a full-blown armed revolt in 1989, seeking unification with Pakistan or complete independence. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict.

New Delhi insists the Kashmir militancy is Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, a charge Islamabad denies. Most Kashmiris consider it a legitimate freedom struggle.

"The verdict today is not just a legal judgment; it is a beacon of hope, a promise of a brighter future and a testament to our collective resolve to build a stronger, more united India," Modi wrote on X, formerly Twitter. He said the decision was "historic and constitutionally upholds the decision taken by the Parliament of India."

Mehbooba Mufti, the region's former top elected official who was once an ally of Modi's party, said in a video message on X that the "verdict upheld the central government's illegal and unconstitutional step and is like news of a death sentence not just for Jammu and Kashmir but also for the idea of India."

Mufti, as well as Omar Abdullah, another former chief minister of the region, said police put them under house arrest early Monday. They uploaded pictures on social media that showed the main entrances of their residences locked.

Manoj Sinha, New Delhi's top administrator in the region, told reporters that no one was arrested and that the claims were just "rumors."

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Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a key resistance leader and a Muslim cleric who was kept under house arrest most of the time since 2019, said the verdict was not unexpected and that the divided territory remains "humanitarian and a political issue."

"Those people who at the time of the partition of the subcontinent facilitated the accession (of the region with India) and reposed their faith in the promises and assurances given to them by the Indian leadership must feel deeply betrayed," he said in a statement.

Soon after the 2019 move, Indian officials began integrating Kashmir into the rest of India with multiple administrative changes enacted without public input, including a controversial residency law that made it possible for Indian nationals to become permanent residents of the region.

Many Muslim Kashmiris view the changes as an annexation, saying new laws were designed to change the region's demography. Members of minority Hindu and Buddhist communities initially welcomed the move, but many of them later expressed fear of losing land and jobs in the pristine Himalayan region.

In New Delhi's effort to shape what it calls "Naya Kashmir," or a "new Kashmir," the territory's people have since been largely silenced, with their civil liberties curbed and media intimidated, as India has shown no tolerance for any form of dissent.

Holiday crowds at airports and on highways are expected to be even bigger than last year

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

More Americans are expected to fly or drive far from home over Christmas than did last year, putting a cap on a busy year for travel.

Auto club AAA forecast Monday that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year's Day. That's 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year.

"That desire to get away is stronger than we have seen in a very long time," said AAA spokeswoman Aixa Diaz. "People are willing to adjust their budgets in other areas of their life, but they want to keep traveling."

The AAA predicts that the holiday season will still fall 3% short of record travel in 2019, the last Christmas before COVID-19 hit the United States.

Air travel in the U.S. has already rebounded, surpassing 2019 levels.

The number of travelers going through U.S. airport checkpoints is up 12.4% over last year and 1.4% higher than in 2019, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Travel around the Thanksgiving Day holiday topped 2019 numbers, peaking at 2.9 million — a single-day record for TSA — screened on Sunday, Nov. 26.

Airlines are predicting a blockbuster holiday season.

Airlines for America says 39 million people — about 2.8 million a day on average — will board U.S. flights between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2. The trade group for big U.S. carriers expects about 3 million on the peak days - the Thursday and Friday before Christmas and the four days after the holiday.

The airlines count people more than once if they take connecting flights instead of nonstops, so their numbers are higher than those reported by TSA.

Travel is strong even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy. In an AP-NORC poll last week, seven out of 10 people surveyed rated the economy as poor. But at least inflation has cooled off a bit.

Airline passengers are getting a slight break from last year's high prices. Average fares in October were 13% lower than a year earlier, according to the government's latest data.

AAA predicts that 7.5 million people will fly in the U.S. in late December, but the club expects far more — nearly 104 million — to drive over the holidays.

Motorists will pay a bit less to fill up. The national average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$3.19 at the end of last week, compared with \$3.33 a year earlier, according to AAA. Gas is under \$3 a gallon across

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a swath in the middle of the country.

Travel for Christmas and New Year's is spread out over a couple weeks, so the busiest days rarely match the Thanksgiving peaks — TSA counted a record 2.9 million air travelers on the Sunday after the November holiday.

Transportation data provider INRIX predicted that highways will be busiest on Saturday, Dec. 23, and Thursday, Dec. 28.

AAA's Diaz notes that many people are still working during the holidays. Vacationers heading to visit family will be mixing with commuters on the roads, "so rush hour could still be bad," she said. "We always say leave as early as possible if you're hitting the road or leave at night."

Today in History: December 12, Paris climate accord is adopted to fight climate change

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 12, the 346th day of 2023. There are 19 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 12, 2015, nearly 200 nations meeting in Paris adopted the first global pact to fight climate change, calling on the world to collectively cut and then eliminate greenhouse gas pollution but imposing no sanctions on countries that didn't do so.

On this date:

In 1787, Pennsylvania became the second state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1870, Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina became the first Black lawmaker sworn into the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1913, authorities in Florence, Italy, announced that the "Mona Lisa," stolen from the Louvre Museum in Paris in 1911, had been recovered.

In 1915, singer-actor Frank Sinatra was born Francis Albert Sinatra in Hoboken, New Jersey.

In 1917, during World War I, a train carrying some 1,000 French troops from the Italian front derailed while descending a steep hill in Modane (moh-DAN'); at least half of the soldiers were killed in France's greatest rail disaster.

In 1977, the dance movie "Saturday Night Fever," starring John Travolta, premiered in New York.

In 1985, 248 American soldiers and eight crew members were killed when an Arrow Air charter crashed after takeoff from Gander, Newfoundland.

In 1995, by three votes, the Senate killed a constitutional amendment giving Congress authority to outlaw flag burning and other forms of desecration against Old Glory.

In 2000, George W. Bush became president-elect as a divided U.S. Supreme Court reversed a state court decision for recounts in Florida's contested election.

In 2010, the inflatable roof of the Minneapolis Metrodome collapsed following a snowstorm that had dumped 17 inches on the city. (The NFL was forced to shift an already rescheduled game between the Minnesota Vikings and New York Giants to Detroit's Ford Field.)

In 2018, Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's one-time fixer, was sentenced to three years in prison for crimes that included arranging the payment of hush money to conceal Trump's alleged sexual affairs.

In 2019, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson led his Conservative Party to a landslide victory in a general election that was dominated by Brexit.

In 2020, thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump gathered in Washington for rallies to back his desperate efforts to subvert the election that he lost to Joe Biden.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Pettit is 91. Singer Connie Francis is 86. Singer Dionne Warwick is 83. Rock singer-musician Dickey Betts is 80. Hall of Fame race car driver Emerson Fittipaldi is 77. Actor Wings Hauser is 76. Actor Bill Nighy (ny) is 74. Actor Duane Chase (Film: "The Sound of Music")

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is 73. Country singer LaCosta is 73. Gymnast-turned-actor Cathy Rigby is 71. Singer-musician Sheila E. is 66. Actor Sheree J. Wilson is 65. Pop singer Daniel O'Donnell is 62. International Tennis Hall of Famer Tracy Austin is 61. Rock musician Eric Schenkman (Spin Doctors) is 60. Author Sophie Kinsella is 54. News anchor Maggie Rodriguez is 54. Actor Jennifer Connelly is 53. Actor Madchen Amick is 53. Actor Regina Hall is 53. Country singer Hank Williams III is 51. Actor Mayim Bialik is 48. Model Bridget Hall is 46. Actor Lucas Hedges is 27. Actor Sky Katz is 19.