

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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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

## Thursday, Dec. 14

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, broccoli, garlic toast, orange sherbet.

School Breakfast: Pop tarts.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, tater tots.

Basketball Double Header at Sisseton: Aux. Gym: Boys C at 4 p.m., Girls C at 5 p.m.; Main Gym: Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m., Boys Varsity and Girls Varsity to follow. (Boys game will be played first)

Boys and Girls Northeast Conference Wrestling Tournament at Milbank, 4 p.m.

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# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

The Israeli military has reportedly begun pumping seawater from the Mediterranean into a complex tunnel network underneath Gaza. The operation, likely to take weeks, is part of Israel's efforts to destroy the roughly 300-mile-long infrastructure used by Hamas to transport supplies and personnel (see overview). Some of the 140 remaining hostages from Hamas' Oct. 7 attack are believed to be held inside the tunnels.

Sports Illustrated's parent company, The Arena Group, announced it has ousted CEO Ross Levinsohn, the latest in a string of firings allegedly related to the company's reported use of artificial intelligence to produce content on its website.

British lawmakers have passed a revised bill to deport some asylum seekers to Rwanda. The passage of the bill comes a month after the nation's high court struck down a previous draft of the policy, stating Rwanda was not a safe country and could expose the UK to liability under international law. Analysts viewed yesterday's vote as a win for Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who saw dozens of abstentions from his own party.

Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), the video game industry's largest convention in North America, shutting down after 28 years.

Andre Braugher, Emmy-winning actor known for roles in "Homicide: Life on the Street" and "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," dies at 61. Bulelwa "Zahara" Mkutukana, iconic multiplatinum-selling South African singer-songwriter, dies at 36 of reported liver problems.

Netflix releases viewing data for full catalog for first time; the report captures over 18,000 titles and covers viewing data from January to June 2023.

Researchers demonstrate a hybrid biocomputer, made with lab-grown brain tissue connected to conventional electronic circuitry; potential applications include use in future AI-powered robotics.

Blue Origin, the Jeff Bezos-owned space flight company, to make its first launch since last September next week; uncrewed flight will carry scientific research payloads.

Study suggests current AI models excel at imitation, fail at innovation when compared to children; study asked human and AI subjects to select tools for unconventional tasks.

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.5%, Dow +0.5%, Nasdaq +0.7%); all three indexes reach new intraday 52-week highs.

The consumer price index, which measures price changes for a basket of goods and services, rose 3.1% year-over-year and 0.1% month-over-month in November; both figures are in line with economist expectations.

Choice Hotels International launches \$8B hostile takeover offer for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts after previous attempts were rebuffed.

Pfizer's \$43B deal to buy cancer drugmaker Seagen expected to close this week.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets with President Joe Biden, US Congress; deal to provide further aid to Ukraine reportedly stalled over disagreement on package deal including immigration policy changes.

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

[GDILIVE.COM](#)

Groton Area  
Tigers

# GT

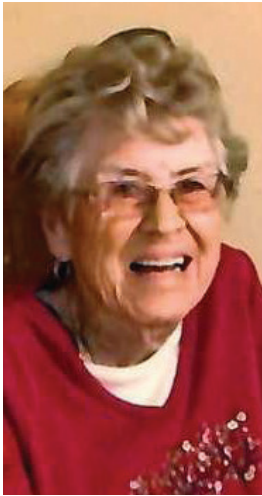
Any interest in any of these basketball games on [GDILIVE.COM](#)? They are \$25 each.

West Central Girls JV

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

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## Service Notice: Janice Fliehs

Services for Janice Fliehs, 95, of Claremont will be 2:00 p.m., Saturday, December 16th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the church on Saturday from 12:00-2 p.m.

Janice passed away December 12, 2023 at Bethesda Home of Aberdeen.

## The Life of Connie Olson

Connie Rae Olson, Lincoln, Neb., passed away on December 7, 2023. Connie was born July 9, 1944 to Darrel and Cara (Jensen) Kurtz. She attended Joan of Ark Country School through eighth grade and graduated from Groton High School in 1963.

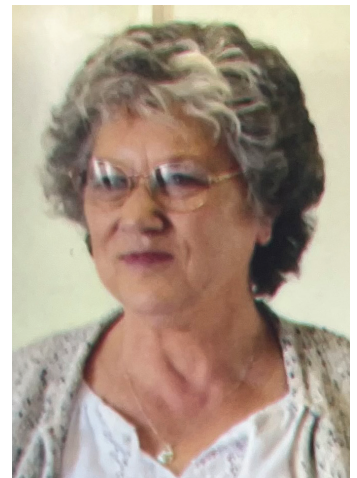
After attending hair styling school in Aberdeen, she married Gary Olson from Webster and moved to Rapid City where Gary was in the United States Air Force.

They had two children and Connie was a stay-at-home mom. Later in life she worked at the local Walmart.

She is survived by her son, Scotty (Laura); grandsons Ryan and Thomas; granddaughter Jena; her siblings, Shirley Simon, Lois (Victor) Schwahn, Karon Kurtz, Duane Kurtz; brother-in-law John Blocker; and many nieces and nephews.

Connie is preceded in death by her parents; daughter, Stacie; sister, Myrtle Blocker; brothers, Darwin Kurtz and Dennis Kurtz; and brother-in-law, Tom Simon.

A memorial service will be held later in Aberdeen.



## Conde National League

**Dec. 11 Team Standings:** Cubs 4, Braves 3, Mets 3, Tigers 1, Pirates 1, Giants 0

**Men's High Games:** Dalton Locke 203, Ryan Bethke 200, Russ Bethke 192

**Men's High Series:** Ryan Bethke 551, Russ Bethke 494, Dalton Locke 487

**Women's High Games:** Vickie Kramp 201, Michelle Johnson 174, Sam Bahr 151

**Women's High Series:** Vickie Kramp 531, Michelle Johnson 450, Sam Bahr 448

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**Groton Community Transit**  
205 E 2nd Ave., Downtown Groton  
**invites you to its**  
**Holiday Bake Sale**

**Thursday, Dec. 21, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Coffee, cider and Christmas goodies will be served.**

*Groton Transit wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed Year!*

**If you would like to donate baked goods, please contact  
the Groton Transit dispatch office at 605-397-8661.**

**Any and all donations are welcome!**

**2024 DOG LICENSES DUE BY  
12/29/2023**

**Fines start January 1, 2024**



Spayed/Neutered  
dogs are \$5 per dog,  
otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot  
information is RE-  
QUIRED!!

Email proof to city.  
kellie@nvc.net, fax to

(605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

**Questions call (605) 397-8422**

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1st Place: Jason & Tara Hill-907 N 1st St



2nd Place: Rick & Sherry Koehler-801 N 3rd St



3rd Place: Austin & Makayla Gibbs-107 E 9th Ave

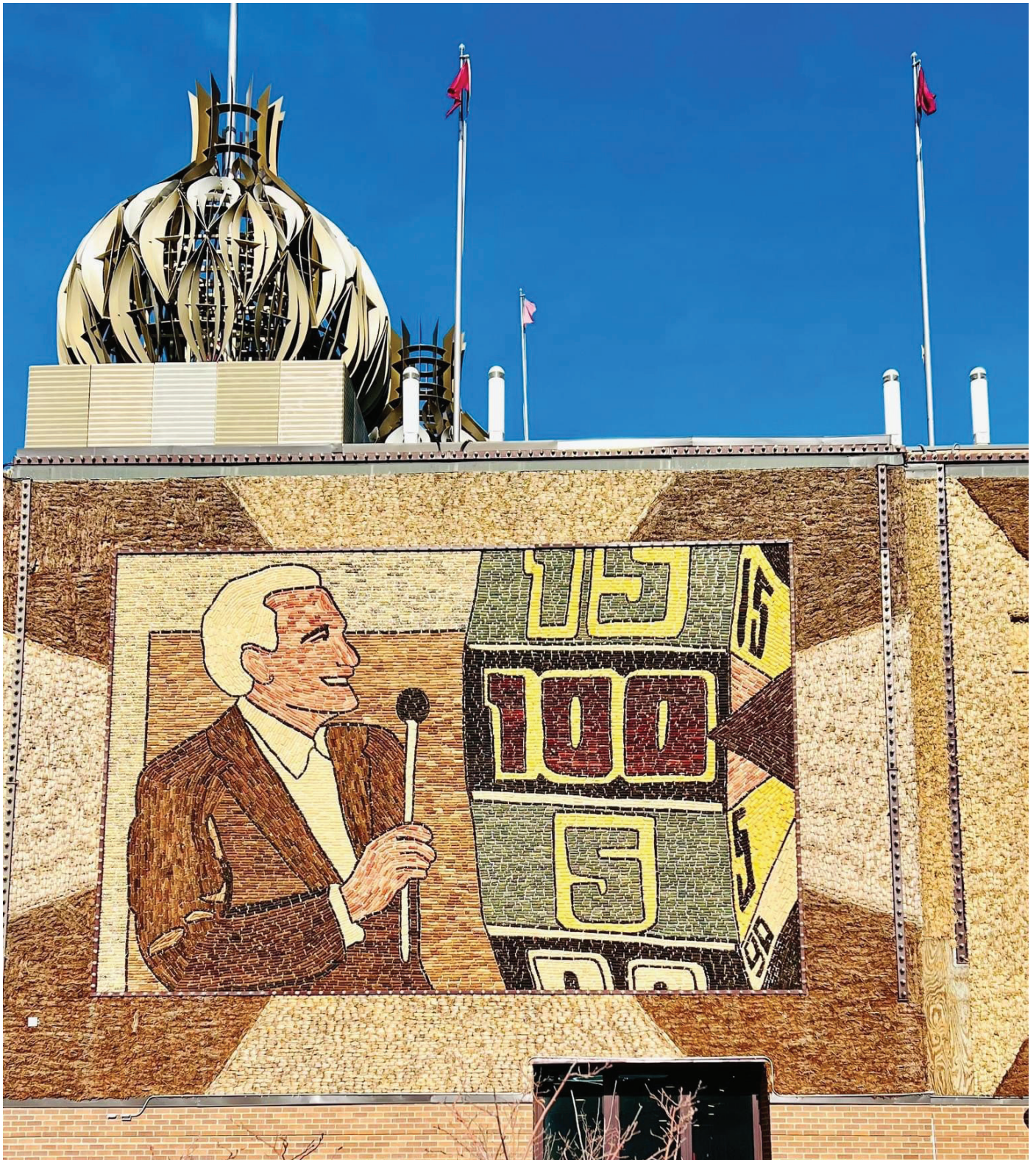


**Winners will receive \$100, \$75, and \$50 credits on their upcoming utility bill.** (Photos from Groton

SD Community Facebook Page)

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**This is pretty cool at the Corn Palace in Mitchell with a tribute to the Famous South Dakotan Bob Barker - yesterday would have been his 100th birthday!** (Photo from The world's only Corn Palace FB page)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Behind the humor, lieutenant governor's second broken gavel has sentimental value

**Rhoden crafted tool himself from a beloved family tree**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 12, 2023 4:20 PM**

When legislators criticize Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden for his heavy-handedness during South Dakota's legislative session, they're being literal: He raps the gavel so loudly that people jump from surprise.

When Rhoden slammed the gavel down to bring the Legislature to order last Tuesday ahead of Gov. Kristi Noem's budget address, the gavel snapped in half, the head tumbling and thudding to the floor. The room erupted with laughter a half-second later as Rhoden sheepishly smiled, chuckled and banged the gavel again (just the head this time) before raising the broken handle for everyone to see.

It wasn't the first time he's broken a gavel.

"Two years in a row," Rhoden said to the legislators gathered on the House floor. "There's something about the House."

Rhoden, who presides over the Senate during the annual wintertime legislative session, broke a gavel last year as well — a gavel he'd received from the governor when they were elected four years earlier, but hadn't yet used. A piece of wood chipped off that gavel.

This year, House Speaker Hugh Bartels, R-Watertown, replaced the House speaker gavel with a new one crafted by a Lake Area Technical College alumnus. Rhoden said Bartels forbade him from using that gavel at the budget address.

"I've seen what you do to gavels. You're not touching mine," Bartels said, according to Rhoden.

The gavel that Rhoden broke last week was one he crafted himself in 2018 from a tall black walnut tree that stood in his family's pasture. He grew up in its shadow, helping his mother in the garden and completing chores around the family farm and ranch. When the tree died, he cut it into lumber for wood crafting projects — a hobby he takes pride in, creating gifts for friends and family. Rhoden's wife, Sandy, wrote a poem to accompany such gifts, explaining the importance of the tree to the Rhoden family.

"That wood holds the memory of my mother and my childhood, and that's why I used it all these years," Rhoden said.

The gavel's accompanying "sound block" — which is used to accept the strike of the gavel and amplify its sound — is made out of the black walnut's root ball.



**South Dakota Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden holds up a gavel he broke before Gov. Kristi Noem's budget address on Dec. 5, 2023, at the Capitol in Pierre.** (Samantha Laury/Argus

Leader)



**Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden repaired his handmade black walnut gavel with glue and baling wire.** (Courtesy of Larry Rhoden)

"I'm going to be a lot more cautious from this point forward when presiding over joint meetings of the House and Senate," Rhoden laughed.

Rhoden and Bartels joked that Rhoden may need something sturdier — perhaps a metal gavel crafted from Lake Area Tech's welding shop. Bartels told South Dakota Searchlight he'll have his own gavel hidden in his office this legislative session so Rhoden can't use it.

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

Within days of returning to his western South Dakota ranch near Union Center after the budget address, Rhoden repaired the gavel with the "stereotypical rancher-type fix": He glued it back together and wrapped it with baling wire.

He had no intentions of retiring the gavel like he had with the governor's gift (which sits safely in its box, chipped piece of wood included). He said his handmade gavel and block serve as a reminder of the values he learned as a child, and a reminder to bring those values to the Capitol.

"The work ethic and values I learned growing up on that small family farm where everyone worked together as a unit is really in the fabric of what makes South Dakota such a great state," Rhoden said.

That said, he's going to be gentler with gavels in the future.

## Housing board backs more infrastructure, including support for dozens of new homes in Milbank

**Around half of \$200 million fund awarded in four months**

**BY: JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 12, 2023 5:49 PM**

If you're ready to spend more than \$400,000 on a home in Milbank, the city will soon have 33 to choose from.

At least that's the plan, as presented to and backed by the South Dakota Housing Development Authority board on Tuesday.

The board signed off on an \$825,000 loan meant to help cover the cost of infrastructure for the JAG Development, which intends to sell the 33 houses for between \$440,000 and \$460,000.

The developers had requested a grant, but the board opted against that on the recommendation of Chas Olson, the housing authority's executive director, and his staff.

"Due to the price points of the homes, South Dakota Housing is recommending this as a loan," Olson said.

The JAG project was one of two Milbank developments backed by the board in its December meeting. The loan came from the Housing Infrastructure Financing Program, a \$200 million pool of state and federal money designed to ease the burden of high inflation for home builders in a state with a high need for workforce housing. Lawmakers passed a bill to implement the program in 2023, after legal wrangling



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held up the funds the previous year. It covers up to one-third the cost of a development's roads, sewer lines, street lights and other costs associated with building new neighborhoods.

Unlike every other program administered by the housing authority, the infrastructure program is untethered to affordable housing guidelines. Instead, it lets communities use the money to support the construction of homes in any price range, so long as the prices are justified by local housing market studies.

The explanation for the housing needs in Mitchell has a lot to do with cheese. After completing an August housing study that pointed to a need for 50-75 new homes, "Valley Queen, the chief manufacturer there, said they'd be expanding their employment by 150 employees in the next two years," Olson told the board.

Milbank also has a recently opened hospital, and a new 87-bed assisted living and memory care facility in a repurposed elementary school.

In the space of four monthly meetings, the housing board has committed more than \$96 million in taxpayer funding to 57 projects in every corner of the state. This month's meeting saw support for another 11 projects and one denied grant application — a request for \$5.8 million for a Rapid City road upgrade a mile from the nearest new housing development.

The second Milbank project backed on Tuesday will bring 32 homes to the city, in that case selling for \$370,000-\$385,000. Board members voted to give that project \$753,007 in grants.

The largest award by dollar amount on Tuesday went to Brandon, which will use its \$6.1 million grant to buy land and develop infrastructure for 145 apartment units and 277 single-family lots.

All told, 84 projects have applied for infrastructure support through the housing authority since the program launched. Taken together, Olson told the board, they amount to \$134 million.

"We're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel," Olson said.

In addition to infrastructure program awards, the board voted to back affordable housing projects with money from other programs, among them apartments for those with developmental disabilities in Sioux Falls, housing for the elderly on the Cheyenne River Reservation, modular homes in Martin, and Habitat for Humanity homes in Brookings, Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

## Housing infrastructure awards, December 2023

143rd Avenue and Country Road Trunk Sewer Extension, potential 2,100 single-family lots, Rapid City: \$3.3 million

Armour's East Development, 27 single-family lots, Armour: \$675,000

Aspen Ridge, 145 multifamily units, 277 single-family homes, Brandon: \$6.1 million

41st and Ellis Project, 390 multifamily units, Sioux Falls: \$1.9 million

Gurney Flats Apartments, 104 multifamily units, Yankton, \$531,967

Hill Street Apartments, 210 multifamily units, Spearfish: \$2.1 million



**A sign in Mitchell advertising workforce housing for delivery.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

JAG Development, LLC, 33 single-family lots, Milbank: \$825,000  
Kimball West Curb & Gutter, 13 single-family lots, Kimball: \$171,892  
Marquette Twinhomes, seven twin homes, Sioux Falls: \$136,830  
Milbank Hunt Addition – Phase 1, 32 single family lots, Milbank: \$753,007  
Shepherd Hills North Valley Drive Extension, 319 single-family homes and 600 multifamily units, Rapid City: \$2.28 million

Rejected: Sheridan Lake Road Reconstruction, no housing developed directly, Rapid City, \$5.8 million  
*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.*

## Q&A: The cyber expert who took Mike Lindell's \$5 million challenge in Sioux Falls and won

BY: DEENA WINTER - DECEMBER 12, 2023 11:01 AM

At first, Bob Zeidman was reluctant to take Mike Lindell up on his \$5 million challenge to anyone who could disprove his claim that the 2020 election was stolen.

In 2021, Lindell held a "cyber symposium" in Sioux Falls, where he vowed to unveil proof that China had interfered in the election.

Zeidman is a cyber forensics expert who has programmed computers for about 50 years, was a pioneer in the field of software forensics and founded several successful Silicon Valley firms. He voted for Donald Trump in 2020 — even though he says he doesn't like him — and respected Lindell for having gone from coke addict to born-again pillow mogul.

At his friends' urging, Zeidman decided to fly to South Dakota, figuring it would be historical one way or the other.

"I went in with an open mind," he said. "I was hoping Mike Lindell was right."

Zeidman ended up proving Lindell wrong, according to an arbitration panel that ruled in his favor in April. We talked to Zeidman about the experience, which he wrote about in a recently published book called "Election Hacks."

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

What did you think of Lindell before you embarked on this whole thing?

I knew a little bit about him and I had a lot of respect for him. I knew he was a recovered cocaine addict and alcoholic, a guy who turned his life around, found Christianity, which I think is great. I'm not a Christian myself, I'm Jewish, but I've found over the years I really respect people who are devoted to religion. And he started a successful business. So I admired that.

What did you think of his election claims before you looked at the data?

I was confused. I didn't know why he would be the one to have this data but he said he hired a crack



**Mike Lindell at his 2021 "cyber symposium" in Sioux Falls, where he vowed to prove the 2020 election was hacked.** (Photo courtesy of Bob Zeidman)

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team of analysts who found that this showed hacking. So I assumed that he had hired people who were experts in their field or at least alleged experts in their field, and one of two things: either they actually did find fraud, and I'd be really interested to see the results ... or they had done an incorrect analysis in which case I might figure that out. I was just going to see how it played out.

But I didn't have any idea that the people who worked on this were totally unqualified to do this and really they were finding polling results out of thin air. There was zero analysis. Basically, everybody accepted at face value what Lindell had when Lindell got this data from a known con artist.

(Editor's note: Federal judges have also accused Dennis Montgomery of fraud and cited him for perjury.)

Did you get a sense whether Lindell has much knowledge in this field?

He admitted over and over again at the deposition and hearing that he didn't understand the technology, but having said that, he defended it vigorously. He would get upset, and this is terrible at a hearing. I've done enough of these to know you don't wanna get overly emotional and confrontational, but he just couldn't help himself.

He does sometimes contradict himself.

He was great for our side because he just couldn't control himself from saying things like that, contradicting himself, making statements that he would admit he didn't know but he was sure they were true.

Did anyone else at the symposium come close to what you did?

I would say every single person there agreed with me. But here's the difference: I was the first one to recognize what the data was. Everyone said this doesn't appear to be legitimate data, but they were divided. Some of them said, "Let's keep looking at it, let's keep looking at it. Maybe it's legitimate."

And others said it's not legitimate but let's give Lindell another chance; let's approach him and say the data is not right but maybe you haven't given us the right data. Which is pretty ridiculous.

This was a \$5 million prize and he accidentally pulled out the wrong data?

I voted for Trump. I don't like Trump but I voted for him ... but when I go into any kind of examination I leave that all behind ... because I'll find the truth. So I went into this with an open mind. I was hoping Lindell was right, actually.

I thought if this showed the election was hacked, this would be historical information and I would be part of it. And I thought, how cool would that be? So I went in with an open mind but as soon as I found the data was bogus, I wasn't going to give Lindell more and more chances.

We all agreed it was bogus data but I was the first one to figure out what it was exactly. And I was the only one to write a detailed report and submit it to Lindell. And no one in their right mind would offer \$5 million if the data wasn't real and verified, right?

So how would you explain to the layperson what you deduced?

The main thing I found was I just recognized that there were transformations that were done on this data. One of the things I pride myself on is pattern recognition. Sometimes I've wondered — people call me a genius; they tell me I'm really, really smart. I won't dispute that, but sometimes I wonder if my biggest ability is just pattern matching. I can see patterns that other people don't see and when I looked at this data, I immediately saw a pattern — this looked like another kind of data. Like if you saw hieroglyphics and said, "Oh, I know what each word is, I can write it in English." You're not changing it, you're just translating it. Or if you see French and you translate it to English.

When I did these two translations, I realized what I had was a Word document. And then I called it up in Word, and sure enough, it was just a Word document perfectly formatted with gibberish in it.

His proof was just gibberish?

Well there was a giant file he gave us. I ran every tool, including my own tool, and every tool said this is nothing, just random stuff. My report said this is nothing that any known tool could analyze, so it's not real data. But it was 23 gigabytes of ones and zeroes.

What's interesting is that Lindell's people said, "If Zeidman had the right tools, he would translate it into this spreadsheet," which Lindell had also given us. Anyone could see the spreadsheet was not any election data. It was just a spreadsheet of stuff like polling locations and the names of Trump and Biden and latitudes and longitudes.

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So this giant 23-gigabyte file that I analyzed every way possible they claimed turned into this spreadsheet they had already given me that everyone could see was not election data.

So they missed this huge opportunity — if I were them and I wanted to cheat, I would say the election data is all in this 23-gigabyte file and Mr. Zeidman doesn't know what it is. But instead the colossal mistake they made was to say, "Oh this 23-gigabyte file turns into this tiny little spreadsheet."

And so at that point I said, well the spreadsheet is bogus — everyone can see it's bogus so we don't even have to look at the 23-gigabyte file. If they wanted to cheat, they should have said, "Oh he doesn't know what the 23-gigabyte file is, therefore he didn't prove anything." That's what my biggest fear was.

It turns out Dennis Montgomery — the guy who sold them the data — created a program that would take a tiny spreadsheet and turn it into a 23-gigabyte file of nonsense. It was a special program that he created to basically fill in garbage, but you could undo it.

Lindell's experts said, "Well he was super-encrypting and compressing." Well compressing makes something smaller, not 1,000 times larger. Why are you hiding evidence with all kinds of fancy encryption?

Would Mike have been in on that?

All of us at the conference were speculating on that. We really didn't know if Lindell was in on it or not. That was a big question. We all agreed it was bogus data. My belief after going to the hearing is that Dennis Montgomery's done this before — many many times, he gives bogus data.

He knows enough computer programming to write a program that'll mix up the data to make it unrecognizable and he sells it to people who have no knowledge of technology so they can't verify it.

And then another guy – Conan Hayes – Mike Lindell uses him to vet all the data he received from Dennis Montgomery. That came out in testimony. Conan Hayes is a surfer who started a surf shop called RVCA and he sold it for a lot of money to Billabong. I looked into this guy's background and there's nothing that says he even ever took a course in computers. You'll find that all of the lawsuits around the country into voting machine hacking were funded by Lindell and vetted by Conan Hayes.

What do you think of the safety of election machines in America?

My take is that there can be problems. There can be bugs in the software ... but I don't think there was any hacking to turn the election one way or the other. I'm almost sure there was no purposeful effort by the voting machine company to change the election.

Any kind of tampering with the election results in the machine itself is going to be found by people like me, and there's a lot of people like me. Because there will be evidence if it was hacked and it will become clear eventually.

I've argued that I believe there was fraud in the 2020 election and the reason for that is there's fraud in every human endeavor. Whether or not it was enough to change the election results, I don't know. But what I do know is that any problems with the voting machines would be found; there would be serious consequences for anyone doing that.

It's like if your house has this complex electronic security system but you leave the back door open all the time. Nobody's gonna hack into your electronic system. It's really, really hard and expensive and you can get caught. They'll just walk in the back door.

There's so many ways of cheating in an election that don't have to do with hacking into voting machines — why would anyone hack into a voting machine?

Have you gotten any of the \$5 million?

I'm a pessimist in general. I don't think I'll see it. I do think he's gonna go bankrupt from all the lawsuits and all his expenditures on these illegitimate voting fraud cases. So I think he'll delay things until he's out of money, and I probably won't see anything.

I never really expected \$5 million. I certainly really wish I had it. I could put at least some of it towards voter integrity.

You've said you would donate it all to that sort of cause?

I would donate a good portion of it. There's a lot of nonprofits that would be getting a portion of it.

*Deena Winter, senior reporter for the Minnesota Reformer, has covered local and state government in four states over the past three decades, with stints at the Bismarck Tribune in North Dakota, as a correspondent for the Denver*

Post, city hall reporter in Lincoln, Nebraska, and regional editor for Southwest News in the western Minneapolis suburbs.

## SD senators help advance defense bill that faces objections in House

**Thune praises B-21 funding and rejection of 'woke ideologies'**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - DECEMBER 12, 2023 6:20 PM**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate took an important step Tuesday on the nation's annual defense policy bill, but the reliably bipartisan legislation is expected to hit the same hard-right opposition in the U.S. House that has dogged lawmakers since the beginning of this Congress.

The Democratic-led upper chamber voted to end debate on this year's \$886 billion National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan 85-15 tally (including yes votes from South Dakota Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds). The legislation will greenlight, but not directly fund, the continuation of U.S. military operations and nuclear weapons programs.

The bill is expected to receive final Senate approval Wednesday and reach the GOP-led House floor Thursday, where a group of far-right members accuse colleagues on both sides of the aisle of stripping the final compromise text of conservative priorities.

On the conservative wish list: prohibiting the Pentagon's leave and travel allowances for troops seeking abortion in states where it remains legal, and prohibiting gender reassignment surgery and hormone treatments for service members.

Congress members often use the bill as a vehicle for various legislation because lawmakers reliably get it done.

This year hard-right members are further incensed by House Speaker Mike Johnson's agreement to tack on a temporary extension until April of the nation's foreign surveillance law that was set to expire by year's end.

Lawmakers on both sides of the political spectrum have criticized the surveillance law as "unlawful, mass surveillance of Americans," as former House Freedom Caucus Chair Andy Biggs of Arizona protested on X on Friday.

In a joint statement issued by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the senators thanked Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, for the "House's commitment to extend vital national security authorities" under the surveillance law.



**The B-21 Raider was unveiled to the public at a ceremony Dec. 2, 2022, in Palmdale, California. Funding for continued development of the planes is included in new legislation passed by the Senate.** (U.S.

Air Force photo)

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The pair promised the surveillance law will be negotiated on its own next year.

## **Praise for the NDAA**

Schumer praised the defense package on the Senate floor Tuesday for bipartisan, bicameral support and specifically highlighted the authorization of Virginia-class submarines to Australia in a trilateral agreement also involving the United Kingdom.

"This historic agreement will create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to counter the Chinese Communist Party's influence in the Pacific," Schumer said.

South Dakota Republican Sen. John Thune similarly said the bill "makes some genuine progress on the readiness front." Speaking on the Senate floor Tuesday morning, Thune said "above all" he is pleased with authorization of funding for B-21 bomber planes, the first of which will be located in his state at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

"I'm also pleased that this year's NDAA takes measures to keep our military's focus on warfighting and not the dissemination of woke ideologies by Pentagon bureaucrats," Thune said on the floor.

The final language includes a Senate amendment to temporarily freeze the hiring of any Department of Defense positions related to diversity, equity and inclusion, often referred to as DEI. A GOP-led House amendment to eliminate the department's DEI offices and positions, including Chief Diversity Officer, did not make it into the final bill.

However, a compromise amendment to establish a pay cap for Defense employees working solely on DEI initiatives also appeared in the final text.

## **Senate opposition**

A last-ditch effort by Sen. Joni Ernst that she described as "reversing the DoD abortion travel (policy)" failed, 47-53. The Iowa Republican tried to hold up the bill's cloture vote and return it to negotiators for changes that could have included abortion policy language.

The Pentagon's policy of allowing service members time off and travel reimbursement when seeking an abortion was the reason behind Alabama GOP Sen. Tommy Tuberville's nine-month blockade of hundreds of military nominees.

Despite Ernst's objection, she voted to advance the full defense package.

GOP Sen. Josh Hawley vowed last week to "do everything in my power to slow (NDAA passage) or stop it if I can" after his amendment to compensate those exposed to residual radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project was stripped from the final bill.

On Tuesday the Missouri senator delayed the NDAA's cloture vote by about 90 minutes. A motion he filed to stop the procedural vote failed, 26-73.

Hawley's original amendment, which passed the Senate in July to be attached to the NDAA, would have opened the compensation program for St. Louis, Missouri residents and to those living in Colorado, Idaho, Guam, Montana and New Mexico, as well as expanded coverage areas in Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

Hawley was among 15 votes Tuesday against advancing the overall bill.

Sen. Ben Ray Luján, a New Mexico Democrat, spoke Tuesday on the floor along with Hawley criticizing the amendment's removal.

"This is legislation which we all fought for," Luján said. "We passed this with a bipartisan strong vote of the Senate, it's now been taken out of NDAA in conference. What do I tell these families?"

Luján joined Hawley in voting against ending debate on the bill.

Senators who also voted against advancing the NDAA included New Jersey Democrat Cory Booker, Indiana Republican Mike Braun, Utah Republican Mike Lee, Wyoming Republican Cynthia Lummis, Massachusetts Democrats Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, Oregon Democrats Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, Kentucky Republican Rand Paul, Vermont independent Bernie Sanders, Tuberville, Ohio Republican J.D. Vance, and Vermont Democrat Peter Welch.

Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania joined his colleagues Tuesday in supporting the defense package but in recent weeks has publicly criticized negotiators for leaving out his amendment to monitor private U.S. investment in advanced tech ventures in China.

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## The House GOP's far-right opposition

The GOP's far-right House Freedom Caucus members issued a statement Friday characterizing the compromise legislation as a "predetermined deal ... reached behind closed doors (that) has been air dropped into the process to undermine many of the most critical House GOP positions."

"Any reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) must be considered only with significant reforms as a standalone measure. Under no circumstances should an extension be attached to 'must-pass' legislation such as the (NDAA)," caucus members wrote.

Members are "prepared to use all available leverage to change the status quo. We will not simply vote 'no' on bad legislation and go home for Christmas," the statement later said, referring to the defense policy bill as well as hinging foreign aid to Ukraine and Israel on changes to immigration policy.

If lawmakers send the defense policy package to President Joe Biden's desk, the passage would mark Congress' 63rd consecutive time doing so.

The White House released a statement Tuesday saying it "commends the strong, bipartisan work of the conference committee to negotiate and draft a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that continues to strengthen our national defense, supports our dedicated troops and their families, and reinforces our alliances and partnerships around the world."

"The NDAA provides the critical authorities we need to build the military required to deter future conflicts while supporting the servicemembers and their spouses and families who carry out that mission every day."

The House and Senate versions of the massive defense package were reconciled by members from both chambers under the majority and minority leadership of both Armed Services committees, which included Sens. Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Roger Wicker of Mississippi, and Reps. Mike Rogers of Alabama and Adam Smith of Washington.

The "four corners," as they are called in defense policy circles, released a joint statement on the compromise bill calling it Congress' "most important responsibility."

"Our nation faces unprecedented threats from China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea. It is vital that we act now to protect our national security," they said in the Dec. 7 statement.

Both chambers are scheduled to leave Thursday afternoon for a three-week winter break. The current NDAA expires on Dec. 31.

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

## With pipeline growth booming, the US agency in charge of safety struggles to keep up

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - DECEMBER 12, 2023 11:10 AM

The pipeline industry added thousands of miles of natural gas, crude oil and carbon dioxide pipelines to the national network in recent years. But the federal regulatory agency responsible for ensuring that vast system's safety failed to grow at the same pace.

Pipeline miles expand every year, and are expected to see even faster growth in the near future thanks to major federal laws.

The 2021 infrastructure law provided \$1 billion for grants for new natural gas distribution lines.

And the climate, taxes and policy law Democrats passed along party lines and President Joe Biden signed last year included billions in tax incentives for carbon capture systems, including pipelines to underground storage sites in North Dakota, spurring a slew of new pipeline proposals in the Midwest.

But neither bill added money for the pipeline safety program at the Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, a 600-employee agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that is responsible for guaranteeing the safety of pipelines that cross state lines.

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Kenneth Clarkson, a spokesman for the Pipeline Safety Trust, an advocacy group, said the agency has long lacked the funding it needs.

"PHMSA has been historically underfunded, and unfortunately that is still the case," Clarkson wrote in an email to States Newsroom. "The agency needs more resources to keep up with the safety of our nation's millions of miles of pipelines, especially so as more pipelines are continually being added to that total."

Pipeline Safety Trust was founded to be a watchdog on industry and regulators in 2003 with money from criminal penalties imposed following



**Construction workers specializing in pipe-laying work on a section of pipeline on July 25, 2013, outside Watford City, North Dakota.** (An-

drew Burton/Getty Images)

the Olympic Pipe Line Company explosion in Bellingham, Washington in 1999.

That disaster killed two children and an 18-year-old and caused at least \$45 million in property damage after nearly 250,000 gallons of oil spilled from a ruptured pipeline and caught fire.

PHMSA Deputy Administrator Tristan Brown told the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Railroad, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee at a March hearing that the agency has had to work "leaner" as its responsibilities have grown without a subsequent rise in resources.

"PHMSA's oversight responsibilities continue to grow, both in terms of the types of facilities we regulate, as well as the number of facilities we regulate," Brown told the House panel. "We have had to continuously operate relatively leaner as compared to our expanded universe of regulated facilities."

Brown is the top PHMSA official because the agency has not had a Senate-confirmed administrator since the end of the Trump administration. Biden has not nominated anyone for the role.

Spokespeople for PHMSA did not substantively respond last week to messages seeking comment.

## **Responsibilities grow but not the budget**

PHMSA's budget is the smallest of DOT's eight agencies, not including the government-owned nonprofit Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

Its annual appropriations are less than half what the next smallest, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, is allocated. PHMSA received \$319 million in regular appropriations last fiscal year, with just more than half, \$161 million, allocated for pipeline safety.

As of March, the agency had 207 inspection and enforcement workers on staff. By comparison, the Federal Rail Administration employs nearly 400 safety inspectors. The Federal Aviation Administration employs more than 14,000 air traffic controllers.

Asked by New York Republican Marc Molinaro in March why rulemaking at the agency took so long, Brown said PHMSA was overwhelmed with new responsibilities in a fast-growing area.

"Natural gas, for example: triple what it was five years ago," Brown said. "Carbon dioxide, hydrogen:



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\$100 billion in incentives. We have zero people, zero full-time employees focused on that. Our ability to get things done is directly proportional to the resources that Congress gives us.”

Molinaro said he didn’t accept that more funding would mean a better job by the agency.

But Bill Caram, the executive director of the Pipeline Safety Trust, told the panel that Congress should provide “a substantial increase to PHMSA’s authorized funding to reflect the enormous increase in their charge.”

A bill the House transportation panel approved last week would boost annual funding authorization for the agency, putting the total at \$201 million for pipeline safety.

But increasing funding authorization doesn’t necessarily translate to more federal inspectors. The most recent authorization bill, passed in 2020, required that the agency have 247 pipeline inspectors on the job in fiscal 2023, but PHMSA was 40 short of that number this year.

The need for pipeline inspectors will only become greater in coming years as the incentives for new carbon dioxide pipelines spur construction. At about 5,000 miles today, pipelines carrying carbon dioxide could grow to 100,000, Clarkson wrote.

Ethanol-producing states in the Midwest are seeing particular interest in carbon dioxide pipelines as the carbon byproduct of the region’s ethanol industry is more easily sequestered and transported to underground storage facilities primarily in North Dakota.

The proposed pipelines have caused controversy with local landowners. South Dakota’s Public Utilities Commission denied an initial permit for Summit Carbon Solutions, which has proposed a \$5.5 billion pipeline network that would carry CO2 from ethanol plants in five states to North Dakota storage facilities. The company has said it plans to reapply.

PHMSA has not yet written regulations for hydrogen and carbon dioxide pipelines.

The House bill would require those rules to be written, but “only provides minimal direction” on how to draft them, Clarkson wrote.

The regulator also does “not really” shift inspectors geographically as more pipelines come online in certain places, said Robert Clarríos, an administrative manager at the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives, a coalition group of state officials.

“There’s no specific focus based on miles of pipeline,” he said. “I’ve never seen anything where PHMSA focuses on, you know, ‘Oh, you guys have had a lot of pipelines, so we’re gonna give you extra attention.’ They just don’t do that.”

## States fill void

With PHMSA a relatively small agency, the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the growing network of pipelines throughout the country falls largely to state agencies.

States employ 435 pipeline inspectors, more than twice as many as PHMSA.

State inspectors fill a vital role in the national mission system of pipeline management, Christopher Mele, the legislative director for energy policy at the coalition group of state-level regulators the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners, said.

“Without the states, they couldn’t do it,” Mele said of PHMSA’s ability to inspect the nation’s pipelines. “It would take them a number of years to gear up. PHMSA’s constantly short of staff as it is, as far as inspectors.”

But state regulators often feel they are not properly funded by the federal government for their role in overseeing the nation’s pipeline network.

By law, state pipeline agencies can be reimbursed by PHMSA for up to 80% of their costs — though that cap is never reached, according to Mele. The highest reimbursement rate states have received since 2016 is 70.5%, he said.

The committee-approved bill would increase funding for state reimbursement, but would still only amount to about 72% or 73% of states’ costs, he said.

And while the reimbursement rate for states has not risen dramatically, federal requirements for inspections have expanded in recent authorization laws, Mele said.

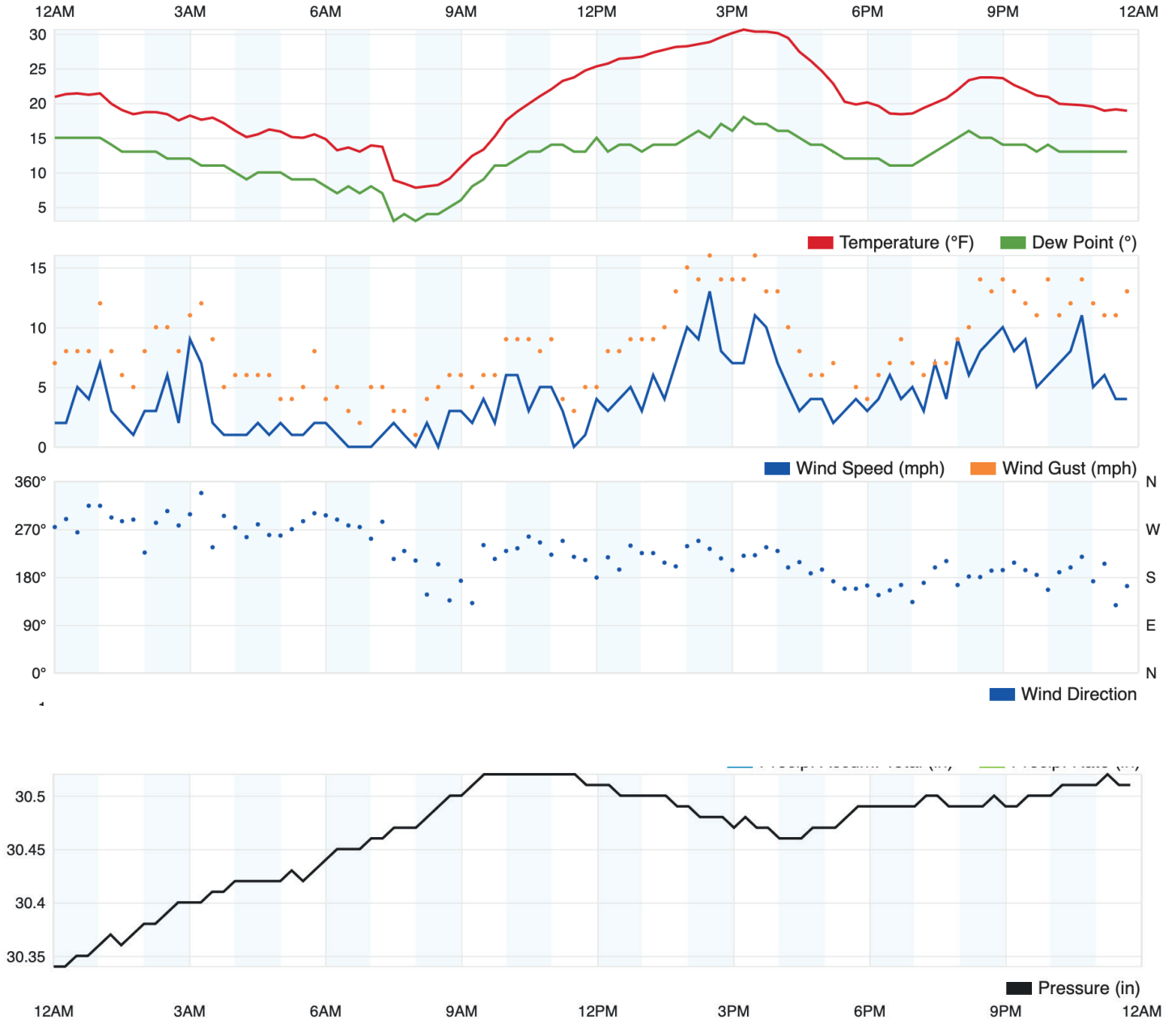
“So we’re faced with a pretty large unfunded-mandate situation,” he said.

*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.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed Dec 13	Thu Dec 14	Fri Dec 15	Sat Dec 16	Sun Dec 17	Mon Dec 18	Tue Dec 19
38°F 26°F	46°F 34°F	42°F 26°F	38°F 25°F	40°F 22°F	40°F 30°F	45°F 26°F
SSW 10 MPH	SSW 16 MPH	S 10 MPH	N 8 MPH 10%	SSW 14 MPH	NE 10 MPH	S 16 MPH



## Mild Days Ahead

December 13, 2023

4:44 AM

and dry too!

### Today

- Mild & Dry
- Highs 39-46°



### Tonight

- Mostly Clear
- Lows in the 20s



### Thursday

- Partly Sunny & Breezy
- Highs 46-52°



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Mild and dry conditions are expected today and Thursday. Downslope winds are expected again along the Coteau tonight with gusts to 40 mph. South to southwest winds will increase on Thursday across the area with gusts of 30 to 45 mph.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 31 °F at 3:14 PM

Low Temp: 8 °F at 8:03 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 3:20 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 49 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1921

Record Low: -34 in 1917

Average High: 29

Average Low: 9

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.25

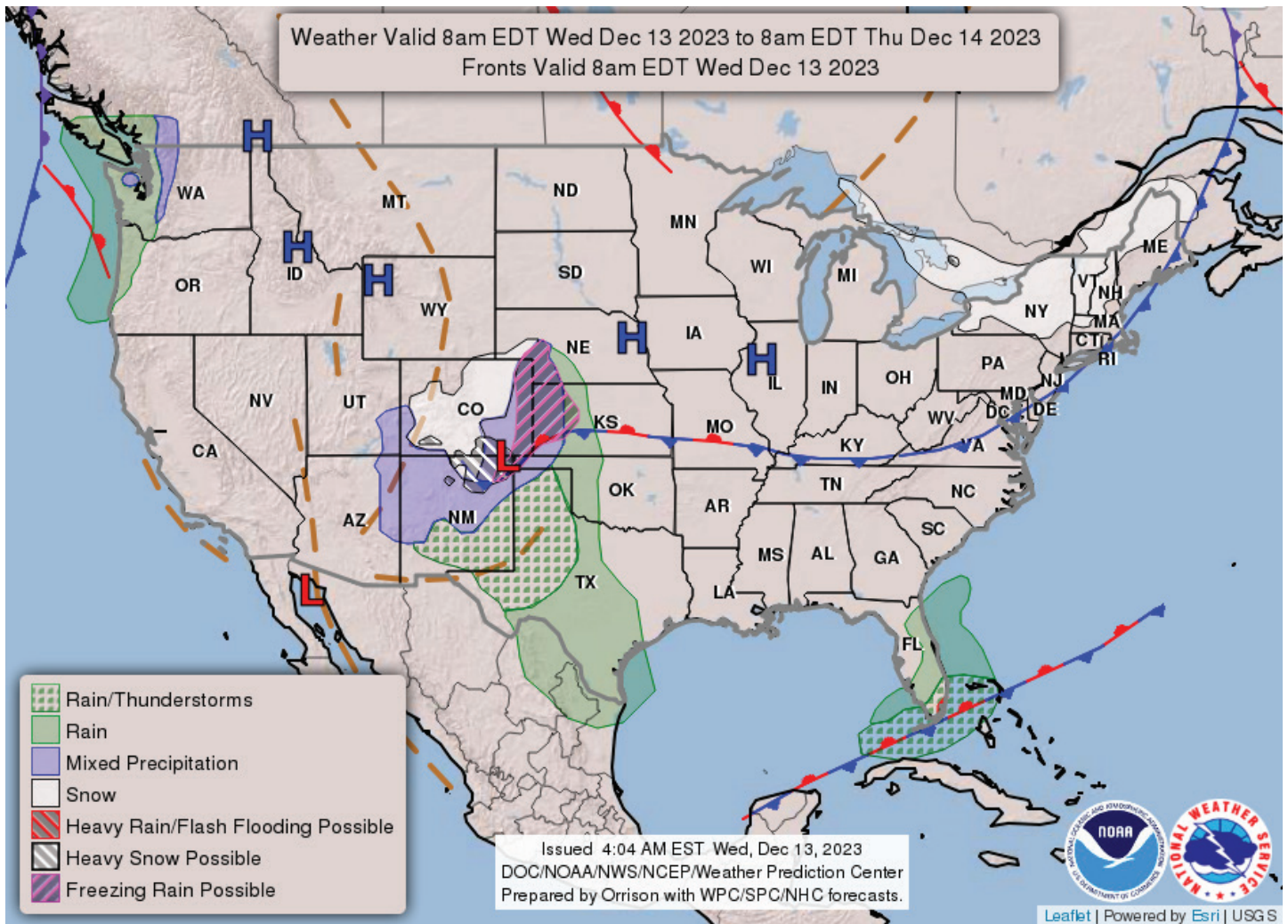
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.46

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:51:04 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02:50 AM



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## Today in Weather History

December 13, 2008: An intense low-pressure area moved out of the Rockies and across the Central Plains bringing widespread snow, blizzard conditions, and extreme winds chills to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota into the early morning hours of the 15th. Snowfall amounts of 1 to as much as 12 inches along with winds gusting to 50 mph caused widespread near zero visibilities and dangerous travel conditions. Winds chills fell into the 35 below to 45 below zero range. Many vehicles became stuck or stranded along several highways and along Interstates 29 and 90. Interstate 90 was closed from the Wyoming line to Murdo from late on the 13th until the morning of the 14th. Interstate 29 was also closed for much of the 14th. The Onida, Agar, and Gettysburg Volunteer Fire Department found it difficult to respond to a structure fire south of Gettysburg. Due to whiteout conditions, the structure was lost to the fire by the time the fire departments arrived. Most area schools were closed on Monday due to the road conditions along with the bitter cold wind chills. Some of the heaviest snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Watertown, Browns Valley, Sisseton, Waubay, and Castlewood; 7 inches at Ortonville, Webster, Clear Lake, Faulkton, and Aberdeen; 8 inches at Milbank, 9 inches at Britton and Wheaton; 10 inches at Clear Lake, and 12 inches at Roscoe. Mobridge received 2 inches and Pierre received 4 inches of snowfall with this storm

1915 - A heavy snowstorm kicked off the snowiest winter in modern records for western New England. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A severe Florida freeze occurred. Morning lows reached 35 degrees at Miami, 18 degrees at Tampa, and 12 degrees at Jacksonville. It was the coldest December weather of the 20th century and caused millions of dollars damage to crops and foliage. In Georgia, the morning low of 9 degrees below zero at Blairsville established a state record for the month of December. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A major winter storm produced high winds and heavy snow in the Southern Rockies and the Southern High Plains. Snowfall totals in New Mexico ranged up to 25 inches at Cedar Crest, with up to three feet of snow reported in the higher elevations. Winds of 75 mph, with gusts to 124 mph, were reported northeast of Albuquerque NM. El Paso TX was buried under 22.4 inches of snow, including a single storm record of 16.8 inches in 24 hours. The snowfall total surpassed their previous record for an entire winter season of 18.4 inches. Record cold was experienced the next three nights as readings dipped into the single numbers. High winds ushering unseasonably cold air into the southwestern U.S. gusted to 100 mph at Grapevine CA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure off the Atlantic coast produced up to a foot of snow in eastern Nassau County and western Suffolk County of southeastern New York State. Mild weather prevailed across the western half of the country. Nine cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Goodland KS with a reading of 74 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds, ushering bitterly cold arctic air into the central U.S., produced squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Snowfall totals in Upper Michigan ranged up to 24 inches at Manistique. Nine cities in Arkansas and Texas reported record low temperatures for the date, including Calico Rock AR with a reading of 4 degrees above zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1997: A freak cold snap and snowstorm struck parts of northern Mexico left 12 people dead, and the area paralyzed. It snowed in the city of Guadalajara for the first time since 1881, leaving amazed residents to gawk at the white stuff and make snowmen. The temperature plunged to 5 degrees in Chihuahua.

2002 - A powerful Pacific storm system plowed into the western United States during the 13th-16th, producing high winds, heavy rains, significant mountain snowfall and causing 9 deaths (Associated Press). Rainfall amounts exceeding 10 inches occurred in parts of California, and wind gusts over 45 mph produced up to 1.9 million power outages during the period (Pacific Gas & Electric).

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE REAL THING!

It has always been difficult for missionary families to be together at special times for important occasions. Often hearts ache for the joy and happiness that bonds hearts and unites loved ones for special reasons and seasons.

The headmaster of a school for the children of missionaries knew that feeling very well. His parents were missionaries, and he spent many birthdays alone as well as many holidays apart from family members. He knew that one of his students, in particular, was having a difficult time one Christmas and decided to visit him in his room.

After talking for a few minutes he asked, "John, what would you like for Christmas this year?"

Looking at a picture of his father on the wall, he said, "I would like my father to step out of that frame."

That's what Jesus did. He "stepped out" of the Old Testament "frames" that prophesied His coming. He became the "real thing" when he walked among the people, laid His hands on the sick, and restored them to health, fed the hungry with bread that would last throughout eternity, and gave the water of life to those dying of thirst.

The Son of God willingly and voluntarily made Himself "nothing" when He assumed a human body and a human nature and became the "real thing." Jesus is God seeing us through human eyes, hearing us with human ears, touching lives with human hands, and loving us with a human heart. In Jesus, we see God with us – Immanuel!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for sending us the "Real Thing." Through Your Son we know how much You love us, understand us, and know our every need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Philippians 2:5-11 Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.12.23

8 23 44 45 53 3

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$28,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 54  
DRAW: Mins 21 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 16 Hrs 9 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.12.23

28 30 31 34 45 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 24 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.09.23

4 7 8 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$87,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 24 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.11.23

10 12 27 40 65 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 53 Mins 21  
DRAW: 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 16 Hrs 53 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 53, Mobridge-Pollock 37  
Avon 45, Corsica/Stickney 38  
Baltic 72, Parker 54  
Bon Homme 74, Irene-Wakonda 35  
Canton 57, Garretson 32  
Centerville 60, Freeman Academy-Marion 4  
Colman-Egan 46, Canistota 39  
Dakota Valley 59, Beresford 52  
Deubrook 61, Deuel 31  
Elkton-Lake Benton 37, Castlewood 21  
Estelline-Hendricks 40, Langford 37  
Ethan 83, Andes Central-Dakota Christian 44  
Faulkton 59, Sunshine Bible Academy 26  
Flandreau 59, Hamlin 39  
Freeman 73, McCook Central-Montrose 46  
Gayville-Volin High School 61, Wausa, Neb. 35  
Herreid/Selby Area 57, Timber Lake 44  
Howard 59, Chester 28  
Huron 65, Brookings 44  
James Valley Christian 59, Highmore-Harrold 42  
Kadoka Area 53, Jones County 18  
Kimball/White Lake 56, Platte-Geddes 46  
Lemmon High School 52, Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 33  
Lennox 66, Dell Rapids 35  
Lyman 66, Sully Buttes 48  
Miller 33, Potter County 30  
Mitchell 56, Watertown 33  
Newell 54, Lead-Deadwood 17  
North Central Co-Op 42, Ipswich 35  
Northwestern 52, Wilmot 28  
Parkston 62, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 43  
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 46, Hitchcock-Tulare 44  
Scotland 44, Menno 40  
Sioux Falls Jefferson 55, Brandon Valley 48  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 58, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 16  
Sioux Falls Washington 55, Yankton 36  
Tri-Valley 51, Madison 20  
Vermillion 55, West Central 31  
Viborg-Hurley 52, Bridgewater-Emery 50  
Wagner 57, Sioux Falls Christian 41  
Warner 56, Aberdeen Christian 28  
Winner 61, Stanley County 31

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## BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Baltic 73, Parker 50  
Bon Homme 55, Irene-Wakonda 40  
Canton 82, Garretson 39  
Castlewood 75, Elkton-Lake Benton 32  
Centerville 56, Freeman Academy-Marion 33  
Chester 63, Howard 60  
Corsica/Stickney 40, Avon 29  
Dakota Valley 87, Beresford 63  
DeSmet 59, Clark-Willow Lake 50  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 62, Mitchell Christian 29  
Deuel 59, Deubrook 54  
Estelline-Hendricks 73, Langford 24  
Ethan 62, Andes Central-Dakota Christian 45  
Faulkton 58, Sunshine Bible Academy 30  
Florence-Henry 57, Waverly-South Shore 52  
Gregory 62, Chamberlain 36  
Hamlin 68, Flandreau 27  
Hanson 48, McCook Central-Montrose 41  
Harrisburg 81, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 61  
Huron 52, Brookings 41  
Lead-Deadwood 77, Newell 35  
Leola-Frederick High School 70, Oakes, N.D. 56  
Madison 46, Tri-Valley 43  
Mobridge-Pollock 69, Aberdeen Roncalli 58  
North Central Co-Op 63, Ipswich 46  
Parkston 52, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 35  
Potter County 58, Miller 47  
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 69, Hitchcock-Tulare 45  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 49, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 41  
Sioux Falls Washington 53, Yankton 37  
St. Thomas More 45, Douglas 42  
Sully Buttes 72, Lyman 56  
Vermillion 62, West Central 55  
Viborg-Hurley 66, Bridgewater-Emery 34  
Warner 50, Aberdeen Christian 37  
Waubay/Summit 66, Webster 38  
Winner 56, Stanley County 26  
Wolsey-Wessington 69, Iroquois-Lake Preston 32

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

## South Dakota State QB Mark Gronowski and Monmouth RB Jaden Shirden lead AP FCS All-America team

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

South Dakota State quarterback Mark Gronowski and Monmouth running back Jaden Shirden, both finalists for the Walter Payton Award given to the most outstanding player in the Championship Subdivision, were selected to the Associated Press FCS All-America team announced Tuesday.

Gronowski is trying to lead the Jackrabbits to their second straight national championship. He leads the

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nation in passing efficiency rating at 178.06, with 25 touchdown passes. Shirden is the nation's leading rusher with 1,478 yards.

Gronowski is one of four South Dakota State players selected to the first team, along with running back Isaiah Davis and offensive linemen Garret Greenfield and Mason McCormick.

The Jackrabbits host Albany on Friday night in the FCS semifinals. The Great Danes have two first-team All-Americans on their defense in lineman Anton Juncaj and linebacker Dylan Kelly.

Second-team quarterback Max Brosmer of New Hampshire is the third finalist for the Payton Award, which will be presented Jan. 6, the day before the FCS national championship game.

North Dakota State plays at Montana on Saturday in the other FCS semifinal.

The All-America team is selected for AP by a panel of sports writers and sports information directors who cover FCS.

## FIRST TEAM (offense)

Quarterback — Mark Gronowski, fourth-year, South Dakota State.

Running backs — Jaden Shirden, fourth-year, Monmouth; Isaiah Davis, fourth-year, South Dakota State.

Offensive linemen — Garret Greenfield, sixth-year, South Dakota State; Noah Atagi, sixth-year, Weber State; Mason McCormick, sixth-year, South Dakota State; Jacob Johanning, fifth-year, Furman; Marcus Wehr, fourth-year, Montana State.

Tight end — Cam Grandy, fifth-year, Illinois State.

Wide receivers — Ty James, fifth-year, Mercer; Dymere Miller, fourth-year, Monmouth; Jalen Coker, fifth-year, Holy Cross.

All-purpose player — Dylan Laube, fifth-year, New Hampshire.

Kicker — Matthew Cook, fifth-year, Northern Iowa.

## FIRST TEAM (defense)

Linemen — Terrell Allen, fourth-year, Tennessee State; Jay Person, sixth-year, Chattanooga; Anton Juncaj, fourth-year, Albany (N.Y.); Alex Gubner, sixth-year, Montana.

Linebackers — Dylan Kelly, fifth-year, Albany (N.Y.); Brock Mogensen, sixth-year, South Dakota; Jacob Dobbs, fifth-year, Holy Cross.

Defensive backs — PJ Jules, fifth-year, Southern Illinois; Cole Wisniewski, fourth-year, North Dakota State; Lance Wise Jr., fifth-year, Mercer; Marcus Harris, fourth-year, Idaho; Sheldon Arnold II, fourth-year, East Tennessee State.

Punter — Aidan Laros, third-year, Tennessee Martin.

## SECOND TEAM (offense)

Quarterback — Max Brosmer, fifth-year, New Hampshire.

Running backs — Sam Franklin, third-year, Tennessee Martin; Jamar Curtis, second-year, Lafayette.

Offensive linemen — Luke Newman, fourth-year, Holy Cross; Charles Grant, fourth-year, William & Mary; Rush Reimer, fourth-year, Montana State; Mark Barthelemy, sixth-year, Nicholls State; Gavin Olson, fifth-year, Tennessee Martin.

Tight end — Carter Runyon, third-year, Towson.

Wide receivers — Brandon Porter, sixth-year, Incarnate Word; Hayden Hatten, fifth-year, Idaho; Chedon James, second-year, Idaho State.

All-purpose player — Junior Bergen, third-year, Montana.

Kicker — Ricardo Chavez, fourth-year, Idaho.

## SECOND TEAM (defense)

Linemen — Ty French, fourth-year, Gardner-Webb; David Walker, fourth-year, Central Arkansas; Finn Claypool, third-year, Drake; Daylan Dotson, fourth-year, Tennessee Martin.

Linebackers — Billy Shaeffer, sixth-year, Lafayette; Winston Reid, seventh-year, Weber State; Micah Davey, third-year, McNeese State.

Defensive backs — Aamir Hall, fourth-year, Albany (N.Y.); Caleb Curtain, third-year, Elon; Blake Ruffin, third-year, Eastern Illinois; Tyler Morton, third-year, Nicholls State; Kenny Gallop, Jr., third-year, Howard.

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Punter — Grant Burkett, fifth-year, Missouri State.

THIRD TEAM (offense)

Quarterback — Matthew Sluka, fourth-year, Holy Cross.

Running backs — Lan Larison, fourth-year, UC Davis; Jordan Fuller, third-year, Holy Cross.

Offensive linemen — John Allen, fourth-year, SE Louisiana; Josiah Ezirim, fifth-year, Eastern Kentucky; Jake Kubas, sixth-year, North Dakota State; Ryan Coll, fifth-year, Richmond; Seth Osborne, sixth-year, St. Francis, Pa.

Tight end — Cole Rusk, third-year, Murray State.

Wide receivers — Raylen Sharpe, third-year, Missouri State; Efton Chism III, fourth-year, Eastern Washington; Kasey Hawthorne, third-year, Howard.

All-purpose player — Sean Chambers, sixth-year, Montana State.

Kicker — Kyle Ramsey, fifth-year, Abilene Christian.

THIRD TEAM (defense)

Linemen — Eric O'Neill, third-year, Long Island; Brendan Webb, sixth-year, South Dakota; Khristian Boyd, sixth-year, Northern Iowa; Brody Grebe, third-year, Montana State.

Linebackers — Amir Abdullah, fourth-year, Illinois State; Braxton Hill, fifth-year, Montana; Noah Martin, fourth-year, Samford.

Defensive backs — Myles Harden, fourth-year, South Dakota; Saiku White, third-year, Lafayette; Max Epps, third-year, Texas A&M-Commerce; Travis Blackshear, sixth-year, Furman; Kaleb Lyons, second-year, Morehead State.

Punter — Aaron Trusler, third-year, Richmond.

## South Dakota vanity plate restrictions were unconstitutional, lawsuit settlement says

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

South Dakota officials will no longer deny applications for personalized license plates based on whether the plate's message is deemed to be "offensive to good taste and decency," following the state's admission that the language is an unconstitutional violation of free speech rights.

The change is part of a settlement state officials reached in a lawsuit filed last month by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of Lyndon Hart. His 2022 application to the Motor Vehicle Division for a vanity plate reading "REZWEED" was denied after state officials called it "in bad taste."

Hart runs a business called Rez Weed Indeed, which he uses to support the legal selling and use of marijuana on Native American reservations. Hart intended for the personalized license plate to refer to his business and its mission of promoting tribal sovereignty, the ACLU said.

The section of the law allowing for denial of personalized plates based on the decency clause is "unconstitutional on its face and as applied to the plaintiff," said U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange in an order signed Friday. The unconstitutional clause can't be used to issue or recall personalized plates, Lange wrote.

As part of the settlement, filed on Friday, state officials agreed to issue the "REZWEED" plate to Hart, as well as the plates "REZSMOK" and "REZBUD," that will not be later recalled "so long as personalized plates are allowed by the legislature." State officials also agreed to issue plates to those previously denied who reapply and pay the required vanity plate fees.

"It's dangerous to allow the government to decide which speech is allowed and which should be censored," Stephanie Amiotte, ACLU of South Dakota legal director, said in a statement.

Federal courts have ruled that license plates are a legitimate place for personal and political expression, and courts throughout the country have struck down similar laws, the ACLU said.

In January, North Carolina decided to allow more LGBTQ+ phrases on vanity plates. The state's Division of Motor Vehicles approved more than 200 phrases that were previously blocked, including "GAYPRIDE," "LESBIAN" and "QUEER." Other states — including Delaware, Oklahoma and Georgia — have been sued over their restrictions in recent years.

The South Dakota settlement stipulates that officials will make a public statement, which is to be included on the South Dakota Department of Revenue's website, announcing the changes to vanity plate standards by Dec. 15.

That statement did not appear on the department's website by Tuesday morning.

An email request Tuesday to the spokeswoman of both the state Revenue Department and Motor Vehicle Division seeking comment was not immediately returned.

## **Tesla recalls over 2 million vehicles to fix defective system that monitors drivers using Autopilot**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Tesla is recalling more than 2 million vehicles across its model lineup to fix a defective system that's supposed to ensure drivers are paying attention when they use Autopilot.

Documents posted Wednesday by U.S. safety regulators say the company will send out a software update to fix the problems.

The recall comes after a two-year investigation by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration into a series of crashes that happened while the Autopilot partially automated driving system was in use. Some were deadly.

The agency says its investigation found Autopilot's method of ensuring that drivers are paying attention can be inadequate and "can lead to foreseeable misuse of the system."

The recall covers nearly all of the vehicles Tesla sold in the U.S. and includes those produced between Oct. 5, 2012, and Dec. 7 of this year.

The software update includes additional controls and alerts "to further encourage the driver to adhere to their continuous driving responsibility," the documents said.

The software update was sent to certain affected vehicles on Tuesday, with the rest getting it at a later date, the documents said.

Autopilot includes features called Autosteer and Traffic Aware Cruise Control, with Autosteer intended for use on limited access freeways when it's not operating with a more sophisticated feature called Autosteer on City Streets.

The software update apparently will limit where Autosteer can be used.

"If the driver attempts to engage Autosteer when conditions are not met for engagement, the feature will alert the driver it is unavailable through visual and audible alerts, and Autosteer will not engage," the recall documents said.

Recall documents say that agency investigators met with Tesla starting in October to explain "tentative conclusions" about the fixing the monitoring system. Tesla, it said, did not agree with the agency's analysis but agreed to the recall on Dec. 5 in an effort to resolve the investigation.

Auto safety advocates for years have been calling for stronger regulation of the driver monitoring system, which mainly detects whether a driver's hands are on the steering wheel.

Autopilot can steer, accelerate and brake automatically in its lane, but is a driver-assist system and cannot drive itself despite its name. Independent tests have found that the monitoring system is easy to fool, so much that drivers have been caught while driving drunk or even sitting in the back seat.

In its defect report filed with the safety agency, Tesla said Autopilot's controls "may not be sufficient to prevent driver misuse."

A message was left early Wednesday seeking further comment from the Austin, Texas, company.

Tesla says on its website that Autopilot and a more sophisticated Full Self Driving system cannot drive autonomously and are meant to help drivers who have to be ready to intervene at all times. Full Self Driving is being tested by Tesla owners on public roads.

In a statement posted Monday on X, formerly Twitter, Tesla said safety is stronger when Autopilot is engaged.

NHTSA has dispatched investigators to 35 Tesla crashes since 2016 in which the agency suspects the vehicles were running on an automated system. At least 17 people have been killed.

The investigations are part of a larger probe by the NHTSA into multiple instances of Teslas using Autopilot crashing into parked emergency vehicles that are tending to other crashes. NHTSA has become more aggressive in pursuing safety problems with Teslas in the past year, announcing multiple recalls and investigations, including a recall of Full Self Driving software.

In May, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, whose department includes NHTSA, said Tesla shouldn't be calling the system Autopilot because it can't drive itself.

In its statement Wednesday, NHTSA said the Tesla investigation remains open "as we monitor the efficacy of Tesla's remedies and continue to work with the automaker to ensure the highest level of safety."

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## **Ambush kills 9 Israeli soldiers in Gaza City, where battles rage weeks into devastating offensive**

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMY MAGDY and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Palestinian militants ambushed Israeli troops in a dense Gaza City neighborhood, killing at least nine of them, media reported Wednesday, as Hamas put up stiff resistance in areas that Israel has isolated and pounded with airstrikes for over nine weeks.

The air and ground offensive has resulted in the deaths of over 18,400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that triggered the war. Nearly 85% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have been forced to flee their homes, and much of the territory's north resembles a moonscape.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has repeatedly called on Israel to take greater measures to spare Palestinian civilians, even as it has blocked international calls for a cease-fire and rushed military aid to its close ally.

More than six weeks after Israeli soldiers invaded Gaza's north, ground troops are still locked in heavy combat with Palestinian fighters in and around Gaza City. Clashes raged overnight and into Wednesday in multiple areas, with especially heavy fighting in Shijaiyah, a dense neighborhood that was the scene of a major battle during the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas.

"It's terrifying. We couldn't sleep," Mustafa Abu Taha, a Palestinian agricultural worker who lives in the neighborhood, said by phone. "The situation is getting worse and we don't have a safe place to go."

Army Radio said troops who were searching a cluster of buildings in Shijaiyah on Tuesday lost communication with four soldiers who had come under fire, sparking fears of a possible abduction. When the other soldiers launched a rescue operation, they were ambushed with heavy gunfire and explosives.

Among the nine dead were Col. Itzhak Ben Basat, 44, the most senior officer to have been killed in the ground operation, and Lt. Col. Tomer Grinberg, a battalion commander.

The military confirmed the deaths but did not respond to a request for further comment. Several Israeli media outlets carried similar accounts of the battle.

### **SUFFERING IN THE SOUTH**

Heavy rainfall overnight swamped tent camps in Gaza's south, where Israel has told people to seek refuge, even as that region has also come under repeated aerial bombardment.

Because of the fighting and Israel's blockade of Gaza, the health care system and humanitarian aid operations have collapsed in large parts of the territory, and aid workers have warned of starvation and the spread of disease among displaced people.

Israeli strikes overnight hit two residential buildings in the southern province of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces had launched a new line of attack earlier this month.

A strike on a home near the main highway between Khan Younis and the southern border town of Rafah killed two boys, aged 2 and 8, a woman in her 80s and a woman in her 30s, according to Mohammed al-



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Beiyouk, a relative of the deceased. Another strike killed a baby and his grandfather, according to hospital records at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.

The military rarely comments on individual strikes. Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames the high toll on Hamas because it conceals fighters, tunnels and weapons in residential areas.

## BIDEN BLAMES FAR RIGHT, BUT MOST ISRAELIS BACK WAR

Biden said Tuesday that he told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate bombing" and that Netanyahu should change his government, which is dominated by hard-right parties.

But the offensive is being conducted by a war Cabinet that includes two politically centrist retired generals, and has overwhelming support among Israelis from across the political spectrum.

In Israel, attention is still focused on the atrocities carried out on Oct. 7, when some 1,200 people were killed, mostly civilians, and some 240 people were taken hostage, around half of whom remain in captivity.

There has been little media coverage or public discussion of the plight of civilians in Gaza, even as international outrage has continued to mount.

On Tuesday, the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for a humanitarian cease-fire. The nonbinding vote was symbolic, but served as a barometer of world opinion. None of the major powers joined Israel and the United States in their opposition.

Still, the U.S. has urged Israel to do more to reduce civilian casualties as the toll has continued to mount at a dizzying rate.

Over 18,400 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, whose counts from previous conflicts have tracked with Israeli and U.N. figures. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but says roughly two-thirds of the dead are women and minors.

## AT ODDS ON POSTWAR PLANS

Israel and the U.S. say any cease-fire that leaves Hamas in power would mean victory for the militant group, which has governed Gaza since 2007 and has pledged to destroy Israel. But the two allies disagree over what should happen if Hamas is defeated.

The U.S. hopes to revive the peace process, which ground to a halt more than a decade ago. It wants the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to also govern Gaza, which Hamas seized from it in 2007.

But President Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the PA, is extremely unpopular, in part because of his security cooperation with Israel, and he has ruled out any return to Gaza outside of a solution to the conflict that creates a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu's government is firmly opposed to Palestinian statehood.

## **Biden to meet in person Wednesday with families of Americans taken hostage by Hamas**

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday will hold his first in-person meeting with the families of eight Americans still unaccounted for and presumed to be taken captive by Hamas during its brutal attack on Israel on Oct. 7, the White House said.

A senior administration official said family members of all eight would participate in the Biden meeting either in person or virtually. The president has previously met with some family members virtually and spoken to others on the phone. Biden was set to provide an update on American efforts to secure the release of those held by Hamas.

"We're not going to stop until every hostage is returned home," Biden told donors in Washington on Tuesday, saying the U.S. commitment to Israel is "unshakable."

Eight Americans remain unaccounted for after Hamas' surprise air, sea and land incursion into Israeli towns, where the group killed about 1,200 Israelis — mostly civilians — and took more than 240 people hostage. Four Americans were released as part of a U.S.-negotiated cease-fire in Israel's war against Hamas

in Gaza that was brokered with the assistance of Qatar and Egypt. One American woman was supposed to be released by Hamas under the terms of last month's ceasefire but she remains unaccounted for — a development that contributed to the end of the temporary pause in the fighting.

The White House has said that at least 31 Americans were killed by Hamas and other militant groups on Oct. 7.

Biden will be joined in the meeting by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and deputy national security adviser Jon Finer, the official said.

## **A Russian missile attack on Kyiv injures more than 50 people as Ukraine pleads for more Western help**

By HANNA ARHIROVA and KARL RITTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's capital came under another ballistic missile attack early Wednesday, injuring at least 53 people on the ground, including six children, and damaging buildings, officials said.

A series of loud explosions could be heard in Kyiv at 3 a.m. local time as the city's air defenses were activated for the second time this week. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 10 ballistic missiles toward the capital and all were intercepted by air defenses.

The attack on the capital underscored the continuing threat to Ukraine from the Kremlin's missile arsenal in the 21-month war. Russia has in recent months been stockpiling its air-launched cruise missiles from its heavy bomber fleet, according to a recent assessment by the U.K. Ministry of Defense.

That may herald another heavy winter bombardment of Ukraine's power grid. Moscow last year targeted energy infrastructure in an effort to deny Ukrainians heat, light and running water and break their fighting spirit.

Ukraine has dwindling supplies of air defense munitions and other ammunition. That prompted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to visit Washington on Tuesday in an effort to persuade lawmakers to approve President Joe Biden's request for \$61.4 billion for Ukraine.

Zelenskyy on Wednesday arrived in Norway to meet Nordic leaders gathered for a regional meeting focusing on cooperation in security and defense issues. Senior leaders from Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden — among Kyiv's staunchest supporters — attended.

"We are in a critical phase where Europe must continue to show its support," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement. "We must be tireless in our help."

Debris from intercepted missiles fell in Kyiv's eastern Dniprovskiy district, injuring at least 53 people, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Kitschko said on Telegram. Twenty people, including two children, were hospitalized, and 33 people received medical treatment on the spot.

An apartment building, a private house and several cars caught fire, while the windows of a children's hospital were shattered, Klitschko said. Falling rocket debris also damaged the water supply system in the district.

It wasn't immediately clear what type of missile was used in the Kyiv attack.

"It is difficult to imagine the consequences of these attacks if we don't have air protection," Ukraine's Minister of Economy, Yulia Svyrydenko, said on X, formerly Twitter. "Each attack emphasizes the urgent need for more protection, as Russia shows no intention of stopping."

In other parts of Ukraine, 10 Russian drones were shot down, most of them in the Odesa region, the Ukrainian air force said.

On Monday, a Russian missile attack destroyed several homes on the outskirts of Kyiv and left more than 100 households temporarily without electricity.

Wednesday's attack came as Zelenskyy visited Washington, where he made an impassioned plea to Congress to approve additional aid to fight Russia's invasion.

Andriy Yermak, Zelenskyy's chief of staff who was traveling with the president, said the interception of the missiles fired at Kyiv showed how Western support is helping Ukraine resist the Russian aggression.

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"The effectiveness of Western weaponry in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers is beyond doubt," Yermak wrote on Telegram.

As winter sets in and hampers troop movements, allowing little change along the front line, air bombardment plays a growing role in the war. Ukrainian officials have warned that Russia will target energy infrastructure to cause power outages and blackouts like it did last winter.

Cyberattacks are also a busy battleground. Ukrainian telecom provider Kyivstar, which serves more than 24 million mobile customers across the country, said its services were disrupted Tuesday by a "powerful" attack by hackers. It also disrupted the air raid warning system in part of the Kyiv region, according to the head of the Kyiv regional administration, Ruslan Kravchenko.

## Delegates at UN climate talks in Dubai agree to 'transition away' from planet-warming fossil fuels

By SETH BORENSTEIN, DAVID KEYTON, JAMEY KEATEN and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — United Nations climate negotiators directed the world on Wednesday to transition away from planet-warming fossil fuels in a move the talks chief called historic, despite critics' worries about loopholes.

"Humanity has finally done what is long, long, long overdue," Wopke Hoekstra, European Union commissioner for climate action, said. After nearly 30 years of talking about carbon pollution, climate negotiators in a key document explicitly took aim at what's trapping the heat: the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Within minutes of opening Wednesday's session, COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber gave approval of the central document — the global stocktake that says how off-track the world is on climate and how to get back on — without asking for comments. Delegates stood and hugged each other.

"It is a plan that is led by the science," al-Jaber said. "It is an enhanced, balanced, but make no mistake, a historic package to accelerate climate action. It is the UAE consensus."

"We have language on fossil fuel in our final agreement for the first time ever," said al-Jaber, who's also CEO of the UAE's oil company.

United Nations Climate Secretary Simon Stiell told delegates their efforts were "needed to signal a hard stop to humanity's core climate problem: fossil fuels and that planet-burning pollution. Whilst we didn't turn the page on the fossil fuel era in Dubai, this outcome is the beginning of the end."

Stiell cautioned people that what they adopted was a "climate action lifeline, not a finish line."

The new deal had been floated early Wednesday and was stronger than a draft proposed days earlier, but had loopholes that upset critics. Analysts and delegates wondered if there was going to be a floor fight over details, but al-Jaber acted quickly, not giving critics a chance to even clear their throats.

Several minutes later, Samoa's lead delegate Anne Rasmussen, on behalf of small island nations, complained that they weren't even in the room when al-Jaber said the deal was done. She said that "the course correction that is needed has not been secured," with the deal representing business-as-usual instead of exponential emissions-cutting efforts. She said the deal could "potentially take us backward rather than forward."

When Rasmussen finished, delegates whooped, applauded and stood, as al-Jaber frowned and then eventually joined the standing ovation that stretched longer than his plaudits. Marshall Islands delegates hugged and cried.

Bolivia blasted the agreement as a new form of colonialism. But there was more self-congratulations Wednesday than flagellations.

"I am in awe of the spirit of cooperation that has brought everybody together," United States Special Envoy John Kerry said. He said it shows that multilateralism can still work despite what the globe sees with wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. "This document sends very strong messages to the world."

The deal also includes a call for tripling the use of renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency. Earlier in the talks, the conference adopted a special fund for poor nations hurt by climate change and nations put nearly \$800 million in the fund.

"Many, many people here would have liked clearer language" on getting rid of fossil fuels, Kerry said. But he said it's a compromise.

Oil-rich Saudi Arabia, whose OPEC threatened to torpedo an agreement, hailed the deal as a success. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has targeted oil companies and their massive profits, also celebrated, saying in a statement that "for the first time, the outcome recognizes the need to transition away from fossil fuels."

"The era of fossil fuels must end – and it must end with justice and equity," he said.

The deal doesn't go so far as to seek a "phase-out" of fossil fuels, which more than 100 nations, like small island states and European nations, had pleaded for. Instead, it calls for "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade."

The deal says that the transition would be done in a way that gets the world to net zero greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 and follows the dictates of climate science. It projects a world peaking its ever-growing carbon pollution by the year 2025 to reach its agreed-upon threshold, but gives wiggle room to individual nations like China to peak later.

Intensive sessions with all sorts of delegates went well into the small hours of Wednesday morning after the conference presidency's initial document angered many countries by avoiding decisive calls for action on curbing warming. Then, al-Jaber presented delegates from nearly 200 nations a new document just after sunrise.

It was the third version presented in about two weeks and the word "oil" does not appear anywhere in the 21-page document, but "fossil fuels" appears twice.

"This is the first time in 28 years that countries are forced to deal with fossil fuels," Center for Biological Diversity energy justice director Jean Su told The Associated Press. "So that is a general win. But the actual details in this are severely flawed."

"The problem with the text is that it still includes cavernous loopholes that allow the United States and other fossil fuel producing countries to keep going on their expansion of fossil fuels," Su said. "There's a pretty deadly, fatal flaw in the text, which allows for transitional fuels to continue" which is a code word for natural gas that also emits carbon pollution.

Several activists highlighted what they considered loopholes.

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, a Nobel Peace Prize winning climate activist, said while it is an important milestone "to finally recognize that the climate crisis is at its heart a fossil fuel crisis," he called the deal "the bare minimum" with "half measures and loopholes."

"Whether this is a turning point that truly marks the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era depends on the actions that come next," Gore said.

## **Amid outcry over Gaza tactics, videos of soldiers acting maliciously create new headache for Israel**

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli soldiers rummaging through private homes in Gaza. Forces destroying plastic figurines in a toy store, or trying to burn food and water supplies in the back of an abandoned truck. Troops with their arms slung around each other, chanting racist slogans as they dance in a circle.

Several viral videos and photos of Israeli soldiers behaving in a derogatory manner in Gaza have emerged in recent days, creating a headache for the Israeli military as it faces an international outcry over its tactics and the rising civilian death toll in its punishing war against Hamas.

The Israeli army has pledged to take disciplinary action in what it says are a handful of isolated cases.

Such videos are not a new or unique phenomenon. Over the years, Israeli soldiers — and members of the U.S. and other militaries — have been caught on camera acting inappropriately or maliciously in conflict zones.

But critics say the new videos, largely shrugged off in Israel, reflect a national mood that is highly sup-

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portive of the war in Gaza, with little empathy for the plight of Gaza's civilians.

"The dehumanization from the top is very much sinking down to the soldiers," said Dror Sadot, a spokeswoman for the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, which has long documented Israeli abuses against Palestinians.

Israel has been embroiled in fierce combat in Gaza since Oct. 7, when Hamas militants raided southern Israel and killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 240 hostages.

More than 18,400 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.

The videos seem to have been uploaded by soldiers themselves during their time in Gaza.

In one, soldiers ride bicycles through rubble. In another, a soldier has moved Muslim prayer rugs into a bathroom. In another, a soldier films boxes of lingerie found in a Gaza home. Yet another shows a soldier trying to set fire to food and water supplies that are scarce in Gaza.

In a photo, an Israeli soldier sits in front of a room under the graffiti "Khan Younis Rabbinical Court." Israeli forces have battled Hamas militants in and around the southern city, where the military opened a new line of attack last week.

In another photo, a soldier poses next to words spray-painted in red on a pink building that read, "instead of erasing graffiti, let's erase Gaza."

A video posted by conservative Israeli media personality Yinon Magal on X, formerly Twitter, shows dozens of soldiers dancing in a circle, apparently in Gaza, and singing a song that includes the words, "Gaza we have come to conquer. ... We know our slogan – there are no people who are uninvolved." The Israeli military blames Hamas for the civilian death toll, saying the group operates in crowded neighborhoods and uses residents as human shields.

The video, which Magal took from Facebook, has been viewed almost 200,000 times on his account and widely shared on other accounts.

Magal said he did not know the soldiers involved. But the AP has verified backgrounds, uniforms and language heard in the videos and found them to be consistent with independent reporting.

Magal said the video struck a chord among Israelis because of the popular tune and because Israelis need to see pictures of a strong military. It is based on the fight song of the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team, whose hard-core fans have a history of racist chants against Arabs and rowdy behavior.

"These are my fighters, they're fighting against brutal murderers, and after what they did to us, I don't have to defend myself to anyone," Magal told The Associated Press.

He condemned some of the other videos that have surfaced, including the ransacking of the toy store, apparently in the northern area of Jebaliya, in which a soldier smashes toys and decapitates a plastic figurine, as destruction that is unnecessary for Israel's security objectives.

On Sunday, the Israeli military's spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, condemned some of the actions seen in the recent videos. "In any event that does not align with IDF values, command and disciplinary steps will be taken," he said.

The videos emerged just days after leaked photos and video of detained Palestinians in Gaza, stripped to their underwear, in some cases blindfolded and handcuffed, also drew international attention. The army says it did not release those images, but Hagari said this week that soldiers have undressed Palestinian detainees to ensure they are not wearing explosive vests.

Osama Hamdan, a top Hamas official, aired the video of the soldier in the toy shop at a news conference in Beirut. He called the footage "disgusting."

Hamas has come under heavy criticism for releasing a series of videos of Israeli hostages, clearly under duress. Hamas militants also wore bodycams during their Oct. 7 rampage, capturing violent images of deadly attacks on families in their homes and revelers at a dance party.

Ghassan Khatib, a former Palestinian Cabinet minister and peace negotiator, said he can't remember a time when each side was so unwilling to consider the pain of the other.

"Previously, there are people that are interested in seeing from the two perspectives," said Khatib, who

teaches international relations at Beir Zeit University in the West Bank. "Now, each side is closed to its own narrative, its own information, rules, and perspective."

Eran Halperin, a professor with Hebrew University's psychology department who studies communal emotional responses to conflict, said that in previous wars between Israel and Hamas, there may have been more condemnation of these types of photos and videos from within Israeli society.

But he said the Oct. 7 attack, which exposed deep weaknesses and failures by the army, caused trauma and humiliation for Israelis in a way that hasn't happened before.

"When people feel they were humiliated, hurting the source of this humiliation doesn't feel as morally problematic," Halperin said. "When people feel like their individual and collective existence is under threat, they don't have the mental capacity to empathize or apply the moral rulings when thinking about the enemy."

## **'I feel trapped': Scores of underage Rohingya girls forced into abusive marriages in Malaysia**

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — In a bedroom in Malaysia that has become a prison, the 14-year-old girl wipes away tears as she sits cross-legged on the concrete floor. It is here, she says, where her 35-year-old husband rapes her nearly every night.

Last year, the Rohingya girl sacrificed herself to save her family, embarking on a terrifying journey from her homeland of Myanmar to a country she had never seen, to marry a man she had never met.

It wasn't her choice. But her family, she says, was impoverished, hungry and terrified of Myanmar's military, which attacked the country's Rohingya Muslim minority in 2017. In desperation, a neighbor found a man in Malaysia who would pay the 18,000 ringgit (\$3,800) fee for the girl's passage and — after she married him — send money to her family for food.

And so, the teenager — identified along with all the girls in this story by her first initial to protect her from retaliation — hugged her parents goodbye. Then M climbed into a trafficker's car packed with children.

Deteriorating conditions in Myanmar and in neighboring Bangladesh's refugee camps are driving scores of underage Rohingya girls to Malaysia for arranged marriages with Rohingya men who frequently abuse them, The Associated Press found in interviews with 12 young Rohingya brides who have arrived in Malaysia since 2022. The youngest was 13.

All the girls interviewed by the AP said their controlling husbands rarely let them outside. Several said they were beaten and raped during the journey to Malaysia, and five said they were abused by their husbands. Half the girls are pregnant or have babies, despite most saying they were not prepared for motherhood.

"This was my only way out," says 16-year-old F, who in 2017 watched as Myanmar's soldiers burned her house and killed her aunt. "I wasn't ready to be married, but I didn't have a choice."

These unwanted marriages are the latest atrocity bestowed upon Rohingya girls: from childhoods marred by violence to attacks where security forces systematically raped them to years of hunger in Bangladesh's squalid refugee camps.

Global apathy toward the Rohingya crisis and strict migration policies have left these girls with almost no options. The military that attacked the Rohingya overthrew Myanmar's government in 2021, making any return home a life-threatening proposition. Bangladesh has refused to grant citizenship or working rights to the million stateless Rohingya languishing in its camps. And no country is offering large-scale resettlement opportunities.

And so the Rohingya are increasingly fleeing — and those who are fleeing are increasingly female. During the 2015 Andaman Sea boat crisis, in which thousands of Rohingya refugees were stranded at sea, the vast majority of passengers were men. This year, more than 60% of the Rohingya who have survived the Andaman crossing have been women and children, according to the United Nations' refugee agency.

In Bangladesh, Save the Children says child marriage is one of the agency's most reported worries among camp residents.

"We are seeing a rise in cases of child trafficking," says Shaheen Chughtai, Save the Children's Regional Advocacy and Campaigns Director for Asia. "Girls are more vulnerable to this, and often this is linked to being married off in different territories."

Accurate statistics on how many Rohingya child brides live in Malaysia don't exist. But local advocates who work with the girls say they have seen a spike in arrivals over the past two years.

"There are really a lot of Rohingyas coming in to get married," says Nasha Nik, executive director of the Rohingya Women Development Network, which has worked with hundreds of child brides in recent years.

Malaysia is not a signatory to the United Nations' refugee convention, so the girls — most of whom are undocumented — are considered illegal immigrants. Reporting their assaults to authorities would put them at risk of being thrown into one of Malaysia's detention centers, which have long been plagued by reports of abuse.

Malaysia's government did not respond to the AP's requests for comment.

M didn't even know her future husband's name when she climbed into the trafficker's car alongside several other girls headed to Malaysia for marriage.

For a week, they traveled through Myanmar and Thailand. After crossing into Malaysia, they stopped at a house. Four of the trafficker's friends arrived and each selected a girl.

The man who chose M — who looked to be around 50 — drove her to another house. When they got inside, she says, he raped her.

In the morning, he locked her in the bedroom and left her there all day with no water or food. The next night, he returned and raped her again. She was terrified he would kill her.

M was then handed over to another man who drove her to her fiancé's apartment.

She didn't dare tell her fiancé she'd been raped, because then he would reject her.

Her fiancé insisted they get married that day. In agony and bleeding from the rapes, M told her husband she had her period, so he wouldn't touch her.

A Rohingya women's advocate, who confirmed M's account to the AP, heard about the situation and brought M to the hospital for treatment.

When M returned to her husband, she learned he was already married with two children. She had no power to object to the situation, or to the beatings, cruel taunts and rapes she regularly endures. She said nothing about the abuse to her parents, lest her husband stop sending them 300 ringgit (\$64) a month.

She sits now in her bedroom, her thin frame cloaked in teddy bear pajamas. Dangling from the ceiling is a rope designed to hold a hammock for any babies her husband forces her to bear.

She once dreamed of going to school and becoming a teacher or a doctor. But she has stopped thinking of her future. For now, she just tries to survive her present.

"I want to go back home, but I can't," she says. "I feel trapped."

## House set for key vote on Biden impeachment inquiry as Republicans unite behind investigation

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is pushing toward a vote Wednesday to formally authorize the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden as Republicans rally behind the charged process despite lingering concerns among some in the party that the investigation has yet to produce evidence of misconduct by the president.

The vote comes as House Speaker Mike Johnson and his leadership team face growing pressure to show progress in what has become a nearly yearlong probe centered around the business dealings of Biden's family members. While their investigation has raised ethical questions, no evidence has emerged that Biden acted corruptly or accepted bribes in his current role or previous office as vice president.

Ahead of the vote, Johnson called it "the next necessary step." He acknowledged there are "a lot of people who are frustrated this hasn't moved faster."

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But Johnson said on Fox News he believes the resolution will pass the House and “we’ll be in the best position to do our constitutional responsibility.”

By holding a vote on the floor, the speaker, who has been on the job less than two months, will be putting his conference on record in support of an impeachment process that can lead to the ultimate penalty for a president: punishment for what the Constitution describes as “high crimes and misdemeanors,” which can lead to removal from office if convicted in a Senate trial.

A successful vote would also ensure that the impeachment investigation extends well into 2024 when Biden will be running for reelection and seems likely to be squaring off against former President Donald Trump — who was twice impeached during his time in the White House. Trump has pushed Republicans to move swiftly on impeaching Biden, part of his broader calls for vengeance and retribution against his political enemies.

In a recent statement, the White House called the whole process a “baseless fishing expedition” that Republicans are pushing ahead with “despite the fact that members of their own party have admitted there is no evidence to support impeaching President Biden.”

Some House Republicans, particularly those hailing from politically divided districts, have been hesitant to take any vote on Biden’s impeachment, fearing a significant political cost. But GOP leaders have made the case in recent weeks that the resolution is only a step in the process, not a decision to impeach Biden. That message seems to have won over skeptics.

“As we have said numerous times before, voting in favor of an impeachment inquiry does not equal impeachment,” Rep. Tom Emmer, a member of the GOP leadership team, said at a news conference Tuesday.

Emmer said Republicans “will continue to follow the facts wherever they lead, and if they uncover evidence of treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors, then and only then will the next steps towards impeachment proceedings be considered.”

Most of the Republicans hesitant to back the impeachment push have also been swayed by leadership’s recent argument that authorizing the inquiry will give them better legal standing as the White House rebuffs their requests for information.

A letter last month from a top White House attorney to Republican committee leaders portrayed the GOP investigation as overzealous and illegitimate as the chamber had not yet authorized a formal impeachment inquiry by a vote of the full House. Richard Sauber, special counsel to the president, also wrote that when Trump faced the prospect of impeachment by a Democratic-led House in 2019, Johnson had said at the time that any inquiry without a House vote would be a “sham.”

Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D., said Monday that while there was no evidence to impeach the president, “that’s also not what the vote this week would be about.”

“We have had enough political impeachments in this country,” he said. “I don’t like the stonewalling the administration has done, but listen, if we don’t have the receipts, that should constrain what the House does long term.”

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., who has long been opposed to moving forward with impeachment, said that the White House questioning the legitimacy of the inquiry without a formal vote helped gain his support. “I can defend an inquiry right now,” he told reporters this week. “Let’s see what they find out.”

For the impeachment probe vote to succeed, nearly all House Republicans will have to vote in favor. It will amount to a major test of party unity, given GOP’s narrow 221-213 majority. House Democrats are unified in their opposition to the impeachment process, saying it is a farce used by the GOP to take attention away from Trump and his legal woes.

“You don’t initiate an impeachment process unless there’s real evidence of impeachable offenses,” Rep. Jerry Nadler, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, who oversaw the two impeachments into Trump. “There is none here. None.”

Democrats and the White House have also defended the president and his administration’s cooperation with the investigation thus far, saying it has already made a massive trove of documents available.

Congressional investigators have obtained nearly 40,000 pages of subpoenaed bank records, dozens of hours of testimony from key witnesses, including several high-ranking Justice Department officials cur-



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rently tasked with investigating the president's son, Hunter Biden.

While Republicans say their inquiry is ultimately focused on the president himself, they have taken particular interest in Hunter Biden and his overseas business dealings, which they accuse the president of personally benefiting from. Republicans have also focused a large part of their investigation into whistleblower allegations of interference in the long-running Justice Department investigation into the younger Biden's taxes and his gun use.

Hunter Biden is currently facing criminal charges in two states from the special counsel investigation. He's charged with firearm counts in Delaware, alleging he broke laws against drug users having guns in 2018, a period when he has acknowledged struggling with addiction. Special Counsel David Weiss filed additional charges last week, alleging he failed to pay about \$1.4 million in taxes over a three-year period.

Democrats have conceded that while the president's son is not perfect, he is a private citizen who is already being held accountable by the justice system.

"I mean, there's a lot of evidence that Hunter Biden did a lot of improper things. He's been indicted, he'll stand trial," Nadler said. "There's no evidence whatsoever that the president did anything improper."

Nonetheless, Republicans had subpoenaed Hunter Biden to appear for a private deposition Wednesday, the same day of the scheduled vote to authorize the inquiry. His attorney has offered for the president's son to come and testify in a public setting, citing concerns about Republicans manipulating any private testimony.

But GOP lawmakers have warned that if Hunter Biden does not appear, they will move to hold him in contempt of Congress.

## US credibility is on the line in Ukraine funding debate

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of President Joe Biden's favorite stories is about his first international summit after taking office, when he declared that "America is back" in the wake of Donald Trump's erratic and isolationist leadership.

"For how long?" responded one of the other leaders in the room.

It's a question that echoes this week as Biden struggles to secure congressional support for continuing American assistance to Ukraine. Even though he's repeatedly promised that the United States would back Ukraine for "as long as it takes" to defeat the Russian invasion, there's no sign of a bipartisan deal to maintain the flow of supplies as the war approaches its third year.

A hastily arranged trip to Washington by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, including a White House visit on Tuesday, did not appear to jolt lawmakers out of their inaction.

The stakes are highest in Ukraine, which faces dwindling supplies of the artillery shells and air defense munitions needed to repel Russian advances. But also hanging in the balance is the kind of U.S. credibility that Biden pledged to restore. Failure to approve new funding would undermine a central plank of the Democratic president's foreign policy, turning a parable of American resolve into a cautionary tale about American instability.

"They went around telling everybody that America is reliable and dependable," said Max Bergmann, a former State Department official who's now a director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "And it's pretty clear that we're not."

It's still possible that lawmakers will reach an agreement, even if takes longer than Biden or Zelenskyy would like. Negotiations continue over a broad legislative package that would support Ukraine, help Israel defeat Hamas in the Gaza Strip and increase security at the U.S. southern border with Mexico.

But the delay, and the public spectacle of political bickering at a moment of grave geopolitical consequence, has emboldened Russian President Vladimir Putin and could reverberate in other places where security depends on American assurances.

"What are the Taiwanese going to think?" Bergmann said. "What are the Japanese, the Koreans going to think?"

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"The future of global American leadership," he added, "is being killed right now in Congress."

Standing alongside Zelenskyy on Tuesday, Biden said that "I will not walk away from Ukraine, and neither will the American people." But rather than pledging anew that the U.S. would support Ukraine "as long as it takes," Biden this time gave a more limited promise that help would be provided "as long as we can."

Biden said he's rapidly running out of authorized military assistance, and he expressed bewilderment at the perilous situation.

"It's stunning that we've gotten to this point," he said.

The congressional roadblock is a reversal of fortune for Biden, whose record on Ukraine was initially celebrated at home and overseas. His administration has helped keep Russia from subjugating the country, which was part of the Soviet Union before achieving its independence in 1991.

Biden maintained unity with European allies despite economic blowback from the war, such as rising gas prices, and spearheaded the enlargement of the NATO with the addition of Finland and likely Sweden, two traditionally nonaligned countries.

Not only has Ukraine remained free, Biden's approach to the conflict helped vindicate his approach to foreign policy after his administration's shambolic withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

"Americans of all political backgrounds decided that they would step up," he said during a surprise trip to Kyiv in February. "The American people know it matters. Unchecked aggression is a threat to all of us."

But the Russian military, instead of collapsing, retrenched and blunted Ukraine's counteroffensive this year. Western training and equipment was insufficient to retake significant amounts of occupied territory in the country's east and south, and the war is now widely viewed as a stalemate.

The U.S. political consensus around the conflict has eroded as well. When the war began in 2021, Democrats controlled both the House and the Senate, and they could count on Republican help to approve money for Ukraine.

The landscape shifted when Republicans won the House majority in the 2022 midterms. Because of slim margins, hardline members of the caucus were empowered, and many are opposed to helping Ukraine. A request for emergency funding for Ukraine went nowhere during recent budget negotiations.

But the White House has routinely swatted away questions about U.S. endurance. Asked on Oct. 2 about potential fatigue over the war, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said "if Putin thinks he can outlast us, he's wrong."

Charles Kupchan, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Biden "may have underestimated the difficulty of maintaining a domestic consensus, especially as we head into an election year, when partisanship too regularly trumps wise policy."

"The domestic politics of the war have gotten a lot more complicated on this side of this Atlantic," said Kupchan, who was senior director for European affairs at the National Security Council under President Barack Obama. "And it's beginning to get more complicated in Europe as well. Europeans are watching the stalemate in Congress over Biden's aid request. And that is, to some extent, empowering voices in Europe that are also reluctant to provide further assistance."

More than 130 European lawmakers sent a letter to their American counterparts urging them to approve more funding for Ukraine. However, they face their own political difficulties. European Union leaders are meeting this week to discuss tens of billions of dollars for Ukraine, which is opposed by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. He is considered Putin's closest ally on the continent.

Poland's newly elected prime minister, Donald Tusk, complained on Tuesday that some leaders don't want to continue helping Ukraine.

"I can no longer listen to some European politicians and those from other Western countries who say they are tired of the situation in Ukraine," Tusk said. "They say to President Zelenskyy's face that they no longer have the strength, that they are exhausted."

The U.S. has provided \$111 billion in military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the war began. During Zelenskyy's visit, the Pentagon announced that it would transfer to Ukraine another \$200 million in ammunition and equipment, including artillery rounds and bullets.

There's only \$4.4 billion left in weapons appropriations, and Biden has asked for another \$61.4 billion. About half of the money would go to the Pentagon to replenish weaponry it is supplying, and the other half for humanitarian assistance and to help the Ukrainian government function with emergency responders, public works and other operations.

But for now, the proposal is stalled.

"The entire world is watching what we do," Biden said on Tuesday. "So let's show them who we are."

## US Asians and Pacific Islanders view democracy with concern, AP-NORC/AAPI Data poll shows

By MATT BROWN and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 7 in 10 Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States believe the country is headed in the wrong direction and only about 1 in 10 believe democracy is working "extremely" or "very" well, according to a new poll from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

About half say they disapprove of President Joe Biden, though more lean toward the Democratic Party than toward the Republicans. The poll shows Asian Americans are more likely to trust Democrats over Republicans to handle issues like the spread of misinformation, election administration, student debt and climate change, but slightly more likely to trust Republicans than Democrats on handling the economy and split on which is better suited to handle immigration. Many in the community trust neither party to handle major issues, especially election integrity and misinformation.

The poll is part of a series of surveys designed to reflect the views of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, whose attitudes and opinions can often not be analyzed in other surveys due to small sample sizes. It finds that the dour views among Asian Americans are broadly in line with the perspectives of the general public. In a December AP-NORC poll of U.S. adults, 75% said they believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. Asian Americans hold only a slightly more positive view of Biden than the general public, at 45% compared with 41% of all U.S. adults in December.

Cassie Villasin, a product manager in Washington, said she believed the country has gotten worse in recent years but said "that doesn't necessarily mean it was all Joe Biden's fault. I think that it was already going downhill prior to his election." Villasin said she approved of Biden generally, citing issues like his handling of student loan debt.

Just 12% of Asian American adults believe U.S. democracy is working extremely or very well, though another 47% say it functions "somewhat" well. Three quarters said the views of most people living in the U.S. should matter significantly when enacting policy in the country. That is slightly higher than the number who said the same of the views of people from their similar background, at 64%, and substantially more who said the same of the opinions of policy makers, at 31%, or interest groups at 7%.

Joy Kobayashi, a retiree in California, said she feared Donald Trump's potential reelection in 2024 signaled an "existential crisis for democracy" but that she believes U.S. democracy "is currently functioning quite well" because of the criminal indictments against the former president for various issues related to the 2020 election.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are broadly skeptical of both parties' presidential nominating processes. Only 27% have a high degree of confidence in the Democrats' selection process and 20% feel the same for the Republican nominee process.

"I'm not going to say they are perfect," Kobayashi, 63, said of the Democratic Party. "But they are much more for trying to fight to make voting convenient and not requiring things like photo ID or putting up artificial barriers."

"I choose to believe that democracy is working, but I have my doubts," said Ed Robertson, an independent in Arizona. Robertson said he believes the 2020 election was correctly decided but that "corruption" exists in all elections.

Will Chou, a Republican, said that American democracy had been "unchanged" as a system for at least

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the last 100 years. "I don't think (democracy is) under threat. We have so many checks and balances and separation of powers, which are all structural elements of the Constitution. And I think it's worked," Chou said.

Chou, 55, said that he trusts Republicans to better handle elections and believes Democrats are "letting in millions of millions of people from outside and find ways to let these people vote."

Concerns about misinformation were high, with 83% saying misinformation is a major issue in U.S. elections, surpassing concerns over election integrity issues or restrictions on free speech.

"It seems like more misinformation is spread through the Republican Party from my personal experiences," Villasin said. "In terms of informing people with scientific evidence, or just evidence in general, it seems like the Democratic Party is more likely to provide that," she said.

Chou said that misinformation is a major problem but believed that both Democrats and Republicans often spread false claims. Kobayashi, on the other hand, believes social media platforms restricting some information, including misinformation, is a "violation of free speech" but, not a major issue in U.S. politics.

The poll of 1,115 U.S. adults who are Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders was conducted Nov. 6-15, 2023, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based Amplify AAPI Panel, designed to be representative of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.

## 2023 in other words: AI might be the term of the year, but consider these far-flung contenders

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

Many sentiments are universal. Many words are not. As 2023 ends, The Associated Press reached out to colleagues around the world for terms that emerged this year and seized or crystalized the popular mood.

Some were newsy, some cultural. A couple were kind of delightful. Whatever the language, the emotions came through. Some might consider AI, or artificial intelligence, as "the" word of 2023, while Merriam-Webster went with "authentic" and Oxford University Press named "rizz," a riff on charisma.

We wanted to share diverse examples of what folks in Germany call a "gefluegeltes Wort," or "word with wings."

Password child: Australia

The Macquarie Dictionary in Australia has named a "word of the month" all year. One was "cozzie livs," slang for cost of living. Another was "murder noodle" for snake, both cute and accurate in a country that's home to the world's most venomous one.

But we're going with "password child," which families anywhere can appreciate. It refers to a child seen as favored over siblings because their name is used in parents' passwords.

- Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia

Kitawaramba: Kenya (kiSwahili) It will come back to haunt you

This was uttered by Kenyan pastor Paul Mackenzie, who was accused of leading a starvation doomsday cult that led to the deaths of more than 400 people.

He said it as people confronted him while he waited to be driven to court. The unfamiliar word appeared to be a threat, and it quickly took on a life of its own. Kenyans used it to warn others that something bad may happen to them for their actions.

The word captured the mood with the rising cost of living. With every new economic policy by President William Ruto's administration, some Kenyans say the related term "kimeturamba" — that electing him has come back to haunt them.

- Carlos Mureithi in Nairobi, Kenya

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Bwa kale: Haiti (Creole) Peeled wood

This became a death cry against violent gangs in Haiti this year. Civilians chanted the phrase as they pursued suspected criminals. The vigilante movement has killed more than 300 suspected gang members, according to the United Nations.

The term had long been used in Haitian street slang to insinuate male dominance and power. Now it has spread overseas, with a video on social media showing a group of Latino soccer fans — it was not clear from what country — chanting “Bwa kale!” after their team beat an opponent.

Some businesses even use the phrase to promote their wares. One restaurant featured a “bwa kale” special: a hamburger skewered by a stick with two small chunks of meat on top. It came with a side of nachos and three bottles of Prestige, a local beer.

- Danica Coto in San Juan, Puerto Rico

Spy balloon: United States

Perhaps no other term this year defined the growing wariness between the world’s two largest economies. It began, movie-like, with Americans noticing a mysterious white orb in the sky. Some watched as fighter jets circled and shot down the balloon that for days had wandered across the continental United States.

“I did not anticipate waking up to be in a ‘Top Gun’ movie today,” one witness said.

China rejected allegations of surveillance and insisted that balloon and others were purely for civilian purposes. It never used the term 气球 (zhen tan qi qiu), or spy balloon, and instead used 气象气球 (qi xiang qi qiu), meaning “weather balloon.”

Kuningi: South Africa (isiZulu) It’s a lot

This word gained popularity among South Africans to express frustration over multiple controversies occurring at the same time.

In 2023, some South Africans wondered if they could handle much more. They faced record electricity outages. The government was under fire for its close relationship with Russia. Soaring incidents of crime included a daring prison escape by a convicted murderer who faked his death.

On days that seemed too much, “kuningi” captured how overwhelmed South Africans could become.

- Mogomotsi Magome in Johannesburg

C’est la hess: France (French) It’s a bummer

Young people insist on keeping the French language plastic despite efforts, backed by law, to preserve it from foreign encroachment.

“C’est la hess” speaks to the multiculturalism of France even as some views continued to harden this year against immigration, shown by the steady progression of the far right.

The phrase is among dozens of words and expressions derived from Arabic, which those under 25 in France have made their own. France has the biggest Muslim population in Western Europe and a long history of immigration from former colonies in North Africa.

- John Leicester in Paris

税 (zei): Japan (Japanese) Taxes

In a closely watched event on Tuesday, the top Buddhist monk at the Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto used a brush to write the kanji character of the year on the temple balcony.

The Japanese public chose “zei” to best represent 2023 amid speculation about tax hikes to fund the country’s military buildup.

Under the latest national security strategy, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s government is pursuing a five-year plan to double Japan’s annual defense spending to about 10 trillion yen (\$69 billion). That would make the country the world’s No. 3 military spender after the United States and China.

- Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo

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— The nones: Global: Nonbelievers

In many countries, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people who are nonbelievers or unaffiliated with any organized religion. They have become known as the “nones” — atheists, agnostics, or nothing in particular — and they comprise 30% or more of the adult population in the United States and Canada, as well as numerous European countries. Japan, Israel and Uruguay are among other nations where large numbers of people are secular.

In a recent package of stories, The Associated Press Religion Team took an in-depth look at how this phenomenon is playing out in several places.

- David Crary in New York

□□□□ (shan dao hou zi): Taiwan (Mandarin) Mountain roadmonkey

This first emerged as a grumbling way to refer to riders who treated Taiwan’s winding mountain roads as a racetrack. But the term became a popular shorthand for young people’s economic pressures in August, when a YouTube user dropped a 20-minute film called the “Life of a Mountain Roadmonkey.” It touched a nerve, attracting nearly 7 million views.

The “roadmonkey” is a motorcyclist who tries to become an Instagram influencer. He lends his girlfriend money to upgrade her bike, but she cheats on him and leaves him. In debt, he works overtime to rebuild his savings, becoming isolated from friends. Ultimately, he dies in a crash.

His story touched off a discussion about the low wages and long hours for many in Taiwan, where housing and traditional “success” are often out of reach.

- Huizhong Wu in Taipei, Taiwan

— Bharat: India (Sanskrit) India

When a dinner invitation sent to guests of the G20 meeting in India featured the word “Bharat,” the immediate question for many was whether the country of more than 1.4 billion people would now be called by its ancient Sanskrit name.

Many saw “Bharat” as a political move by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government. The word resonated with Modi’s supporters, who argued it would salvage the country from the taint of colonialism. But Muslims and other minority groups felt even more uncomfortable.

The name has now been used at various international forums. But there has been no formal announcement of a name change.

- Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi

— Quoioubeh! France (French) Who knows?

This word became super popular with French teenagers this year. They use it to annoy their elders, and it doesn’t have a real meaning. It’s simple: A teen says something inaudible, hoping that parents or teachers will answer “Quoi?” or “What?” The response : “Quoioubeh!”

Its origins remain mysterious, although Radio France suggested it was inspired by a play on words from Ivory Coast, where some respond “quoicou” to a person saying “quoi.” An AP journalist in Ivory Coast, however, said that “unfortunately,” he had never heard of this.

In any case, a word open to interpretation seems like a good way to enter 2024 and whatever lies ahead.

- Samuel Petrequin in Paris

## **Andre Braugher, Emmy-winning actor who starred in ‘Homicide’ and ‘Brooklyn Nine-Nine,’ dies at 61**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Andre Braugher, the Emmy-winning actor who would master gritty drama for seven seasons on “Homicide: Life on The Street” and modern comedy for eight on “Brooklyn 99,” died

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Monday at 61.

Braugher died after a brief illness, his publicist Jennifer Allen told The Associated Press. No further details were given.

The Chicago-born actor would establish himself in the role of Det. Frank Pembleton, the lead role on "Homicide: Life on the Street," a dark police drama based on a book by David Simon, who would go on to create "The Wire." The show, which focused on the homicide unit of the Baltimore Police Department, ran for seven seasons on NBC, and would win critical acclaim with Braugher as its dramatic center and breakout star.

He would win his first career Emmy for the role, taking the trophy for lead actor in a drama series in 1998.

He feared he would be typecast after spending most of the 1990s as the brooding detective.

"If I do it too long then I'll stop really searching and probing inside my own work," he told the AP in 1998. "That's just a great danger. I think I'm going to escape that trap, and get an opportunity to do some work that will be more challenging for me."

That would not prove to be a problem. He would go on to play a very different kind of cop on a very different kind of show, shifting to comedy as Capt. Ray Holt on the Andy Samberg-starring "Brooklyn Nine-Nine." It would run for eight seasons from 2013 to 2021 on Fox and NBC.

Though he'd dipped his toe into comedy in the TNT dramedy "Men of a Certain Age," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" still represented a major shift for Braugher, who was known for acting in dark and heavy dramas.

"I just felt as though it was an opportunity to do something strikingly different from the rest of my career," Braugher told the AP in 2019. "I like it because it just simply opens up my mind and forces me to think in a different way. So I think I've become much more sort of supple as an actor, and more open to the incredible number of possibilities of how to play a scene."

He would be nominated for four Emmys during the run.

Braugher's "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" co-star Terry Crews was among those paying tribute to him Monday night.

"Can't believe you're gone so soon," Crews said on Instagram. "I'm honored to have known you, laughed with you, worked with you and shared 8 glorious years watching your irreplaceable talent. This hurts." He added, "You showed me what a life well-lived looked like."

Braugher most recently starred in "She Said," the 2022 film about the New York Times journalists who broke the story of Harvey Weinstein's years of sexually abusing women. Braugher played Times editor Dean Baquet.

Born and raised in Chicago, Braugher graduated from Stanford and got a master of fine arts degree from Juilliard.

He had his breakthrough role in 1989's "Glory," starring alongside Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington, who won an Oscar for the film about an all-Black Army regiment during the the Civil War.

Braugher played the bookish, frightened union corporal Thomas Searles in the film.

"I conceived that character as heroic, but I got a lot of scripts after that where I'm constantly crying," he told the AP in 1993.

Despite the part, he told the AP in 2019 that before "Homicide" he struggled to find work in a Hollywood where roles for African American actors were "few and far between, Period."

Braugher won his second Emmy for lead actor in a miniseries or movie for the 2006 limited series "Thief" on FX. Braugher would be nominated for 11 Emmys overall.

His other film credits included "Primal Fear" and "Get on the Bus," and his other TV credits included "Hack," "Gideon's Crossing" and "The Good Fight."

He also acted frequently on the stage, often doing Shakespeare. He won an Obie Award for playing the title role in "Henry V" at the New York Shakespeare Festival, where he also appeared in "Measure for Measure," "Twelfth Night" and "As You Like It."

Braugher was married for more than 30 years to his "Homicide" co-star Ami Brabson. He is also survived by sons Michael, Isaiah and John Wesley, his brother Charles Jennings and his mother Sally Braugher.

## Israel and US show sharp divisions over mounting casualties and future of war against Hamas

By NAJIB JOBAIN, WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press  
RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel and the United States on Tuesday showed their sharpest public disagreement yet over the conduct and future of the war against Hamas as the two allies became increasingly isolated by global calls for a cease-fire.

The dispute emerged while Israeli forces carried out strikes across Gaza, crushing Palestinians in homes. President Joe Biden said he told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel was losing international support because of its “indiscriminate bombing” and that Netanyahu should change his government, which is dominated by hard-right parties.

Just hours later, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a humanitarian cease-fire by a vote of 153 in favor, 10 against and 23 abstentions. The non-binding vote is largely symbolic, but it serves as an important barometer of world opinion. None of the major powers joined Israel and the United States in their opposition to the cease-fire.

Biden’s comments came as the White House national security adviser heads to Israel this week to discuss with Netanyahu a timetable for the war — and what happens if Hamas is defeated. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will travel to Israel next week for a visit the Pentagon said aims to show U.S. support for Israel but also to press the need to avoid more civilian casualties in Gaza.

The war ignited by Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel has already brought unprecedented death and destruction to the impoverished coastal enclave, with much of northern Gaza obliterated, more than 18,000 Palestinians killed and over 80% of the population of 2.3 million pushed from their homes.

The U.S. has urged Israel to do more to reduce civilian casualties since it launched its invasion of southern Gaza at the beginning of the month. But the toll has continued to mount at seemingly the same dizzying rate.

The health care system and humanitarian aid operations have collapsed in large parts of Gaza, amid Israel’s blockade of the territory and intense airstrikes and fighting, and aid workers have warned of starvation and the spread of disease among displaced people in overcrowded shelters and tent camps.

### DEVASTATION IN THE NORTH

Gaza City and much of the surrounding north have already suffered widespread destruction from more than two months of bombardment. Amid the rubble, Israeli ground troops are still locked in heavy combat with Palestinian fighters, more than six weeks after soldiers invaded the north.

Fierce clashes raged Tuesday in Gaza City’s Zaytoun and Shijaiya neighborhoods, as well as in Jabaliya, a densely built urban refugee camp, residents said.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians remain in the north, huddled in homes or in U.N. schools-turned-shelters. As airstrikes and drones smash houses, first responders are unable to reach anyone buried in the wreckage, residents said.

“It was massive,” Mustafa Abu Taha, an agricultural worker, said of the sound of gunfire and explosions in Shijaiya, where he lives.

Amal Radwan, a woman sheltering in a school in Jabaliya, said the situation was “catastrophic,” as Israeli troops tried to advance deep into the district and unleashed heavy fire against fighters.

“Whenever the resistance hit them, they hit us very hard. It has become crazy. They strike everywhere with no regard to women or children,” she said.

Outside Gaza City, Israeli troops using a controlled detonation blew up a school run by UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, in the northern town of Beit Hanoun. Footage posted online showed soldiers cheering as they watched the building collapse in a giant blast and pall of smoke.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini confirmed the demolition in a post on X Tuesday, calling it “outrageous.” There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. On Saturday, it said militants opened fire from inside an UNRWA school in the town.

Israel also has begun flooding some Hamas tunnels, a U.S. official confirmed Tuesday, speaking on con-



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dition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the action. Israelis said they are testing the targeted flooding of tunnels on a limited basis and are exploring the idea as one of a range of options to degrade the tunnel network, according to another U.S. official familiar with the matter.

President Joe Biden said during a news conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that there were assertions that no hostages were in Gaza tunnels being flooded with seawater by the Israelis, but "I don't know that for a fact."

## 'INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING'

Biden's comments were a startlingly direct criticism of Israel even as his administration continues to give unwavering diplomatic and military support for the military campaign in Gaza in the face of mounting international outrage.

Tuesday's General Assembly vote was held after the U.S. vetoed calls for a cease-fire at the U.N. Security Council last week and rushed tank munitions to Israel to allow it to maintain the offensive. The U.N. secretary-general and Arab states have rallied much of the international community behind calls for an immediate cease-fire.

Israel launched the campaign after Hamas and other militants streamed into the south on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and taking about 240 others hostage. About half of those remain in captivity. At least 105 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive, the army says.

Israel and the U.S. say any cease-fire that leaves Hamas in power would mean victory for the militant group, which has governed Gaza since 2007 and has pledged to destroy Israel. Israel blames civilian casualties on Hamas, saying it positions fighters, tunnels and rocket launchers in dense urban areas, using civilians as human shields.

But the two allies have also had differences over the timetable of the war and over how Gaza should be ruled in the future.

In a briefing with the AP on Monday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant signaled that the current phase of heavy ground fighting and airstrikes could stretch on for weeks and further military activity could continue for months.

Netanyahu has said the military will have to keep open-ended security control of Gaza after the war ends.

The Biden administration has said Israel should not return to a military occupation and the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority should govern Gaza as talks resume on creating a Palestinian state next to Israel.

Netanyahu appeared to firmly rule that out Tuesday, acknowledging "there is disagreement about 'the day after Hamas.'"

"I will not allow Israel to repeat the mistake of Oslo," he said, referring to the peace process in the 1990s that created the Palestinian Authority and was intended to reach a two-state solution. The authority governs pockets of the occupied West Bank and governed Gaza until the Hamas takeover in 2007.

## STRIKES AND RAIDS ACROSS GAZA

Strikes overnight and into Tuesday in southern Gaza — where almost all of Gaza's population of 2.3 million is now crowded — killed dozens, according to hospital records.

Islam Harb's three children were among those killed when Israeli airstrikes flattened four residential buildings in the town of Rafah on the Egyptian border. At least 23 people were killed, including seven children and six women, according to an Associated Press reporter who saw the bodies arrive at a hospital.

"My twin girls, Maria and Joud, were martyred, and my little son, Ammar, also martyred," Harb said.

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.

In the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, Israeli forces stormed the Kamal Adwan Hospital, ordering all men, including medics, into the courtyard, said Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Gaza Health Ministry. The hospital had 65 patients in intensive care and six newborns in incubators, the U.N. said, and some 3,000 displaced people were sheltering there with little food or water.

The Israeli military says it is rounding up men in northern Gaza as it searches for Hamas fighters. Photos and videos circulating online show groups of detainees stripped to their underwear, bound and blindfolded, and some who have been released say they were beaten and denied food and water.

Asked about the hospital, the military said it "continues to act against Hamas strongholds in the north of Gaza," including Beit Lahiya and takes "all feasible precautions to mitigate harm to noncombatants."

## Argentina sharply devalues its currency and cuts subsidies as part of shock economic measures

By DÉBORA REY Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina on Tuesday announced a sharp devaluation of its currency and cuts to energy and transportation subsidies as part of shock measures new President Javier Milei says are needed to deal with an economic emergency.

Economy Minister Luis Caputo said in a televised message the Argentine peso will be devalued by 50% to 800 to the U.S. dollar from 400 pesos to the dollar.

"For a few months, we're going to be worse than before," Caputo said, two days after the libertarian Milei was sworn in as president of the second largest economy in South America and immediately warned of tough measures.

Milei has said the country didn't have time to consider other alternatives.

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

As part of the new measures, Caputo said the government is canceling tenders of any public works projects and cutting some state jobs to reduce the size of the government.

He also announced cuts to energy and transportation subsidies without providing details or saying by how much, and added that Milei's administration is reducing the number of ministries from 18 to 9.

He said the measures are necessary to cut the fiscal deficit he believes is the cause of the country's economic problems, including surging inflation.

"If we continue as we are, we are inevitably heading toward hyperinflation," Caputo said. "Our mission is to avoid a catastrophe."

The IMF welcomed the measures, saying they provide "a good foundation" for further discussions with Argentina about its debt with the institution.

"These bold initial actions aim to significantly improve public finances in a manner that protects the most vulnerable in society and strengthen the foreign exchange regime," said IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack in a statement. "Their decisive implementation will help stabilize the economy and set the basis for more sustainable and private-sector led growth."

The major figures in the former Peronist government of Alberto Fernández didn't comment on the measures announced Tuesday.

But social leader Juan Grabois, who is close to former center-left president Cristina Fernández (2007-2015), said that Caputo had announced "a social murder without flinching like a psychopath about to massacre his defenseless victims."

"Your salary in the private sector, in the public sector, in the popular, social and solidarity economy, in the cooperative or informal sector, for retirees and pensioners, will get you half in the supermarket," he said. "Do you really think that people are not going to protest?"

"There's no money," has been a common refrain in Milei's speeches, using it to explain why a gradualist approach to the situation is a non-starter. But he has promised the adjustment will almost entirely affect the state rather than the private sector, and that it represented the first step toward regaining prosperity.

Milei, a 53-year-old economist, rose to fame on television with profanity-laden tirades against what he called the political caste. He parlayed his popularity into a congressional seat and then, just as swiftly,

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into a presidential run. The overwhelming victory of the self-declared “anarcho-capitalist” in the August primaries sent shock waves through the political landscape and upended the race.

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

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

Many Argentines have wondered which Milei will govern their country, the chainsaw-wielding, anti-establishment crusader from the campaign trail, or the more moderate president-elect who emerged in recent weeks.

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

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

Milei had cast himself as a willing warrior against the creep of global socialism, much like former U.S. President Donald Trump, whom he openly admires.

He said during his inaugural address, however, that he has no intention to “persecute anyone or settle old vendettas,” and that any politician or union leader who wants to support his project will be “received with open arms.”

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

## **Fashion retailer Zara yanks ads that some found reminiscent of Israel’s war on Hamas in Gaza**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The Spanish fashion brand Zara has pulled advertising images that to some appeared to reference Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza.

The images for a line of jackets included what the company called “unfinished sculptures in a sculptor’s studio.” But some online critics said one image of a model holding a wrapped-up mannequin resembled someone holding a corpse. Other photos included a mannequin with missing limbs and a figure wrapped in fabric or plastic on the floor, according to news reports.

The company apologized in a statement posted on Instagram Tuesday and said the campaign was conceived in July and photographed in September. Hamas attacked Israeli civilians on Oct. 7, prompting Israel’s subsequent invasion of Gaza.

Zara said the campaign was created “with the sole purpose of showcasing craftmade garments in an artistic context.” While acknowledging the offense critics took to the images, the company said these people “saw in them something far from what was intended when they were created.”

## **Packed hospitals, treacherous roads, harried parents: Newborns in Gaza face steeper odds of survival**

By WAFAA SHURAFU and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The birth of their daughter should have marked the beginning of a joyful chapter for the young Palestinian couple.

Instead, the devastating war in Gaza, now in its third month, has turned childbirth and parenthood into a time of worry and fear for Salim and Israa al-Jamala.

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First, they endured a perilous journey, dodging missile fire, to reach a maternity ward. And now, the couple is sheltering with their newborn in the partially tented courtyard of another hospital where they can't care properly for their now 3-week-old daughter, her mother's namesake.

His wife's breast milk is not sufficient because she cannot eat enough as a result of widespread food shortages, said the 29-year-old Salim, rocking baby Israa, swaddled in blankets in a crib cobbled together from wood scraps. Baby formula and medicine for the infant's persistent cough are not available and in any case not affordable.

The war, triggered by a deadly Oct. 7 Hamas assault on southern Israel, has unleashed unimaginable destruction, with more than 18,000 Palestinians killed and close to 50,000 wounded in Israel's offensive, according to health officials in Hamas-run Gaza. The initial Hamas attack killed about 1,200 people in Israel, most of them civilians.

Amid the devastation, about 5,500 births are expected over the next month, out of an estimated 50,000 women in Gaza who are currently pregnant, according to the World Health Organization.

Yet the health sector is close to collapse, with two-thirds of Gaza's 36 hospitals now out of service. The 12 remaining health facilities are only partially operational. Even in the functioning hospitals, doctors report a lack of basic medicines and the kind of equipment needed to treat newborns, including ventilators, formula milk and disinfectant.

The severe shortage of fuel is another major concern for hospitals that have run solely on generators since the early days of the war when Israel cut Gaza's electricity supply.

"Electricity sometimes comes on for a few minutes" before dropping off, said Wisam Shaltout, head of the neonatal intensive care unit at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Salim and Israa's odyssey began in mid-October. During that period, the Israeli military had been issuing daily warnings to residents of northern Gaza, including Gaza City, to head to the southern half of the territory ahead of a looming Israel ground offensive in the north.

Heeding the warnings, Salim, a heavily pregnant Israa and their 5-year-old son fled their home in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City and headed south on foot. The family of three shortly arrived at Shifa hospital in Gaza City before managing to secure a taxi later that day to take them to Al-Aqsa Hospital where they found shelter.

When 26-year old Israa went into labor on Nov. 23, the pair were told to head to Al-Awda Hospital, near the Nuseirat refugee camp, as it still had a maternity ward.

The couple managed to find a Red Crescent ambulance to take them to Al-Awda, just 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) away. But it was a frightful stop-start journey that took more than an hour because three airstrikes hit near the road.

Most arriving at Al-Awda's maternity ward have no vehicle to help. Some pregnant women are too scared to go at all, fearing airstrikes that in some cases have also struck ambulances, said Dr. Yasmin Kafarneh, who runs the obstetrics department at Al-Awda.

She said she believes her department is the only functioning maternity ward in southern Gaza. Before the war, the department used to handle around six births a day. Now, pregnant women arrive from all over and more than 70 babies are delivered each day.

Under the current conditions, first-time mothers are permitted to stay and receive treatment in the hospital for around four hours after giving birth, while those who have previously given birth can stay for only half that time.

Israa gave birth at 2 a.m. on Nov. 24, but the joy was short-lived. Just after daybreak, the family was told by medical staff they had to leave to make room for others.

They secured a donkey cart to carry them back to their shelter at the Al-Aqsa Hospital. They have little to eat, some days just onions.

Their neighbors make fires to stay warm, sometimes burning plastic that releases toxic fumes. "The atmosphere here is all smoke, all dust," Salim said. "It is not an appropriate environment for a newborn girl!"

The baby's health has deteriorated, said Salim, troubled by her persistent cough.

Israa was born just hours before a cease-fire took effect that lasted a week. After fighting resumed and ground forces advanced in central and southern Gaza, their shelter became even more crowded.

Given the circumstances, Salim said he has done the best he can. But he's scared for his daughter. "I do not know whether she will be alive tomorrow," he said.

## Zelenskyy pleads for Ukraine aid at Capitol and White House, says to US: Our fight is yours

By LISA MASCARO, AAMER MADHANI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told America his country was fighting for "our freedom and yours" as he made an impassioned plea Tuesday for Congress to approve more assistance to fight Russia's invasion.

But prospects for additional U.S. aid to Ukraine appeared seriously delayed, if not in grave doubt, despite his whirlwind diplomacy in Washington.

After hours of talks on Capitol Hill, Zelenskyy spent more hours at the White House meeting with President Joe Biden and his aides about a way forward. The U.S. has already provided Ukraine \$111 billion since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his grinding invasion more than 21 months ago, but Republicans are insisting on linking any more money to strict U.S.-Mexico border security changes that Democrats decry.

The White House is warning that if new money isn't provided by year's end it will have swift consequences for Ukraine's capacity to hold its territory, let alone take back land captured by Russia.

As Zelenskyy wrapped up his two-day visit to Washington, it was unclear if he had been able to shake up the political stalemate over aid — though negotiations swiftly resumed at the Capitol and key Senate negotiators emerged saying they had made progress. He sought to make the case that supporting his country's fight for its territorial integrity is about far more than Ukraine.

"For nearly two years we've been in a full scale war — the biggest since World War II, fighting for freedom," Zelenskyy said. "No matter what Putin tries he hasn't won any victories. Thanks to Ukraine's success — success in defense — other European nations are safe from the Russian aggression."

Biden similarly warned that failure by the United States to provide Ukraine further aid would embolden Russian President Vladimir Putin and others on the world stage.

"Putin is banking on the United States failing to deliver on Ukraine," Biden said. "We must, we must, we must prove him wrong."

Earlier, meeting with Zelenskyy in the Oval Office, Biden called on Congress "to do the right thing, to stand with Ukraine, and to stand up for freedom." He added, "Congress needs to pass the supplemental funding for Ukraine before they break for the holiday recess, before they give Putin the greatest Christmas gift they could possibly give him."

Zelenskyy made his own case in his private meetings with congressional leaders — that Ukrainian forces have fought fiercely to push back the Russian invasion with the help of American and other Western allies and it's no time for Ukraine's friends to step back.

"The fight we're in is a fight for freedom," Zelenskyy repeatedly said in the meetings on Capitol Hill, according to lawmakers.

Elsewhere, meanwhile, more than 130 senior lawmakers from across Europe signed a letter urging U.S. lawmakers to continue their support for Ukraine.

At the Capitol, flanked by Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Zelenskyy entered a private meeting with senators with a public bipartisan show of support and to some applause. But more than an hour later few senators' minds appeared changed.

Zelenskyy also visited House leaders, including a private meeting with new Speaker Mike Johnson, whose hard-right Republicans have been the most resistant to any deal. Johnson insisted afterward, "We do want to do the right thing here."

Zelenskyy sought to impress on the senators that Ukraine could win the war against Russia, telling them he was drafting men in their 30s and 40s in a show of strength for the battle. In his trademark olive drab,

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he stood before a portrait of George Washington, history hanging behind him.

To the House Democrats, he showcased his country's embrace of the West by pointing to the Christmas season, telling them it was the first year Ukraine would celebrate on Dec. 25 rather than the day Russians mark the holiday.

McConnell said Zelenskyy was "inspirational and determined" in the Senate meeting.

But Republican senators seemed unmoved from their position. Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma said the emergency funding wouldn't gain GOP support unless it includes "real, meaningful border reform."

Biden pushed back that "history will judge harshly those who turned their backs on freedom's cause." The president quoted a Kremlin-aligned television host celebrating Republicans' recent blocking of aid as a job "well done."

"If you're being celebrated by Russian propagandists, it might be time to rethink what you're doing," he said.

Biden has been calling for a \$110 billion U.S. aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs.

He 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 proposals for expedited deportations and strict asylum standards as a return to Trump-era hostility toward migrants.

Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas met for nearly two hours at the Capitol to help with talks. Key Senate negotiators Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma and Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona both left saying they made progress.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's high-stakes meetings, the White House 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.

It's Zelenskyy's third visit to Washington since the war broke out in February 2022, including a quick trip just a few months ago as aid was being considered. His surprise arrival days before Christmas last December, his daring first wartime trip out of Ukraine, drew thunderous applause in Congress.

At the time, lawmakers sported the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine, and Zelenskyy delivered a speech that drew on the parallels to World War II as he thanked Americans for their support.

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.

Republican Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Zelenskyy might be able to take on the stalemate by showing the stakes of potential Russian expansion toward NATO, and making his case on "moral clarity and why is Ukraine important."

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. During his meeting with Biden, he also sought to assure Congress — and the American public — that Ukraine was worth the substantial cost to the United States.

"Ukraine can win," said Zelenskyy. "People need to be confident that freedom is secure."

Of the new \$110 billion national security package, \$61.4 billion would go toward Ukraine — with about half to the U.S. Defense Department to replenish weaponry it is supplying, and the other half for other military intelligence and defense support, 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.

Biden also announced Tuesday that he had approved an additional \$200 million military aid package for Ukraine. Including that latest package, the U.S. now has about \$4.4 billion remaining in weapons it can provide from department stockpiles.

## **Biden takes a tougher stance on Israel's 'indiscriminate bombing' of Gaza**

By COLLEEN LONG and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday warned that Israel was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza, speaking out in unusually strong language just hours before the United Nations demanded a humanitarian cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war.

"Israel's security can rest on the United States, but right now it has more than the United States. It has the European Union, it has Europe, it has most of the world supporting them," Biden said to donors during a fundraiser Tuesday.

"They're starting to lose that support by indiscriminate bombing that takes place," he said.

The president said he thought Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu understood, but he wasn't so sure about the Israeli war cabinet. Israeli forces were carrying out punishing strikes across Gaza, crushing Palestinians in homes as the military presses ahead with an offensive that officials say could go on for weeks or months.

Biden offered a harder-than-usual assessment of Israel's decisions since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and the moves by his conservative government. Meanwhile, Biden's top national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, is heading to Israel this week to consult directly about timetables for ending major combat.

The president also renewed his warnings that Israel should not make the same mistakes of overreaction that the U.S. did following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

He recounted a familiar anecdote about inscribing on a photo with Netanyahu decades ago, "Bibi, I don't agree with a damn thing you have to say." This time, the president added to his retelling of the story: "That remains to be the case."

The 2024 campaign fundraiser was part of a gathering of Jewish donors, many of whom attended a White House Hanukkah reception on Monday evening; Biden's fundraisers are open to some reporters on the condition that no audio or video be shared.

Hours later, during a press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Biden refrained from offering the same public criticism again, but said that he had made it clear to Israel "the safety of innocent Palestinians is still of great concern."

"The actions they're taking must be consistent with attempting to do everything possible to prevent innocent Palestinian civilians from being hurt, murdered, killed, lost," Biden said, adding, that it was important to remember "what we're doing here."

"We're here to support Israel because they're an independent nation and the way in which Hamas treated Israel is beyond comparison," the president said.

Biden's rhetoric to donors tracks his more candid and private messaging to Netanyahu on their frequent calls, according to two White House officials, where he reasserts U.S. support for Israel before pushing for Israel to do more to help civilians in Gaza.

"Israel has a tough decision to make. Bibi has a tough decision to make. There's no question about the need to take on Hamas. There's no question about that. None. Zero," Biden said. But he added, of Israel's leader, "I think he has to change his government. His government in Israel is making it very difficult."

Biden specifically called out Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of a far-right Israeli party and the minister of national security in Netanyahu's governing coalition, who opposes a two-state solution and has called for Israel to reassert control over all of the West Bank and Gaza. Ben-Gvir sits on Israel's security cabinet, but is not a member of the country's three-person war cabinet.

The comments prompted responses from both the Israeli military and also Hamas.

"We know to explain exactly how we operate with precision, based on intelligence, even when we are

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operating on the ground," said Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari. "We know how to operate against the Hamas strongholds in such a way that best separates the uninvolved civilians from terrorism targets."

Asked about Biden's comments, a senior Hamas official said in Beirut that "the resistance and the steadfastness of the Palestinian people have made Biden understand that the Israeli military operation is a crazy act."

"The repercussions (of the war) will be catastrophic on the entity (Israel) and on the results of elections in which Biden might lose his seat in the White House," Osama Hamdan, member of Hamas' political bureau said during a news conference.

During the fundraiser, Biden said that when he has warned Netanyahu of a loss of international support over the bombing, the Israeli leader has mentioned that the U.S. had "carpet-bombed Germany" in World War II and dropped the atomic bomb on Japan.

"That's why all these institutions were set up after World War II, to see that it didn't happen again," he said. "Don't make the same mistakes we made in 9/11. There's no reason we had to be in a war in Afghanistan. There's no reason we had to do so many things that we did."

The U.N. General Assembly voted Tuesday on a nonbinding resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire, days after the U.S. vetoed a similar measure at the U.N. Security Council. The U.K. abstained from that 13-1 vote, but France and Japan were among those supporting the call for a cease-fire. Only Security Council resolutions are legally binding under the terms of the international body's charter, but the vote Tuesday sent a strong message on how the conflict was viewed around the world.

Before Biden's comments at the fundraiser, Netanyahu said in a statement that he appreciated American support and that he'd received "full backing for the ground incursion and blocking the international pressure to stop the war."

"Yes, there is disagreement about 'the day after Hamas' and I hope that we will reach agreement here as well. I would like to clarify my position: I will not allow Israel to repeat the mistake of Oslo. Gaza will be neither Hamastan nor Fatahstan."

Speaking at a forum hosted by The Wall Street Journal before either leader's comments, Sullivan reiterated the Biden administration's position that it does not want to see Israel reoccupy Gaza or further shrink its already small territory.

The U.S. has repeatedly called for a return of the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority and the resumption of peace talks aimed at establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Sullivan said he would also speak to Netanyahu about his recent comments that Israel Defense Forces would maintain open-ended security control of Gaza after the war ends.

"I will have the opportunity to talk to Prime Minister Netanyahu about what exactly he has in mind with that comment, because that can be interpreted in a number of different ways," Sullivan said. "But the U.S. position on this is clear."

## UN General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to demand a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to demand a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza in a strong demonstration of global support for ending the Israel-Hamas war. The vote also showed the growing isolation of the United States and Israel.

The vote in the 193-member world body was 153 in favor, 10 against and 23 abstentions, and ambassadors and other diplomats burst into applause as the final numbers were displayed. The United States and Israel were joined in opposing the resolution by eight countries — Austria, Czechia, Guatemala, Liberia, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay.

The support was much higher than for an Oct. 27 Arab-sponsored resolution that called for a "humanitarian truce" leading to a cessation of hostilities, where the vote was 120-14 with 45 abstentions.

"Today was a historic day in terms of the powerful message that was sent from the General Assem-



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bly," Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, said after the vote. "And it is our collective duty to continue in this path until we see an end to this aggression against our people, to see this war stopping against our people. It is our duty to save lives."

The United States has grown increasingly isolated in its support for Israel's military campaign in Gaza after Hamas militants killed about 1,200 people and abducted about 240 in a surprise attack on Oct. 7.

More than the United Nations or any other international organization, the United States is seen as the only entity capable of persuading Israel to accept a cease-fire as its closest ally and biggest supplier of weaponry.

In tougher language than usual, though, President Joe Biden warned before the vote that Israel was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza.

After the United States vetoed a resolution in the Security Council on Friday demanding a humanitarian cease-fire, Arab and Islamic nations called for Tuesday's emergency session of the General Assembly to vote on a resolution making the same demand.

Unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding. But the assembly's messages are important barometers of world opinion.

But Mansour said "we will not rest until we see compliance of Israel with this demand from the General Assembly so that we can see a cease-fire in place."

The resolution makes no mention of Hamas, and the assembly defeated two proposed amendments mentioning the militant group. One, proposed by the United States, would have added a paragraph stating that the assembly "unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas." The other, proposed by Austria, would have added a call for the immediate release of hostages still held by Hamas.

The war, now in its third month, has brought unprecedented death and destruction, with much of northern Gaza obliterated, more than 18,000 Palestinians killed according to the Hamas-run health ministry, 70% of them reportedly children and women, and over 80% of the population of 2.3 million pushed from their homes.

General Assembly President Dennis Francis, who chaired the meeting, said the world is witnessing "an onslaught on civilians, the breakdown of humanitarian systems, and profound disrespect for both international law and international humanitarian law."

He said civilians should never undergo the level of suffering in Gaza and asked, "How many more thousands of lives must be lost before we do something? No more time is left. The carnage must stop."

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the assembly "how Israel defends itself matters," and she delivered several U.S. demands, which she said the Biden administration will press at the highest levels.

"Israel must avoid mass displacement of civilians in the south of Gaza," Thomas-Greenfield said. "It must ensure sufficient humanitarian assistance to those who have fled violence and it must allow civilians in Gaza to return home as soon as conditions allow."

But she made clear that the U.S. remains committed to Israel's right to defend itself. She asked assembly members why it was so difficult for U.N. nations to condemn Hamas' "terrorist actions" on Oct. 7, "to say unequivocally that murdering babies and gunning down parents in front of their children is horrific, that burning down houses while families shelter inside and taking civilian hostages is abhorrent."

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan warned before the vote that a cease-fire "will only prolong the death and destruction in the region" and will be "a death sentence for countless more Israelis and Gazans."

"A cease-fire means one thing and one thing only — ensuring the survival of Hamas, ensuring the survival of genocidal terrorists committed to the annihilation of Israel and Jews," he said.

Erdan said if U.N. member nations want a cease-fire they should call Hamas' office in Gaza. He held up a sign with a phone number and the name Yehya Sinwar, the mastermind of the Hamas attack, who is at the top of Israel's hit list.

The resolution expresses "grave concern over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population," and it says Palestinians and Israelis must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law.

It also 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.”

Tuesday’s vote showed major shifts in voting. More than 25 countries that abstained on Oct. 27 supported Tuesday’s cease-fire demand, including Albania, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, India, Iraq, Japan, Latvia, Monaco, North Macedonia, Philippines, Poland, South Korea, Moldova, San Marino, Serbia, Sweden, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Zambia.

Croatia and Fiji went from voting no on Oct. 27 to voting yes on Tuesday, while Hungary, the Marshall Islands and Tonga went from voting no to abstaining.

## **Kate Cox sought an abortion in Texas. A court said no because she didn’t show her life was in danger**

By PAUL J. WEBER and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Kate Cox, whose fetus had a fatal condition, did not qualify for an abortion in Texas: not after four emergency room visits, elevated vital signs, risks of a uterine rupture and with her ability to have more children in jeopardy.

The Texas Supreme Court’s rejection of the mother of two’s request for an exception under the state’s restrictive ban has laid bare the high threshold women in many states must meet to get the procedure: pregnancy complications that pose life-threatening danger to the mother.

“These laws reflect the policy choice that the Legislature has made, and the courts must respect that choice,” the court’s nine Republican justices said in their ruling late Monday.

The state’s Republican attorney general had for a week argued that Cox did not meet the standard for an exception, despite appeals from her attorneys that her health was deteriorating. Hours before the order came down, Cox’s attorney said she could no longer wait for the procedure and had already left Texas to get an abortion in another state.

The decision galled doctors and opponents who say it underscored how, even though such bans allow abortions to save a mother’s life, the laws are vague on how close to death a patient must be to get the procedure. Fourteen states have banned abortion at nearly all stages of pregnancy since the U.S. Supreme Court decision last year in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health*, which upended the right to an abortion.

The outcome in Texas drew condemnation from the White House, which criticized Republican abortion policies and called them out of step. “This should never happen in America, period,” President Joe Biden said in a statement Tuesday.

Public polling has shown that the majority of U.S. adults want abortion to be legal at least in the initial stages of pregnancy.

Dr. Clayton Alfonso, an OB-GYN at Duke University, said things “can go from being really OK to really bad really quickly” during pregnancy. He said that with so many nuances in medicine, it’s often difficult to know what will lead to a death.

“Things just don’t fit the strict legal guidelines of black and white,” Alfonso said.

Texas’ ban is one of the most restrictive in the U.S. and backers of the law say it worked as designed this week, even while acknowledging Cox’s tragic circumstances.

On Tuesday, however, there was no reaction from Republicans in Texas who championed the state’s ban. The offices of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, the state’s GOP lieutenant governor and the House speaker did not return messages seeking comment.

States with bans in the U.S. have provisions to allow abortion to save the life of the woman. There’s a patchwork of policies for other exceptions, including for pregnancies caused by rape or incest. In the states with the most restrictive policies, abortion is generally allowed if doctors find it necessary to prevent the pregnant woman from irreversible impairment of a major bodily function — but not to protect her health in other ways, including mental health.

Texas Right to Life President John Seago, whose group opposes abortion and has helped push through some of the state's restrictive laws, said they want doctors to "intervene immediately" if there is a life-threatening condition. But he said Cox's lawsuit never demonstrated that was the case.

"When we look at this case, it is a very tragic situation of a child that has a negative diagnosis, but in Texas law we have a very strong position that we are going to give every child in Texas a chance at life," Seago said.

Nationally, about 700 women die each year because of pregnancy or delivery complications. Doctors worry that delaying an abortion could mean a slightly riskier procedure, especially when the pregnancy is further along. While they stress that abortion is safe at all points of pregnancy — with an overall complication rate of 2% — the procedure does carry additional risks as the pregnancy progresses.

Doctors and researchers say abortion delays have grown more common since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. One big reason for delays is the increasing need to seek care out of state.

Some state lawmakers took steps this year to clarify their laws. In Texas, for instance, they added a provision that offers doctors some legal protection when they end pregnancies in cases of premature rupture of membranes or ectopic pregnancies.

For Cox, tests confirmed late last month that the baby she was carrying had a condition called trisomy 18, an extra chromosome that made it likely the baby would die in utero or shortly after birth.

Dr. Andrea Henkel, a clinical assistant in the department of obstetrics and gynecology and a complex family planning subspecialist at Stanford Health Care in Palo Alto, California, said trisomy 18 is associated with an increased risk of gestational diabetes, preterm birth and cesarean birth. She said additional cesareans — Cox already has two children born by cesarean section — are inherently more risky, especially if Cox wants to have more children in the future.

"I think that that's where I really struggle right now is when legislators get in the way of a patient making the best plan outside of knowing their specific goals and desires," Henkel said.

## Florida fines high school for allowing transgender student to play girls volleyball

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Florida's state athletic board fined a high school and put it on probation Tuesday after a transgender student played on the girls volleyball team, a violation of a controversial law enacted by Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Legislature.

The Florida High School Athletic Association fined Monarch High \$16,500, ordered the principal and athletic director to attend rules seminars and placed the suburban Fort Lauderdale school on probation for 11 months, meaning further violations could lead to increased punishments. The association also barred the girl from participating in boys sports for 11 months.

The 2021 law, which supporters named "The Fairness in Women's Sports Act," bars transgender girls and women from playing on public school teams intended for student athletes identified as girls at birth.

The student, a 10th grader who played in 33 matches over the last two seasons, was removed from the team last month after the Broward County School District was notified by an anonymous tipster about her participation. Her removal led hundreds of Monarch students to walk out of class two weeks ago in protest.

The Associated Press is not naming the student to protect her privacy.

"Thanks to the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida passed legislation to protect girls' sports and we will not tolerate any school that violates this law," Education Commissioner Manny Diaz said in a statement. "We applaud the swift action taken by the Florida High School Athletic Association to ensure there are serious consequences for this illegal behavior."

DeSantis' office declined comment. The governor was in Iowa on Tuesday, campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination. He has made his enactment of the law and others that are similar a campaign cornerstone.

Jessica Norton, the girl's mother and a Monarch information technician, went public last week. She

reissued a statement Tuesday calling the outing of her daughter a "direct attempt to endanger" the girl. The Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ+ rights organization that has been supporting the family, said in a statement that Tuesday's ruling "does not change the fact that the law preventing transgender girls from playing sports with their peers is unconstitutionally rooted in anti-transgender bias, and the Association's claim to ensure equal opportunities for student athletes rings hollow."

"The reckless indifference to the well-being of our client and her family, and all transgender students across the State, will not be ignored," wrote Jason Starr, the group's litigation strategist.

According to court documents filed with a 2021 federal suit challenging the law on the girl's behalf, she has identified as female since before elementary school and has been using a girl's name since second grade.

At age 11 she began taking testosterone blockers and at 13 started taking estrogen to begin puberty as a girl. Her gender has also been changed on her birth certificate. A judge dismissed the lawsuit last month but gave the family until next month to amend it for reconsideration.

Broward County Public Schools in a short statement acknowledged receiving the association's ruling and said its own investigation is ongoing. The district has 10 days to appeal.

The association also ruled that Monarch Principal James Cecil and Athletic Director Dione Hester must attend rules compliance seminars the next two summers and the school must host an on-campus seminar for other staff before July.

The school district recently temporarily reassigned Cecil, Hester, Norton and the assistant athletic director and suspended the volleyball coach pending the outcome of its investigation.

After the group's reassignments, Norton thanked students and others who protested on their behalf. "The outpouring of love and support from our community ... has been inspiring, selfless and brave," Norton said in last week's statement. "Watching our community's resistance and display of love has been so joyous for our family — the light leading us through this darkness."

## Harvard board keeps president as leader of Ivy League school following antisemitism backlash

By STEVE LeBLANC and KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Harvard President Claudine Gay will remain leader of the prestigious Ivy League school following her comments last week at a congressional hearing on antisemitism, the university's highest governing body announced Tuesday.

"Our extensive deliberations affirm our confidence that President Gay is the right leader to help our community heal and to address the very serious societal issues we are facing," the Harvard Corporation said in a statement following its meeting Monday.

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 in the wake of the latest Israel-Hamas war, which erupted in early October. Their academic responses provoked 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.

Some lawmakers and donors to the university had called for Gay to step down, following the resignation of Liz Magill as president of the University of Pennsylvania on Saturday.

On Tuesday, the University of Pennsylvania announced it had selected an interim president to replace Magill, naming Dr. J. Larry Jameson, who has served as executive vice president of the University of Pennsylvania for the Health System and dean of the Perelman School of Medicine since 2011.

A petition signed by more than 600 faculty members had asked the school's governing body to keep Gay in charge.

At issue was a line of questioning that asked whether calling for the genocide of Jews would violate the universities' code of conduct. At the hearing, Gay said it depended on the context, adding that when "speech crosses into conduct, that violates our policies."

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"So many people have suffered tremendous damage and pain because of Hamas's brutal terrorist attack, and the university's initial statement should have been an immediate, direct, and unequivocal condemnation," the corporation's statement said. "Calls for genocide are despicable and contrary to fundamental human values. President Gay has apologized for how she handled her congressional testimony and has committed to redoubling the university's fight against antisemitism."

In an interview with The Harvard Crimson student newspaper last week, Gay said she got caught up in a heated exchange at the House committee hearing and failed to properly denounce threats of violence against Jewish students.

"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.

Testimony from Gay and Magill drew intense national backlash, as did similar responses from the president of MIT, who also testified before the Republican-led House Education and Workforce Committee.

U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-New York, a committee member who repeatedly asked the university presidents whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate the schools' rules, voiced her displeasure about the school's decision on X, the social media platform.

"There have been absolutely no updates to (Harvard's) code of conduct to condemn the calls for genocide of Jews and protect Jewish students on campus," she said. "The only update to Harvard's code of conduct is to allow plagiarists as president."

The school said an independent review into plagiarism allegations against Gay found three instances of "inadequate citation," but no misconduct.

On the Harvard campus, the news about the decision came as students and teachers were rushing to classes. Gunduz Vassaf, a visiting professor in psychology, said he supports Gay.

"I fully support her testimony before Congress. I do believe that the situation has been taken out of context in the emotions of the immediate moment," Vassaf said.

"As long as there's no incitement and a call for violence, this falls within the freedom of speech," he added.

Evan Routhier, a student at Harvard, said he also supports Gay.

"My experience since she's taken over has been positive," he said.

The news drew others to the campus.

Rabbi Chananel Weiner, the director of Aish Campus Boston, said he came to Harvard to show solidarity with students.

"We need to resist the ideas really that are being spread here that are really against the Jewish people," he said. "The Jewish people are under attack and we're under attack from all angles, academia being one of them and this is the heart of academia."

Celebrity lawyer Alan Dershowitz, a longtime defender of Israel and a professor at Harvard Law School, said Tuesday it was a mistake for the Harvard Corporation to support Gay, saying she championed a diversity, equity and inclusion bureaucracy "that has become an incubator for antisemitism."

He said he hopes that Gay changes her views on free speech to ensure everyone is treated the same.

"Right now she has been presiding over a dangerous double standard that permits free speech attacking some groups but not others. The school must decide on a policy, either free speech for all, equally, or limited restrictions, equally applied. She has not been the champion for that kind of equality and therefore she is the wrong person, at the wrong time, in the wrong job," he said.

A grassroots watchdog group called StopAntisemitism said on X that Harvard's decision "serves only to greenlight more Jew-hatred on campus." It said it continues to call for Gay's resignation and urged the corporation to reconsider.

College campuses nationwide have been roiled by protests, antisemitism and Islamophobia since the start of the war in Gaza two months ago, putting university administrators across the nation on the defensive.

The corporation also addressed allegations of plagiarism against Gay, saying that Harvard became aware of them in late October regarding three articles she had written. It initiated an independent review at Gay's request.

The corporation reviewed the results on Saturday, "which revealed a few instances of inadequate citation" and found no violation of Harvard's standards for research misconduct, it said. Gay is proactively requesting four corrections in two articles to insert citations and quotation marks that were omitted from the original publications, the statement said.

Harvard's announcement came the same day several prominent universities faced new federal investigations for allegations of antisemitism or Islamophobia.

The U.S. Education Department announced it opened civil rights investigations at Stanford, UCLA, the University of California-San Diego, the University of Washington-Seattle, Rutgers University and Whitman College. Details about the complaints were not released. Those schools join Harvard, Penn, Cornell, Columbia and several others that have come under investigation by the department since Oct. 7.

## Georgia election worker suing Rudy Giuliani tells jurors that his lies made her fear for her life

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scared for her life after Rudy Giuliani and other Donald Trump allies falsely accused her of fraud, former Georgia election worker Wandrea "Shaye" Moss told jurors Tuesday she seldom leaves her home, suffers from panic attacks and battles nightmares brought on by a barrage of threatening and racist messages.

Wandrea "Shaye" Moss took the witness stand on the second day of the defamation trial that will determine how much the former New York City mayor will have to pay Moss and her mother, Ruby Freeman, for spreading a conspiracy theory that they rigged the state's 2020 election results. Moss noted that Giuliani just a day earlier — after the trial began — repeated the false claims about her and her mother, saying they were "engaged in changing votes."

"I personally cannot repair my reputation at the moment because your client is still lying on me and ruining my reputation further," she told Giuliani's lawyer.

She sobbed as she testified that her life was turned upside down by the accusations, though they were quickly debunked by state officials. Her attorneys displayed a few of the graphic messages accusing her of treason and more that she received after Giuliani in December 2020 falsely accused workers at the State Farm Arena in Atlanta of tampering with ballots.

Moss told jurors that she was a bubbly, outgoing person before the conspiracy theories began, but since then she's been stuck in a lonely cycle of crying and nightmares.

"I'm most scared of my son finding me and or my mom hanging in front of our house on a tree having to get news at school that his mom was killed," the 39-year-old said. At one point in January 2021, she said, someone came to her grandmother's door threatening to make a "citizen arrest."

"Most days I pray that God does not wake me up and I just disappear," Moss said.

Moss and her mother are seeking tens of millions of dollars in damages from Giuliani in the defamation case at the same time he's preparing to defend himself against criminal charges in a separate case in Georgia. Giuliani has pleaded not guilty in the criminal case that accuses him and others of scheming to overturn Donald Trump's 2020 election loss in the state. He has denied any wrongdoing.

The trial is playing out at Washington's federal courthouse months before Trump is scheduled to stand trial there on criminal charges accusing him of conspiring to subvert the will of voters to stay in power. Giuliani is among Trump's unnamed "co-conspirators" in the federal case but the former mayor has not been charged by special counsel Jack Smith.

The judge overseeing the defamation case has already found Giuliani liable, and Giuliani has acknowledged in court that he made public comments falsely claiming Freeman and Moss committed fraud while counting ballots. The only issue remaining in the trial is the amount of damages Giuliani will have to pay the women.

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 has said any award should be much less, describing the damages the women are seeking as the "civil equivalent of the death penalty."

Defense attorney Joseph Sibley has argued there's no evidence Giuliani himself encouraged the harassment. While questioning Moss under cross-examination, Sibley said the right-wing website Gateway Pundit was the first to publish the surveillance video of the election workers rather than the former mayor. Sibley pressed Moss on the amount of money they are seeking, asking her, "Are you going to repair your reputation or use the money to do something else?"

Moss, who previously testified before the U.S. House Committee that investigated the Capitol attack, described being brought into her director's office after Giuliani made the claims during a Georgia legislative hearing. Moss thought her director wanted to recognize her for her election work or give her a promised promotion, she told jurors. Instead the mood in the room was somber, and soon she learned the real reason for the meeting.

"I am shown these videos, these lies, everything that had been going on that I had no clue about," Moss said.

Moss said she went home that night, scared and confused, and could only watch as the angry messages poured in. She got her long blonde hair cut off and dyed the next day, trying to reclaim some of her anonymity. She moved from the home she lived in to try to avoid the harassment, but people have found her new address, she told jurors. About two months ago, someone mailed a picture of her face from the newspaper cut into shreds, she said.

"I was afraid for my life. I literally felt like someone going to come and attempt to hang me and there's nothing that anyone will be able to do about it," Moss said.

Giuliani watched intently during Moss's testimony, frequently taking notes or conferring with his lawyer. Giuliani is expected to testify.

Moss' testimony came hours after the judge scolded Giuliani for comments made outside the federal courthouse Monday in which he insisted his claims about the women were true.

"When I testify, the whole story will be definitively clear that what I said was true, and that, whatever happened to them — which is unfortunate about other people overreacting — everything I said about them is true," Giuliani told reporters.

Giuliani added that Moss and Freeman were "engaged in changing votes." When a reporter pushed back, saying there was no proof of that, Giuliani replied: "You're damn right there is. ... Stay tuned."

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell warned Giuliani's lawyer that his client's remarks amounted to "defamatory statements about them yet again." The judge was incredulous, asking Giuliani's lawyer about the contradiction of his opening statements calling Freeman and Moss "good people" but then the former mayor repeating unfounded allegations of voter fraud.

"How are we supposed to reconcile that?" she asked the lawyer.

Sibley conceded her point and told the judge he discussed the comments with his client, but added, "I can't control everything he does." He also argued that the mayor's age and health concerns make long days in court challenging.

## **New York's high court orders new congressional maps as Democrats move to retake control of US House**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York's highest court on Tuesday ordered the state to draw new congressional districts ahead of the 2024 elections, giving Democrats a potential advantage in what is expected to be a battleground for control of the U.S. House.

The 4-3 decision from the New York Court of Appeals could have major ramifications as Democrats angle for more favorable district lines in the state next year. Republicans, who won control of the House after flipping seats in New York, sought to keep the map in place.

The state's bipartisan Independent Redistricting Commission will now be tasked with coming up with new

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districts, which will then go before the Democrat-controlled Legislature for approval. The court ordered the commission to file a map no later than Feb. 28.

"In 2014, the voters of New York amended our Constitution to provide that legislative districts be drawn by an Independent Redistricting Commission," Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson wrote for the majority. "The Constitution demands that process, not districts drawn by courts."

The ruling is an early, but important, step in Democrats' plans to retake a handful of congressional districts in New York seen as vital to winning a House majority.

"Today's decision is a win for democracy and particularly the people of New York. We are eager for the Independent Redistricting Commission to get back to work to create a new, fair congressional map – through the process New York voters intended," said U.S. Rep. Suzan DelBene, chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Democrats sued to have last year's maps thrown out after their party lost seats in the New York City suburbs and handed control of the House to Republicans.

The case came after Democrats in the state bungled the redistricting process for the 2022 elections, and along with what many considered political miscalculations at the top of the state ticket, drew blame for the party's loss of the House.

The maps used last year were supposed to be drawn by the state's independent redistricting commission. But the commission, which is made up of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans, failed to reach a consensus and eventually gave up.

The state Legislature then stepped in and drew its own map, which was set up in a way to give Democrats a major edge by cramming Republican voters into a few super districts, diluting GOP voting power in the rest of the state. A legal challenge stopped the Democrats' map from moving forward and the Court of Appeals ruled that the state didn't follow proper procedure in adopting the maps.

Instead, the court had an independent expert draw a new set of lines that, along with strong turnout from the GOP, led to Republicans flipping seats in the New York City suburbs and winning control of the House in 2022.

Democrats then filed their own lawsuit to stop last year's maps from being used in 2024, with the case going all the way to New York's highest court. They argued that the court-drawn map was never meant to be used in more than one election and that the state's bipartisan redistricting commission should have another opportunity to draw the maps.

Republicans have argued the districts are politically balanced and should not be discarded.

"We are disappointed but not surprised by the Court's decision to allow Democrats a second attempt at gerrymandering the maps," said Savannah Viar, spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee. "Instead of focusing on policies that appeal to everyday voters, Democrats are trying to cheat their way to power."

Democrats have dedicated major financial and campaign resources to retake districts in New York next year. Republicans are aiming to hold onto the seats, focusing on issues such as crime and the arrival of migrants that they hope will animate suburban voters.

Still, the redistricting process is far from over. A new map will likely result in another legal challenge, with the commission's work closely watched by both Republicans and Democrats.

"We're going to have a very busy holiday redistricting season to have maps ready by February," said New York Law School professor Jeffrey Wice, who focuses on redistricting.

## **Epic wins its antitrust lawsuit against the Play Store. What does this verdict mean for Google?**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Google lost an antitrust lawsuit over barriers to its Android app store, as a federal court jury has decided that the company's payments system was anticompetitive and damaged smartphone consumers and software developers.

It's a blow to a major pillar of Google's technology empire. But it's a win for Epic Games, the maker



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of the popular Fortnite video game that brought the lawsuit — and, analysts say, for the broader game developer community.

Below are some questions and answers about what the verdict means.

## WHY DID EPIC SUE?

Epic, which is based in Cary, North Carolina, filed its 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%-30% on digital transactions completed within apps.

## HOW DID GOOGLE LOSE?

The jury reached its decision with just three hours of deliberation after listening to two hours of closing arguments from the lawyers on the opposing sides of the case.

They sided with Epic, whose lawyer depicted Google as a ruthless bully that deploys a “bribe and block” strategy to discourage competition against its Play Store for Android apps. Google, Epic lawyer Gary Bornstein said, makes it too cumbersome or worrisome for consumers to download Android apps from other distribution outlets than the Play Store.

“Google makes it a challenge to put a competitor on the phone (powered by Android),” Bornstein said. “If a competition were a race, it’s like Google gets to run on a nice smooth track and everyone else has to run on quicksand.”

In its original lawsuit, Epic said Google “prevents app distributors from providing Android users ready access to competing app stores.”

Were it not for Google’s “anticompetitive” behavior, Epic said in its complaint, Android users “could freely download apps from developers’ websites, rather than through an app store, just as they might do on a personal computer.”

Technically, it is possible to download apps from outside of Google’s Play Store, but Epic argued that for most people this is too cumbersome, requiring as many as 16 steps, for instance, to download Fortnite. And for those who try, Google sends “dire warnings that scare most consumers into abandoning the lengthy process.”

Google’s lawyer, meanwhile, 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.

Epic’s David vs. Goliath approach seems to have won over the jury. A key witness, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, sometimes seemed like a professor explaining complex topics while standing behind a lectern because of a health issue. Epic CEO Timothy Sweeney, meanwhile, painted himself as a video game lover on a mission to take down a greedy tech titan.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Google sought to avoid having a jury trial, only to have its request rejected by U.S. District Judge James Donato. Now, Donato will 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.

Google said it will appeal the decision. But Wedbush analyst Michael Pachter says the search giant faces an “uphill battle.” While remedies Google must enact haven’t yet been decided, Pachter said he believes that its rivals will focus on the fee the company charges developers in its store. In the Apple case, the judge barred the company from implementing “anti-steering provisions,” Pachter said, that is, preventing developers from steering people toward third-party payment stores outside of Apple’s own app store. While Apple’s fees within its own store remain largely unchallenged, he added, “the anti-steering prohibition has led to a slow creep of traffic toward direct-to-consumer transactions.” Apple is still appealing the decision.

“We expect Apple to ultimately lose its appeal,” Pachter said in a research note. “Google’s loss, however, allows for DIRECT store competition within its Android platform, and we believe that it is likely to result in lower platform fees over the next several years.”

## WHAT DOES THE VERDICT MEAN FOR GOOGLE?

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. But 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.

Shares in Google's parent company, Mountain View, California-based Alphabet Inc., slipped less than 1% on Tuesday. The stock is up 50% so far this year.

DIDN'T APPLE WIN A SIMILAR CASE?

Indeed, 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 currently 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.

## DeSantis' campaign and allied super PAC face new concerns about legal conflicts, AP sources say

By STEVE PEOPLES and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Ron DeSantis has visited each of Iowa's 99 counties. He has the endorsement of the governor and boasts the largest get-out-the-vote operation in the state. And he has predicted victory in Iowa's Jan. 15 caucuses.

But as the Florida governor works to project strength in the Republican primary and cut into former President Donald Trump's huge lead, DeSantis' expansive political machine is facing a churn of leadership, stagnant polling numbers and new concerns about potential legal conflicts.

Specifically, there has been concern in recent weeks among some within DeSantis' operation that interactions between his campaign and his network of outside groups are blurring the lines of what's legally permissible.

Multiple people familiar with DeSantis' political network said that he and his wife had expressed concerns about the messaging of Never Back Down, the largest super PAC supporting the governor's campaign, in recent months as his Iowa polling numbers stagnated in late summer and autumn.

The governor and his wife, Casey, who is widely considered his top political adviser, were especially frustrated after the group took down a television ad last month that criticized leading Republican rival Nikki Haley for allowing a Chinese manufacturer into South Carolina when she was governor.

DeSantis' team shared those messaging concerns with members of Never Back Down's board, which includes Florida-based members with close ties to the governor, according to multiple people briefed on the discussions. Some of the board members then relayed the DeSantis team's wishes to super PAC staff, which was responsible for executing strategy, the people said.

The people spoke on the condition of anonymity to share internal discussions.

Federal laws prohibit coordination between presidential campaigns and outside groups. There is no known lawsuit or federal complaint alleging DeSantis' campaign broke the law. And in the super PAC era that began with the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision, murky relationships between campaigns and allied outside groups have become commonplace.

Still, Adav Noti, legal director for the Campaign Legal Center, said that the reported communication between DeSantis' team and the super PAC goes "too far." Noti suggested the communications could draw the scrutiny from the Federal Election Commission, which is responsible for enforcing campaign finance laws but has been gridlocked by internal divisions.

"To actually have a conversation with the candidate's agents and the super PAC's agents about strategy — there is no plausible argument that that is legal," Noti said. "This is not a gray area."

DeSantis' campaign has strongly denied the governor has tried to influence the network of outside groups supporting him given the federal laws prohibiting coordination. Asked for comment, DeSantis spokesman Andrew Romeo described the AP's reporting as "more nonsense from unnamed sources with agendas."

"While the media continues to obsess over attacking DeSantis with anonymous tabloid trash to support

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a false narrative, we remain focused on organizing in Iowa and sharing our vision for how to help the many Americans struggling this holiday season," Romeo said.

Never Back Down founder Ken Cuccinelli dismissed questions about DeSantis' political operation as insignificant in the overall campaign, saying "not a single voter gives a flying rat's tail about personnel stuff."

"We're going to be backing the governor all the way through this thing," Cuccinelli said in an interview at last Wednesday's GOP debate in Alabama. "We're not going anywhere, and I fully expect to be right there for it."

Cuccinelli, a former Virginia attorney general, also made clear he was speaking of his own personal experience when asked directly if he felt any pressure from the DeSantis campaign about the super PAC's strategy.

"No, not to me. No, no, I don't play those games. I just don't play those games," Cuccinelli told The Associated Press. "I've met the governor, and I've encountered Casey at events, but I don't have those conversations."

Five Never Back Down senior officials have either been fired or quit in the past two weeks, including two chief executives, the chairman and the communications director. The group has not explained the departures publicly. At the same time, DeSantis' Florida allies created a new super PAC, Fight Right, which quickly earned the public blessing of the DeSantis campaign.

DeSantis said he was unfamiliar with Never Back Down's ads last week when asked at an event in Cedar Rapids — an event sponsored by the super PAC, which has hosted him on campaign stops across the state — about how well he thought they represent him.

"I don't know. I don't see them, to be honest with you. I don't watch a lot of TV. So, I don't know. I can't really speak to that," DeSantis told reporters, pivoting to and praising his own campaign-financed ads.

The Florida governor is relying on super PACs more than any other leading presidential candidate in the brief history of the outside groups, which exploded in importance after a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2010.

Never Back Down has spent nearly \$43 million on paid advertising so far this year, according to the media tracking firm AdImpact. By contrast, DeSantis' formal campaign, which he does legally control, has spent just \$4.4 million.

In Iowa alone, Never Back Down has spent more than \$16 million on advertising. That's more than any other political entity, campaign or super PAC in Iowa. The group was airing several ads in November, some promoting DeSantis and others critical of Haley.

Never Back Down remains responsible for many of DeSantis' campaign stops and get-out-the-vote efforts.

DeSantis has visited all of Iowa's 99 counties, a traditional gesture some candidates make before the caucuses to demonstrate their commitment to Iowa. Never Back Down hosted DeSantis at events in 92 of the counties he visited, according to the group's schedule.

Super PACs can accept unlimited donations, while campaigns have strict limits. The big catch: Groups like Never Back Down cannot legally coordinate with the formal campaigns on how to spend that money. And a candidate is barred from controlling a super PAC.

But as is the case with most candidate-focused super PACs in 2024, those who lead outside groups are usually close to the candidate. Many of Never Back Down's original top staff and officers, including most of those who left this month, did not have longstanding relationships with DeSantis. Late last week, Phil Cox, who managed DeSantis' 2022 reelection, was named a senior adviser to the super PAC.

DeSantis on Friday praised Never Back Down, which claims 26 paid staff in Iowa and says it has collected written commitments from more than 30,000 Iowa Republicans to caucus for DeSantis next month. That's a significant figure for a contest in which the record number of participants was 186,000, in 2016.

Iowa's caucuses traditionally reward well-organized campaigns. DeSantis' allies hope the months of effort will help them overcome expectations from polls suggesting Trump will be dominant on Jan. 15.

"I think the idea was that they would be able to really focus on this organization," including in all 99 counties, DeSantis said on Iowa PBS's "Iowa Press" Friday. "So I think it was smart that they did that."

Many voters who gathered to see DeSantis at a crowded bar along Iowa's border with Nebraska late last week said they were not aware of the apparent turmoil. And those who were said they weren't par-

ticularly concerned.

"That happens with every campaign. It's early. Shakeups with people are going to happen," said 57-year-old Sally Madsen of Council Bluffs.

Madsen, who previously supported Trump, has already decided to caucus for DeSantis. She said Trump lost her support in the final year of his presidency for how he handled the COVID-19 pandemic and his failure to help who she described as "innocent" Jan. 6 rioters, many of whom have been convicted and some sent to prison.

"He didn't do anything for them," Madsen said of Trump. "I don't know if he could even attract good people to work for him at this point."

## How rising prices for restaurants, car repair and other services kept inflation up last month

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Held down by sinking gas prices, U.S. inflation was mostly unchanged last month. But underlying price pressures — from apartment rents, restaurant meals, auto insurance and many other services — remained stubbornly high.

Last month's inflation data arrived just a day before the Federal Reserve will end a two-day policy meeting and announce its latest decisions on interest rates. The Fed is expected on Wednesday to keep its key rate unchanged for the third straight time.

Most economists expect the rate of price increases to keep slowing in the coming months. Though the decline could follow a bumpy path, inflation should fall much closer to the Fed's 2% target by the end of 2024. Wages and rental prices, among other items, are now increasing more gradually.

In November, much cheaper gas held down overall prices, which rose just 0.1% from October, the government said. Compared with a year ago, inflation dipped to 3.1%, down from a 3.2% year-over-year rise in October.

Prices in the vast service sector, though, still surged uncomfortably fast. Core prices — which exclude volatile food and energy costs and are considered a better guide to the path of inflation — rose 0.3% from October to November, slightly faster than the 0.2% increase the previous month. Measured from a year ago, core prices were up 4%, the same as in October.

### WHERE IS INFLATION LIKELY GOING FROM HERE?

America's consumers will probably continue to feel relief in the form of milder price increases in the coming months. And in some areas, notably the prices of physical goods, many items are actually becoming cheaper rather than just rising more slowly.

Furniture and appliances both dropped in price last month. They're now cheaper, on average, than they were a year ago. Clothing prices, which fell from October to November, are up just 1.1% from a year earlier. And though used cars jumped 1.6% last month, they're down 3.8% from a year earlier.

Housing costs, though, were again among the key factors lifting inflation. Rental prices rose 0.5% from October to November and are up 6.9% in the past year. Although those increases are down from recent peaks, they're still much sharper than they were pre-pandemic.

At the same time, new apartment buildings are flooding the market, and real-time data providers like Zillow and ApartmentList show rent growth for new apartments tumbling. As those prices feed into the government's measure, they should help cool inflation.

Wage growth, while still rising at a healthy clip, is also cooling. Though they rose 4% last month from a year earlier, according to the November jobs report, that's down from a peak of nearly 6% nearly two years ago. Slower wage growth should ease inflationary pressures because employers won't have to raise prices so much to cover their labor costs.

"The main takeaway is we're on that path towards returning to the Fed's 2% target," said Alan Detmeister, an economist at UBS. "But we're getting there slowly."

Prices are cooling — or even becoming cheaper — for some of the items that have been leaving the

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biggest marks on consumers' budgets. Gas prices, for example, sank 6% just from October to November. From a peak of \$5 about a year and a half ago, the national average has dropped to \$3.15 a gallon as of Monday, according to AAA.

And grocery prices ticked up just 0.1% in November and are only 1.7% higher than they were a year ago. Bread, beef, chicken and pork prices all dropped.

## WHAT DO AMERICANS THINK?

Surveys show that Americans are mostly gloomy about the economy, despite steady job growth, a low unemployment rate and falling inflation. Yet when it comes to consumer prices, their outlook has improved recently.

For example, Americans now foresee inflation rising just 3.4% in the year ahead, according to a survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. That level of expected inflation is nearly back to pre-pandemic levels and is the lowest since the spring of 2021 — down from a peak of 6.8% in June 2022. (Inflation expectations typically exceed the actual inflation figures.)

Lower inflation expectations are important because they are often self-fulfilling. If, for example, Americans expect inflation to rise more quickly, they then typically adjust their own behavior accordingly. Most significantly, they may demand — and receive — higher pay, which would then pressure their employers to raise prices further.

Fed officials have often pointed to low inflation expectations as a reason why they may succeed in pulling off a rare "soft landing," in which inflation would fall back to 2%, without causing a sharp recession.

## WHAT WILL THE FED DO NEXT?

The Fed is set to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged when its latest meeting ends Wednesday. Inflation still exceeds the Fed's 2% annual target, which is why its officials are set to keep rates high. But inflation is also cooling faster than policymakers expected, which means the Fed's policymakers likely see no reason to further raise rates.

Though Fed Chair Jerome Powell has expressed optimism about slowing inflation, he said earlier this month that it was "premature" to assume that the Fed was done raising its benchmark rate or to speculate about rate cuts, which many on Wall Street expect as early as spring.

The stickiness of inflation in the economy's service sector will likely keep Powell from signaling a clear end to rate hikes or acknowledging the prospect of future rate cuts. The Fed chair has been scrutinizing the costs of services as a guide to whether underlying inflationary trends are cooling.

Michael Gapen, chief economist at Bank of America, said Tuesday's persistent inflation data "fits the 'wait and see and be careful' narrative that the Fed is constructing."

"In terms of building confidence that you're in a disinflationary environment and opening the door to cuts," Gapen added, "I think you have to say, well, we need more time to assess where services inflation is going."

Still, if indeed the Fed leaves its key rate unchanged for the third straight time, it would suggest that it's probably done raising borrowing costs.

The central bank has raised its key rate to about 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years, in a determined drive to conquer inflation. Its rate hikes have made mortgages, auto loans, business borrowing and other forms of credit much costlier, reflecting the Fed's goal of slowing borrowing and spending enough to tame inflation.

## Death of Adam Johnson from skate blade prompts new look at neck guard mandates in youth hockey

By PAT EATON-ROBB AP Sports Writer

SOUTH WINDSOR, Conn. (AP) — A day after professional hockey player Adam Johnson suffered a fatal cut to his throat during a game in England, Dan Sacco went out and ordered his 10-year-old twins new neck guards.

Colton and Harper Sacco play together as squirts — 9- and 10-year-olds — for the youth hockey program

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in North Branford, Connecticut. They already had neck guards, which are required for youth hockey in the state, but Sacco said he took another look at them after Johnson's death in October.

"They were small," he said. "So I got new ones that are made not to be sliced through and they're bigger. It's scary."

Harper, a center, was not a big fan.

"At first I said it was a choking device, because it went up to here," she said, pointing to her chin. "But I got used to it."

Johnson's death has renewed a national debate over whether there needs to be uniform standards and mandates for neck guards and other safety equipment when it comes to youth hockey. USA Hockey, the nation's national governing body for the sport, recommends neck guards, but does not mandate them, leading to different policies — even within states.

Dan Larochelle, a manager of the pro shop at the South Windsor Arena in Connecticut, said the guards he sells range in price from about \$15 for a standard, relatively thin wrap-around guard, to \$110 for hockey shirts made of cut-resistant material that come with thicker guards built in. Price, he said, can be a factor for many parents.

He said they have been selling a lot of neck guards since Johnson's death, just as they did in 2022 when a Connecticut 16-year-old, Teddy Balkind, suffered a fatal cut to the throat. He was playing for a private prep school, St. Luke, in a league that did not require neck guards, even though the organization overseeing public youth hockey does.

Courtney Anderson was at home in Edina, Minnesota, when she read of Balkind's death. Her 14-year old son, Evan Smolik, was a goalie on a bantam team in a league that did not require neck guards. She persuaded him to wear one.

A couple of weeks later, Evan was at practice when a teammate's skate struck his throat. The cut hit his jugular vein, but the guard prevented it from cutting his carotid artery. Evan lost three pints of blood, but survived thanks to the guard and the quick work of a doctor at the rink and local paramedics, Anderson said.

Now 16, Evan is still playing and has persuaded his team to mandate neck guards.

"I feel like people mainly don't wear neck guards because it's not seen as cool or it looks dumb," he said. "I never thought about it, until that kid got cut. But it made a huge difference for me. You wear it, and you won't die."

Former NHL player Pierre-Luc Lévesque now coaches his 9-year-old son, Luc, for the Clifton Park (N.Y.) Dynamos. He said wearing neck guards, whether mandated or not, needs to be normalized at every level, from the National Hockey League on down.

"If they all wear it, they're not going to be worried about what they look like," he said.

Any sort of mandate in the NHL would require an agreement between the league and players' union, which have been discussing skate blade safety for years.

Last month, USA Hockey's board of directors voted to have its Safety and Protective Equipment Committee come up with wording for a mandate. Not long after, the International Ice Hockey Federation announced that it is making neck guards mandatory for the tournaments it runs, including the Olympics and men's and women's world championships.

In Canada, all boys and girls in hockey leagues and two top junior leagues are required to wear neck protection. The English Ice Hockey Association, which governs the sport below the Elite League where Johnson played, will require all players in England to wear neck guards beginning in 2024.

"The process will hopefully bring us closer to our ultimate goal, which has been my ultimate goal long before these tragedies, which is to develop high quality and affordable, cut resistant products, including neck laceration protectors, certify them, promote them, require them, make sure that you're being manufactured, monitored, continuously evaluated and improved," said Dr. Michael Stuart, the chief medical officer for USA Hockey and head of the protective equipment committee. "And I think that's a challenge for the entire hockey community."

There are more than 387,000 youth hockey players in the U.S., according to USA Hockey data. Injury

details can be hard to come by but by one estimate, more than 12,000 of them seek emergency room care every year for injuries in practices or games; 7% of them seek aid for lacerations of some kind.

"The young kids is where a lot of this stuff happens because of the collisions that you see and some of the accidental falls," said retired NHL defenseman Carlo Colaiacovo, whose 6-year-old son plays. "Every time he goes into a collision, I'm always watching those very closely because I'm thinking to myself: 'OK, where are the skates? Where are the skates?' It's almost like a scar that has been created because I've seen it happen so much."

Stuart said there also needs to be updated and higher standards when it comes to the effectiveness of the equipment designed to prevent cuts. He said a USA Hockey survey showed that 27% of neck lacerations occurred to players who were already wearing guards.

"Most are not actually tested or certified," said Stuart, whose own son suffered a neck laceration in 1998. "Many do not even cover the most vulnerable anatomic areas."

USA Hockey is working with the Hockey Equipment Certification Council or HECC to adopt new standards, and not just for neck guards, but for cut-resistant socks, wrist guards and protection for other vulnerable areas.

Some companies aren't waiting for that.

Teri Weiss started her company, Skate Armor, 13 years ago after her then 9-year-old son, Mason Lohrei, took a stick blade to the throat and suffered a relatively minor cut. She said she tested Lohrei's neck guard and could cut through it easily with a kitchen knife. She saw a spike in orders after Balkind died and again after Johnson's death.

"It's been an uphill battle a lot of times," she said. "Parents say, 'Well, if they're not mandating it, my kid doesn't want to wear it.'"

Her son is now 22 and has been up and down this season with the Boston Bruins in the NHL and the Providence Bruins in the AHL. He no longer wears a neck guard, much to his mom's dismay. He said it just doesn't fit well with his other equipment.

"Definitely I have rethought it (since Johnson's death)," he said. "I've actually been talking with her about it. I don't wear a shirt under my stuff, so it'd be kind of weird to wear the shirt with that. So I'm trying to get her to make me something that, you know, looks like a shirt but isn't necessarily. So maybe she'll give me a custom piece because I'm her son."

## **Biden will meet with families of Americans taken hostage by Hamas on Wednesday at the White House**

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday will hold his first in-person meeting with the families of Americans taken hostage by Hamas during its brutal attack on Israel on Oct. 7, two White House officials said.

It was not immediately clear how many families would be attending the White House meeting in person, or via videoconference. Biden has previously met with some family members virtually and spoken to others on the phone, officials said. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss Biden's schedule.

"We're not going to stop until every hostage is returned home," Biden told donors in Washington on Tuesday, saying the U.S. commitment to Israel is "unshakable."

Seven Americans remain unaccounted for after Hamas' surprise air, sea and land incursion into Israeli towns, where the group killed about 1,200 Israelis — mostly civilians — and took more than 240 people hostage. Four Americans were released as part of a U.S.-negotiated cease-fire in Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza that was brokered with the assistance of Qatar and Egypt. The White House has said that at least 31 Americans were killed by Hamas and other militant groups on Oct. 7.

NBC News was first to report on the meeting.

## George Santos attorney expresses optimism about plea talks as expelled congressman appears in court

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

CENTRAL ISLIP, N.Y. (AP) — Former U.S. Rep. George Santos' lawyer expressed optimism about plea negotiations in Santos' criminal fraud case Tuesday, successfully fending off prosecutors' attempts to speed up the ousted congressman's trial.

In Santos' first court appearance since he was expelled from Congress earlier this month, his attorney, Joseph Murray, argued that it was premature to bring the September trial forward while the two parties were in talks to resolve the case.

"We should focus on the plea deal. I believe they can be fruitful," Murray told Judge Joanna Seybert in the federal court in Long Island. He also argued that he was "struggling" to keep up with "voluminous materials" produced by the government during the discovery process.

Seybert sided with Murray, saying she would try to move the case "as expeditiously as possible" but that September seemed like the earliest possible date based on her current caseload. She set the next hearing in the case for Jan. 23.

Santos, wearing a blue blazer over a dark sweater, declined to comment on the case to reporters as he left the courthouse, saying to one, "It's cold, go home."

Santos earlier this month became only the sixth lawmaker in history to be expelled from the U.S. House of Representatives.

In an interview with WABC radio that aired early Tuesday morning, Santos said he hopes to eventually regain the trust of the American people and return to public office.

"I'm not done with public service, I want to go back to Congress," he said. "I'm not saying today, I'm not saying tomorrow. I'm 35, I have a lot of things I need to take care of first, I think we all know."

The ex-lawmaker faces a slew of criminal charges, including allegations that he defrauded campaign donors, lied to Congress about his wealth, received unemployment benefits while employed, and used campaign contributions to pay for personal expenses like designer clothing. Among the charges are allegations that he made unauthorized charges on credit cards belonging to some of his donors.

Santos pleaded not guilty to a revised indictment in October.

Prosecutors revealed in a court filing Monday that they were negotiating with Santos to potentially resolve his criminal case without a trial.

In an interview on CBS New York that aired Sunday, Santos said he hadn't ruled out pleading guilty, saying "there's obviously conversations taking place, especially after what happened in Congress, and we'll see."

Santos was elected last year after campaigning as a self-made Wall Street whiz, but was revealed after the election to have been a fabulist who had lied about where he worked, where he went to college and big chunks of his personal background.

Since leaving Congress, Santos launched an account on the website Cameo, where the public can pay him for a personalized video message. In the televised interview, Santos said he made more money in a week on the platform than his annual salary as a congressman.

A special election will be held Feb. 13 to elect his successor in a House district that includes a mix of wealthy Long Island suburbs and a working-class section of Queens.

That race will likely pit former U.S. Rep. Thomas Suozzi, a Democrat who previously held the seat before running unsuccessfully for governor, against one of a number of Republicans.

## Kentucky woman seeking court approval for abortion learned her embryo no longer has cardiac activity

By BRUCE SCHREINER and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — A pregnant woman in Kentucky who filed a lawsuit demanding the right to an abortion has learned her embryo no longer has cardiac activity, her attorneys said Tuesday.



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The plaintiff's attorneys signaled their intent to continue the challenge to Kentucky's near-total abortion ban, but did not immediately comment on what effect the development would have on the lawsuit.

The complaint was filed last week in a state court in Louisville. The plaintiff, identified only as Jane Doe, was seeking class-action status to include other Kentuckians who are or will become pregnant and want to have an abortion. The suit filed last week said she was about eight weeks pregnant.

The flurry of individual women petitioning a court for permission for an abortion is the latest development since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned last year. The Kentucky case is similar to a legal battle taking place in Texas, where Kate Cox, a pregnant woman with a likely fatal condition, launched an unprecedented challenge against one of the most restrictive abortion bans in the U.S.

But unlike the Texas case, little is known about the Kentucky plaintiff. Her attorneys have insisted they would fiercely protect their client's privacy, stressing that Jane Doe believes "everyone should have the right to make decisions privately and make decisions for their own families," Amber Duke, executive director for the ACLU of Kentucky, said last week. Her legal team also declined to disclose whether Jane Doe still needed an abortion.

Instead, Jane Doe's attorneys urged other women who are pregnant and seeking an abortion in the Bluegrass State to reach out if they are interested in joining the case. The lawsuit says Kentucky's near-total abortion ban violates the plaintiff's rights to privacy and self-determination under the state constitution.

"Jane Doe sought an abortion in Kentucky, and when she could not get one, she bravely came forward to challenge the state's abortion ban," ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project deputy director Brigitte Amiri said in a statement. "Although she decided to have an abortion, the government denied her the freedom to control her body. Countless Kentuckians face the same harm every day as the result of the abortion ban."

According to court documents, Jane Doe had a medical appointment Dec. 8 — after the lawsuit was filed — where no cardiac activity was discovered after an ultrasound was performed.

In the Texas case, Cox, a 31-year-old mother of two, had been seeking court permission to end her pregnancy in a state where abortion is only allowed in narrow exceptions when the life of the mother is in danger — not for fetal anomalies. Before the Texas Supreme Court on Monday rejected Cox's request, her attorneys said she had left the state to get an abortion elsewhere because she could not wait any longer due to concerns that remaining pregnant would jeopardize her health and her ability to have more children.

While Cox is believed to be the first to make such a request, her legal team and other experts anticipate other challenges among the dozen of other GOP-controlled states where abortion is largely prohibited at all stages of pregnancy. Meanwhile, a handful of separate legal challenges are taking place across the country highlighting the stories from women who were denied abortions while facing harrowing pregnancy complications.

Earlier this year, Kentucky's Supreme Court refused to halt the state's near-total abortion ban and another outlawing abortion after the sixth week of pregnancy. The justices focused on narrow legal issues but did not resolve larger constitutional questions about whether access to abortion should be legal in the state.

The legal challenge revolves around Kentucky's near-total trigger law ban and a separate six-week ban — both passed by Republican legislative majorities. The trigger law was passed in 2019 and took effect when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022. It bans abortions except when they are carried out to save the life of the patient or to prevent disabling injury. It does not include exceptions for cases of rape or incest.

Kentucky voters last year rejected a ballot measure that would have denied any constitutional protections for abortion, but abortion rights supporters have made no inroads in the Republican-controlled Legislature in chipping away at the state's anti-abortion laws.

As a result of the ruling, patient-led challenges "are our only path forward to strike down the bans under the right to privacy and right to self-determination," Amiri said.

"We will do everything we can to restore abortion access in Kentucky," she said.

## 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 northwestern Pakistan early Tuesday, killing at least 23 troops, wounding 32 and causing a part of the building to collapse, authorities said.

The attack — one of the deadliest in recent months in Pakistan — also damaged businesses and shops nearby. A newly formed militant group — Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, believed to be an offshoot of the Pakistani Taliban — claimed responsibility for the attack.

The military and local police said six other attackers were also involved in the assault at the police station, triggering an hourslong shootout before all six were killed.

Some of the wounded officers were said to be in critical condition, and there were fears the death toll would rise. Mohammad Adnan, a senior police official, said the casualties were taken to a local hospital.

Later, the army said in a statement that "troops killed 27 insurgents" in multiple operations in the same region Tuesday.

The attack targeted Daraban police station in the city of Dera Ismail Khan, according to local officer Kamal Khan. The city is located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan and which is a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban.

Khan said a large number of security forces from across Pakistan were recently deployed at the station for intelligence operations against militants in the area in coordination with the local police.

The militant offshoot said in its claim of responsibility that it targeted officers who were at the police station.

Mehrban Khan, who owns a hotel next to the police station, described the scene, saying he saw "many army soldiers killed and wounded."

Pakistani President Arif Alvi denounced the attack and expressed his condolences to the families of those killed, saying "their sacrifices would not go to waste" and that such attacks would not weaken the resolve of security forces.

Pakistan's caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti also denounced the attack as an "act of terrorism."

In separate developments Tuesday, two soldiers and four insurgents were killed in a shootout in the northwestern town of Kulachi, the military said.

The surge in militant attacks on Pakistani security forces — many by the Pakistani Taliban — have strained relations between Islamabad and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers in Kabul. Islamabad says the Pakistani Taliban have become emboldened since their Afghan Taliban allies' takeover of the neighboring country in 2021. Many Pakistani Taliban members are living openly in Afghanistan, and Pakistan wants their extradition.

Later Tuesday, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry summoned a Taliban-appointed representative from Kabul to protest the latest attack in Dera Ismail Khan.

The ministry said it asked the Taliban envoy to convey to his superiors in Kabul that Islamabad demands they "fully investigate and take stern action against perpetrators" of the attack and also "publicly condemn the terrorist incident at the highest level."

Islamabad also asked for the Afghan Taliban's "verifiable actions against terrorist groups and their sanctuaries."

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also seen a rise in violence with 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.

Dera Ismail Khan is located near South Waziristan, a former militant sanctuary. Pakistan's army carried out multiple operations there after a 2014 attack on an army-run school that killed more than 150 people, mostly school children.

## As Navalny vanishes from view in Russia, an ally calls it a Kremlin ploy to deepen his isolation

MOSCOW (AP) — The loss of contact with Alexei Navalny at the prison colony where the opposition leader was being held likely signals a Kremlin effort to tighten his isolation while President Vladimir Putin runs for reelection over the next three months, Navalny's spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Worries about Navalny spread Monday after officials at the facility east of Moscow said he was no longer on the inmate roster. Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said his associates and lawyers have been unable to contact him for a week. Prison officials said he has been moved from the colony where he has been serving a 19-year term on charges of extremism, but they didn't say where he went.

Prison transfers in Russia are notoriously secretive, with authorities providing no information about the whereabouts of inmates for weeks until they reach another facility and are given permission to contact relatives or lawyers.

"We now have to look for him in every colony of special regime in Russia," Yarmysh told The Associated Press. "And there are about 30 of them all over Russia. So we have no idea in which one we will find him."

She noted that "they can transfer a prisoner for weeks or even for months, and no one will know where he is."

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service did not immediately respond to an AP request for comment about Navalny's possible transfer and whereabouts. Earlier this year, another prominent opposition figure, Andrei Pivovarov, also went missing during a prison transfer. His transfer, from a detention center in Russia's southern region of Krasnodar to a penal colony in the northwestern region of Karelia, took about a month.

Once at a new facility, prison officials there are legally obliged to notify relatives or lawyers within 10 days, but Yarmysh said they can hardly be expected to follow the rules in Navalny's case.

She said the authorities will likely try to keep Navalny's location secret for as long as they can after Putin on Friday declared his intention to seek another six-year term in the March 17 election, moving to extend his rule of over two decades.

"They will try to hide him as long as possible," Yarmysh said. "I guess this was made deliberately to isolate Alexei during this period of time so he wouldn't be able to influence all these things in any way, because everyone understands — and Putin, of course, understands — that Alexei is his main rival, even despite the fact that he is not on the ballot."

Asked Tuesday where Navalny is, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov snapped that "we have neither a desire nor an opportunity to track down inmates."

Commenting on U.S. expressions of concern about Navalny, Peskov said in a conference call with reporters that he has been convicted and is serving his sentence, adding that "we consider any interference, including by the United States, inadmissible."

Navalny, 47, has been behind bars since January 2021, when he was arrested upon his return from Germany where he had recuperated from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. Navalny, who campaigned against official corruption and organized major anti-government protests, has rejected all charges against him as a politically motivated vendetta.

Navalny has been serving his sentence at the 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 penal colony with an even higher level of security.

The loss of contact with Navalny was particularly worrying, given that he recently fell ill, Yarmysh said. She said prison officials had given him an IV drip when he felt dizzy and he had to lie on the floor of his cell.

"It looks like it might have been a faint from hunger because he isn't being fed properly and he doesn't have any ventilation in his cell and he doesn't have any like proper exercise time," Yarmysh said.

While Putin's reelection is all but certain, given his overwhelming control over the country's political scene and a widening crackdown on dissent, Navalny's supporters and other critics hope to use the campaign to erode public support for the Kremlin leader and his military action in Ukraine.

Authorities could try to send Navalny to a remote colony to further limit his influence, Yarmysh said.

Since the start of his imprisonment, he has continued his scathing attacks on the Kremlin in comments his associates posted to social media.

"I guess they decided that it would be smarter for them to send him as far away because he's still too loud and too present in the public field," Yarmysh said.

## **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 hacked Democratic emails and orchestrated their release with what U.S. officials say was a goal of aiding Trump 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 efforts to influence 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, 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 few details are released, fatal stabbing of Catholic priest rocks small Nebraska community

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

FORT CALHOUN, Neb. (AP) — The fatal stabbing of a Catholic priest inside the church rectory where he lived has rocked the eastern Nebraska community of Fort Calhoun, a one-stoplight town where people tend not to worry if they forget to lock their doors at night.

The Rev. Stephen Gutsell, who served at St. John the Baptist church, was attacked during what authorities called a break-in early Sunday. The 65-year-old died despite being rushed to an Omaha hospital. Authorities with the Washington County Sheriff's Office arrested a man, who was still in the church rectory when they arrived six minutes after the priest called 911.

"It's a crazy world I guess. Anything can happen to anybody," said longtime Fort Calhoun resident Stephen Green, who said he did not know Gutsell personally, but has attended Lenten fish fries at the church and sent his kids to vacation Bible school there.

By Monday, the church nestled in a neighborhood a block away from the elementary school was clear of crime scene tape as it prepared to host a wake for one of its members, but the yellow plastic continued to encircle the rectory — the modest home next to the church.

A stack of church bulletins sat unused just outside the sanctuary — with a note from Gutsell about how he had planned to preach about St. John the Baptist's namesake on Sunday. On the way into town, the lighted sign along the highway welcoming visitors to Fort Calhoun asked for "prayers for our church and our community."

Gutsell was attacked just one day after the Christmas in Calhoun celebration, where many of the town's

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residents celebrated with a full day of events including a Boy Scout pancake breakfast at St. John the Baptist. The small congregation of more than 250 families is an active one known for its fish fries during Lent and its vacation Bible school programs every summer.

Fort Calhoun hosts only about 1,000 residents, located about 16 miles (26 kilometers) north of Omaha. The town is best known for being home to Fort Atkinson, the first U.S. military post west of the Missouri River, where volunteers dress up in clothes from the period as part of a living history program. It is about 75 miles (120 kilometers) south of Sioux City, Iowa, where authorities say the suspect in Gutzsell's death was from.

But the priest's stabbing was the second killing to happen this year in the small town.

"You know, there's no murders forever and ever, and then all of a sudden, bam!" said Kevin Schultz, one of two pastors at the Cherry Hill church and ice cream shop on the main highway just a few blocks away from St. John the Baptist.

A day following the attack with little new details released, residents were left to speculate about Gutzsell's killing. Prosecutors said they expect to file formal homicide and weapons charges on Tuesday against Kierre L. Williams, 43, who was arrested inside the rectory. He does not have a lawyer yet and likely won't appear in court until Wednesday.

"It seems like there's more to the story," Schultz said.

Court records in Iowa show Williams is facing a misdemeanor assault charge; he is accused of punching someone at a soup kitchen in Sioux City after getting in an argument in July. The criminal charge against him in that case lists him as homeless.

Green, who has lived in Fort Calhoun since he was 5 years old, said he has always known the town to be safe and he remembers riding his bike all over town when he was young. But he said the killing of Gutzsell — and the August killing of 71-year-old Linda Childers — are eye opening.

In August, Childers was found dead in her rural home in Fort Calhoun in what authorities believe was a home invasion by a man she did not know. In that case, William P. Collins has been charged with first-degree murder and other counts.

"It shouldn't happen in a small town like this," said Andy Faucher, who owns the Longhorn Bar and Grill where people gathered to eat and talk about what happened. Faucher said the fact that this latest killing involved a priest only "intensifies the scariness of the situation."

On Sunday evening, the congregation held a vigil at St. John the Baptist to remember Gutzsell, who served at several different parishes across the Archdiocese of Omaha during his 39 years as a priest. In addition to leading St. John the Baptist in Fort Calhoun, Gutzsell helped at St. Francis Borgia in Blair, where the archbishop held a special service after the stabbing Sunday and met with members of the congregation.

"We continue to pray that the Lord of mercy and love will welcome Father Gutzsell into his Heavenly kingdom," Archbishop of Omaha George J. Lucas said in a statement. "May Our Blessed Mother intercede for us all as we grieve his death."

The Archdiocese said Gutzsell was a native of Kansas City, Missouri, who graduated from the University of St. Thomas in 1980 and attended the St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota before joining the priesthood in 1984.

Funeral arrangements for Gutzsell are pending.

Kelly Tegels told KETV that she had just seen Gutzsell at Mass on Saturday night, so his death did not feel real yet.

"It's going to be hard," Tegels said at the vigil. "I'm bringing flowers tonight because he always had this altar decorated with flowers, and I know he would appreciate it."

## Ukraine faces heavy attack from air and cyberspace while Zelenskyy in US presses for more funding

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine came under heavy attack from the air and from cyberspace on Tuesday, local officials said, as nearly 600 Russian shells, rockets and other projectiles rained down on a southern

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region and unidentified hackers knocked out phone and internet services of the country's biggest telecom provider.

Ukraine also claimed a successful hacker attack against Russia's national tax system.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived on Capitol Hill to press U.S. Congress for additional military help, as further U.S. funding is uncertain because of a domestic political dispute.

One person was killed and four others were wounded during 24 hours of Russian bombardment of Ukraine's southern Kherson region, according to Oleksandr Prokudin, head of the regional military administration. The number of projectiles fired at Kherson was the highest in at least two weeks.

As winter sets in and hampers troop movements, allowing little change along the front line, air bombardment plays a growing role in the war.

Cyberattacks are also a busy battleground. Ukrainian telecom provider Kyivstar said it came under a "powerful" attack by hackers. The company serves more than 24 million mobile customers across the country.

"The war with Russia has many dimensions, and one of them is in cyberspace," Kyivstar Director-General Oleksandr Komarov said in a statement.

The company didn't estimate when services might be restored. It said its specialists were working with law enforcement agencies and special state services on solving the problem.

Kyivstar's traffic began dropping at 9 a.m. local time and was nearly at zero by noon, Doug Madory, an analyst at the network integrity firm Kentic Inc., said in a tweet.

"Traffic was slow decline instead of being abruptly cut all at once," Madory told The Associated Press. He said that was similar to what happened in a March 2022 cyberattack on Ukrtelecom, the country's legacy telecom, which was then seventh among Ukrainian providers in internet traffic volume.

Kyivstar is Ukraine's largest destination for internet traffic, Madory said.

But the attack had more far-reaching consequences. It disrupted the air raid warning system in part of the Kyiv region, according to the head of the Kyiv regional administration, Ruslan Kravchenko. Similar disruptions were also reported in the Sumy region of northeastern Ukraine, while some ATMs of state-owned Oschadbank stopped working as a result of the Kyivstar attack, the bank's press office told local news outlet Suspilne.

Also, a Ukrainian online bank said it fought off a massive distributed denial-of-service attack on Tuesday. A DDoS attack employs a network of distributed computers to direct junk traffic at the target site in an effort to render it unusable.

At the same time, Ukraine's Main Directorate of Intelligence claimed to have conducted a successful hacker operation infesting Russia's Federal Taxation Service servers with malware.

According to an intelligence agency statement, the operation infiltrated several central servers and more than 2,300 regional servers, resulting in disrupted communication within Russia's taxation system and destroying its database and backups.

Moscow made no immediate comment about any attack, and the claim couldn't be independently verified.

In other developments, Ukraine claimed to have captured a tactically important hill in the Donetsk region, where the front line has barely budged since 2014.

Zelenskyy announced on social media that his troops had taken the foothold, which provides a vantage point over the front line near Pivdenne, a mining town to the northwest of the Donetsk city of Horlivka.

## Today in History: December 13, George W. Bush claims presidency after Supreme Court stops recount

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 13, the 347th day of 2023. There are 18 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

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On Dec. 13, 2000, Republican George W. Bush claimed the presidency a day after the U.S. Supreme Court shut down further recounts of disputed ballots in Florida; Democrat Al Gore conceded, delivering a call for national unity.

On this date:

In 1862, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside launched futile attacks against entrenched Confederate soldiers during the Civil War Battle of Fredericksburg; the soundly defeated Northern troops withdrew two days later.

In 1937, the Chinese city of Nanjing fell to Japanese forces during the Sino-Japanese War; what followed was a massacre of war prisoners, soldiers and citizens. (China maintains that up to 300,000 people were killed; Japanese nationalists say the death toll was far lower.)

In 1981, authorities in Poland imposed martial law in a crackdown on the Solidarity labor movement. (Martial law formally ended in 1983.)

In 1993, the space shuttle Endeavour returned from its mission to repair the Hubble Space Telescope.

In 1996, the U.N. Security Council chose Kofi Annan of Ghana to become the world body's seventh secretary-general.

In 2001, the Pentagon publicly released a captured videotape of Osama bin Laden in which the al-Qaida leader said the deaths and destruction achieved by the September 11 attacks exceeded his "most optimistic" expectations.

In 2002, President George W. Bush announced he would take the smallpox vaccine along with U.S. military forces, but was not recommending the potentially risky inoculation for most Americans.

In 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured by U.S. forces while hiding in a hole under a farmhouse in Adwar, Iraq, near his hometown of Tikrit.

In 2007, Major League Baseball's Mitchell Report was released, identifying 85 names to differing degrees in connection with the alleged use of performance-enhancing drugs.

In 2013, North Korea's state-run media announced the execution the day before of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek, portraying him as a morally corrupt traitor.

In 2014, thousands of protesters marched in New York, Washington and other U.S. cities to call attention to the killing of unarmed Black men by white police officers who faced no criminal charges.

In 2019, the House Judiciary Committee approved two articles of impeachment accusing President Donald Trump of abuse of power in his dealings with Ukraine and obstruction of Congress in the investigation that followed.

In 2020, the first vials of the Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 began making their way to distribution sites across the United States.

In 2022, President Joe Biden signed gay marriage legislation, saying "the law and the love it defends strike a blow against hate in all its forms."

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Dick Van Dyke is 98. Country singer Buck White is 93. Music/film producer Lou Adler is 90. Singer John Davidson is 82. Actor Kathy Garver (TV: "Family Affair") is 78. Singer Ted Nugent is 75. Rock musician Jeff "Skunk" Baxter is 75. Actor Robert Lindsay is 74. Country singer-musician Randy Owen is 74. Actor Wendie Malick is 73. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is 73. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke is 70. Country singer John Anderson is 69. Singer-songwriter Steve Forbert is 69. Singer-actor Morris Day is 67. Actor Steve Buscemi (boo-SEH'-mee) is 66. Actor Johnny Whitaker (TV: "Family Affair") is 64. Rock musician John Munson (Semisonic; Twilight Hours) is 61. Actor-reality TV star NeNe Leakes is 57. Actor-comedian Jamie Foxx is 56. Actor Lusia Strus is 56. Actor Bart Johnson is 53. Actor Jeffrey Pierce is 52. TV personality Debbie Matenopoulos is 49. Rock singer-musician Thomas Delonge is 48. Actor James Kyson Lee is 48. Actor Kimee Balmilero (TV: "Hawaii Five-0") is 44. Actor Chelsea Hertford is 42. Rock singer Amy Lee (Evanescence) is 42. Actor Michael Socha is 36. Actor Marcel Spears (TV: "The Mayor") is 35. Singer Taylor Swift is 34. Actor Maisy Stella is 20.