

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Monday, Jan. 8

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, glazed carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cheese omelets.

School Lunch: Chicken patty, potato wedges.

Groton is hosting its junior high/junior varsity wrestling tournament today at 5 p.m. in the GHS Gym. There will be six matches going at one time. There are 14 schools coming and just under 170 wrestlers participating.

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

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

United Methodist: PEO Meeting (Outside Group), 7 p.m.

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, Jan. 9

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, mixed Monterey blend peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

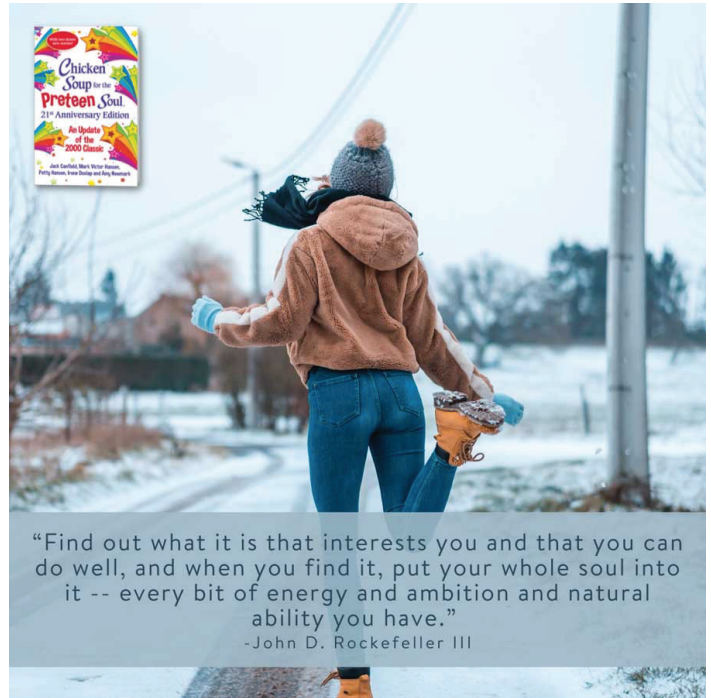
School Lunch: Meatballs, mashed potatoes.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 6 p.m.

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



"Find out what it is that interests you and that you can do well, and when you find it, put your whole soul into it -- every bit of energy and ambition and natural ability you have."  
-John D. Rockefeller III

## Wednesday, Jan. 10

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetable winter bend, carrot bars, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

School Board meeting, 7 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

## Saturday's Line-up for Dakota Valley

2:00 p.m. – C boys (gym) / JV girls (Arena)

3:15 p.m. – C girls (gym) / JV boys (Arena)

4:30 – Varsity Girls

6:00 – Varsity Boys

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset](#)<sup>™</sup>

Opening arguments begin today in a long-anticipated civil trial against the National Rifle Association, the largest gun-rights lobby in the US. The trial opens after longtime NRA leader Wayne LaPierre, a subject of the lawsuit, resigned Friday citing health reasons.

Federal aviation officials ordered the grounding of a popular model of Boeing's 737 MAX jets over the weekend, following a harrowing incident on a Friday Alaska Airlines flight during which a chunk of the plane's fuselage blew off midascent. No one was injured during the

incident, though depressurization reportedly ripped a child's shirt off. See video here.

Congressional leaders reached an agreement on spending levels for the 2024 fiscal year, striking a roughly \$1.7T deal ahead of looming deadlines to fund separate parts of the federal government. Leaders from both parties in the House and Senate approved the compromise, with individual appropriations bills sticking to the topline levels by separate committees.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Oppenheimer," "Poor Things," "Succession," and "The Bear" win top prizes at 81st Golden Globe Awards; see complete list of winners. "The Last of Us" wins eight awards on Night 1 of the 2023 Creative Arts Emmy Awards.

Cindy Morgan, actress known for roles in "Caddyshack" and "Tron," dies at 69. Actor Christian Oliver dies at 51 in plane crash along with two daughters and pilot. Mário Zagallo, Brazilian soccer legend, dies at 92.

Michigan takes on Washington tonight (7:30 pm ET, ESPN) in the College Football Playoff National Championship. South Dakota State wins its second straight FCS national championship. NFL regular season wrapped last night; see playoff picture.

## Science & Technology

Small scale study suggests ibogaine, a potent psychedelic found in plants, reduces PTSD in veterans who've sustained traumatic brain injuries by 80%.

Researchers discover fossilized bacteria capable of photosynthesis dating to 1.75 billion years old; find sheds light on the production of oxygen on the early Earth.

Link between cancer immunotherapy treatments and gastrointestinal side effects revealed; gut microbiome found to spur hyperactive immune T cells in the digestive tract.

## Business & Markets

Markets close slightly higher Friday (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq +0.1%), but all three indexes end nine-week winning streak.

Radio and podcast giant Audacy, the second-largest radio broadcaster in the US, files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy citing long-term decline in ad sales.

Court cancels trial between Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway and billionaire Haslam family over accounting practices at the Pilot truck stop chain.

SpaceX sues the National Labor Relations Board, arguing the agency is unconstitutional; follows a board complaint alleging SpaceX illegally fired eight employees.

## Politics & World Affairs

Israeli defense official says Hamas' military capacity in northern Gaza dismantled as war reached three-month mark yesterday. Two Palestinian journalists killed in Israeli airstrike Sunday, raising total to 70 since start of war, according to press group.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin hospitalized since Jan. 1 for undisclosed reasons, faces scrutiny for failing to alert the White House for three days; Austin is sixth in presidential line of succession.

Parts of New England see close to a foot of snow amid major winter storm across Northeast over the weekend.

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## Revised Agenda

BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

January 9, 2024 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Rachel Kippley – Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
  - a. Open Bids for Richmond Youth Camp House
  - b. Discuss Options for Funding Expo Replacement Roof Costs
5. Randy & Stephanie Mages regarding Fairboard
6. Discuss Certificates of Deposit
7. Mariann Malsom – Register of Deeds
  - a. Discuss Fees for Transfers
8. Scott Bader – Planning & Zoning Director
  - a. Approve the Planning & Zoning Application Fee Schedule
  - b. Approve the Planning & Zoning Permit Fee Schedules
  - c. Adopt the Zoning Map
9. Approve Board for Edward's Preserve Nature Area
10. Authorize Chairman to sign Contract Agreement with Building Restoration Corp. for Tuckpointing
11. Appoint Board Member for Hockey Improvement Fund & Approve the Board
12. Approve Housing & Redevelopment Commission of Brown County
13. Approve Regional Railroad Authority Commission
14. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of Reorganization Meeting Minutes of January 2, 2024
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Interest Statement
  - e. Lease
  - f. Abatements
  - g. Travel Requests
  - h. Landfill Tonnage Report
15. Other Business
16. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
17. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Weekly Vikings Recap - Vikings vs. Lions

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Minnesota Vikings' 2023 season is officially over as the team fell to the Detroit Lions to finish the season 7-10, their first season with double-digit losses since 2013. It's hard to properly characterize what this season was for the Vikings as they lost both starting quarterback, Kirk Cousins, and superstar wide receiver, Justin Jefferson, for at least eight games to injury. To make matters worse, the Vikings finished with a total of 34 turnovers on the season, second most in the NFL. In hindsight, it is quite impressive the Vikings finished with the record they did for how often the odds were against them.

Sunday's game for the Vikings was a weird one for Vikings fans as many probably wanted the team to lose for draft position purposes even though the team still had a chance to make the playoffs if four scenarios went their way. Sunday's game was also one of those unique games where a team decided to play all their starters even though they had already clinched the division and could not improve their seed in the playoffs. For a game that had little to no implication on playoff seeding, it was surprising to see both teams go all out with playing their starters.

Nick Mullens got the start at quarterback for the Vikings and played a decent game for the most part, finishing with 396 passing yards and two touchdowns. Mullens, who started three games this season, averaged an impressive 370 passing yards and two passing touchdowns per game. The problem for Mullens was the turnovers as he amassed eight interceptions in his three starts. If Mullens could have even split that interception total in half, he might have finished the season with a 3-0 record rather than a 0-3 record in his three starts.

The star of Sunday's game was Justin Jefferson who went for 192 receiving yards on 12 catches and a touchdown. Jefferson, who played in only eight full games this season was still able to eclipse 1000 yards receiving today with his performance Sunday. Jefferson's performance, along with Jordan Addison who caught his tenth touchdown this season on Sunday, provided a glimpse of the offense firepower the Vikings are going to have next season. The question all offseason will now become who the quarterback will be throwing the ball for the Vikings.

By midway through the fourth quarter, it became clear that the Vikings' playoff hopes were officially closed when it was announced that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeated the Carolina Panthers. After that moment, the sole focus for the Vikings was to get out of Sunday's game with no injuries. Luckily for the Vikings, no one got injured. However, that was not the story for the Lions who appeared to have lost their start rookie tight end, Sam LaPorta, to a knee injury for the playoffs. It will be interesting to see if LaPorta's injury hurts the Lions' offense next week when they take on the Los Angeles Rams in the Wild Card Round.

Lions 30 - Vikings 20

With the Vikings' loss and the Las Vegas Raiders' victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday, the Vikings will officially be slotted for the 11th overall pick in the 2024 NFL Draft. It will be the highest draft pick the team has had since they selected Trae Waynes 11th overall in the 2015 NFL Draft. For a team that does not usually draft this high, it might finally be time for the Vikings' front office to draft

## “Benefits of Pasteurization”

My father-in-law is a farmer. He grew up on the family farm in southwest Minnesota, where his dad grew up, too. Blessed by fertile soil, the farm has provided for the family for several generations. It is invaluable for my children to experience the farm, see the crops grow, help with animals, and learn about the cycles of life on the farm.

The farm no longer has cows, but it did at one time. My father-in-law used to milk cows. He remembers they had a pasteurizer. His mother would pour in raw milk.

The cream rose to the top, and the milk would have chunks of fat and protein in it, from curdling. He remembers thinking how lucky the townsfolk were, having cartons of smooth milk, without the chunks.

The process of pasteurizing milk was invented by Louis Pasteur over 150 years ago. One of the “fathers” of bacteriology, germ theory, and microbiology, he helped develop sterilization procedures to kill off bacteria. He disproved a common belief at the time in spontaneous generation, proving that living beings do not spontaneously arise out of nothing. He invented the process of treating milk to stop bacterial contamination, now known as pasteurization, named in his honor.

Rich in nutrients, milk is an excellent medium for growing bacteria. In pasteurization, milk is heated to destroy pathogens like bacteria and spoilage organisms like yeast and molds. This helps to extend the shelf life of milk. Very little nutrients are lost in the process, and often additional good nutrients are added like vitamin D and vitamin A.

Improperly handled raw milk is the leading cause of hospitalization for any food-borne disease source. Pasteurization can help prevent numerous diseases and kills the harmful bacteria Salmonella, Listeria, Yersinia, Campylobacter, Staphylococcus aureus, and Escherichia coli, among others.

As more and more people are further removed from farm life, some people do not know where or how their food is made. Some take for granted the work and steps in getting the food to the grocery store. It is the pasteurization of milk that allows it to be safely consumed by anyone, far from the farm. Without it, we could be at risk of getting sick from bad milk. Without it, we might not all be able to enjoy the nutritional benefits of milk, helpful for our bones and overall health.

*Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook and instagram featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its 22nd season of health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB an streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.*



**Andrew Ellsworth, MD**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Education, taxes, crime: Notable bills filed ahead of South Dakota's 2024 legislative session

**Lawmakers convene Tuesday at the Capitol in Pierre**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 7, 2024 7:00 AM**

Teacher pay, tax relief, election processes, and tweaks to medical marijuana laws are among the topics of bills filed ahead of the annual legislative session.

More than 100 bills have been introduced so far. More than 500 bills were filed during the 40-day session last year.

The 99th South Dakota legislative session kicks off Tuesday with Gov. Kristi Noem's State of the State address. The State of the Judiciary and the State of the Tribes speeches will be delivered Wednesday.

South Dakota Searchlight combed through bills filed as of Friday and selected some of the most notable legislation and trends.

#### Teachers & education

Education is set to be one of the major themes of the 2024 session, including teacher pay and a potential fourth tuition freeze for public universities.

More than 10 education-related bills have been filed ahead of session.

The focus on teacher pay comes after Gov. Kristi Noem drew attention to the issue in her December budget address.

Landmark 2016 legislation aimed to boost teacher pay and increase competitiveness with surrounding states' average teacher salaries, by raising the state sales tax rate for the first time in decades. The legislation created an accountability board to track teacher salaries and compensation among South Dakota public school districts.

New legislation introduced at the request of the state Department of Education would update the accountability formula, which currently states that any school district with an average teacher salary higher than it was in 2017 is in compliance with the law. Education experts have called the standard "outdated."

The department's legislation would establish a "benchmark teacher salary," directly influenced by the percent adjustment to educational aid adopted by the Legislature each session. By 2028, school districts would be expected to reach that benchmark salary or be subjected to an accreditation review.

Another bill introduced by Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, would require high school juniors to take the ACT instead of the state assessment test, and require school districts to pay the registration fees with reimbursement from the state Department of Education.

South Dakota students' average ACT score was down for the third consecutive year in 2023, but it remains higher than the national average. About 59% of 2023 high school graduates took the exam, earning an average composite score of 21.1 out of 36.

ACT participation rates vary among South Dakota students. During the 2022-2023 school year, 77% of white students took the ACT, 7% of Native American students took it and 5% of Hispanic students took it.

Other bills addressing education include:

Funding Noem's \$6 million literacy program, which would provide professional development for teachers on phonics-based teaching methods.

Providing reimbursements for free or reduced school lunches for children.

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Expanding reduced college tuition to certain school district employees and Head Start employees.

## Taxation

The first bill filed for the 2024 legislative session is an effort to repeal the sunset clause on last year's tax cut. Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, is the sponsor of the bill.

Discussions around taxes — sales tax, food sales tax and property taxes — dominated the 2023 session and ended with a \$100 million sales tax cut that's set to end in 2027.

That conversation will continue with Karr's bill, and another bill capping property valuation increases, which figure into the formula for calculating property taxes. The legislation would reset the assessed values of owner-occupied, single-family homes back to 2020 amounts and limit annual valuation increases to 3% for property owners who acquired their homes before or during fiscal year 2020.

The bill, introduced by Rep. Trish Ladner, R-Rapid City, and Sen. Jack Kolbeck, R-Brandon, has already seen pushback. The Pennington County director of equalization told the Rapid City Journal that the legislation would adversely affect South Dakotans purchasing a new home and will shift the tax burden onto agricultural, commercial and residential rental properties.

Other taxation bills introduced include:

Adding lithium as a taxable precious metal. Precious metals extracted from South Dakota are taxed at 10% of net profits from sale.

Extending the length of time for a tax agreement between a tribe and the state from five to 10 years.

## Law enforcement and crime

More than 15 bills have been introduced ahead of session regarding law enforcement and crime in the state, including:

Criminalizing artificial intelligence-created child pornography.

Extending the time a person is on the sex offender registry list before they can be removed.

Mandating that a school district must have a school resource officer or school sentinel at every school building in a district.

Classifying xylazine, an animal tranquilizer increasingly used in street drugs, as a controlled substance. South Dakota reported its first case in 2023.

Penalizing a person if they expose a law enforcement officer to a controlled substance.

## Medical marijuana

The Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee met multiple times in 2023 to discuss issues surrounding the state's medical cannabis program and changes to it.

One bill, introduced by Sen. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, would require that a patient's primary or referring practitioner be notified when a patient is certified for medical cannabis from a practitioner who isn't the patient's normal provider.

Seven bills have been introduced regarding medical cannabis so far, including:

Restricting medical cannabis use for certain jobs.

Restricting a practitioner from referring patients to a medical cannabis clinic the provider is financially connected to.

## Elections

Only one bill introduced so far concerning elections is not being introduced at the request of the Secretary of State's Office.

That bill aims to revise the nomination process for lieutenant governor candidates. Currently, political party convention delegates nominate candidates for lieutenant governor.

This bill would have governor candidates nominate their own running mates.

Gov. Kristi Noem almost had former Sioux Falls lawmaker Steve Haugaard as her running mate, instead of Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden, in 2022 due to the current process. Haugaard unsuccessfully challenged Noem in the gubernatorial primary and then gained support from some convention delegates to be placed on the ticket with her.

Lawmakers last session attempted to overhaul the party nomination process for multiple positions, but

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the effort failed in the House.

The secretary of state's election bills include:

Modifying residency requirements for voter registration by specifying that the state's 30-day residency requirement before voter registration must be achieved within one year before registering. KELO-TV asked the secretary of state's office whether the bill is an attempt to disqualify people who live full-time in recreational vehicles and register in the state, but the office declined to answer the question.

Allowing the secretary of state to make the cast vote record and ballot images collected from a tabulator public record. Ballot images are digital copies of every paper ballot tabulated in an election, and cast vote records are electronic records of how the marks on a ballot are tabulated. While other jurisdictions post such information publicly, there is a risk to voter privacy, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center.

Making it a crime for threatening or intimidating election officials or election workers.

## **Medicaid work requirements, daylight savings time**

Other notable bills filed ahead of session include another attempt to put Medicaid work requirements on the ballot, which failed in committee after passing the House last year. If the resolution passes this year, it'll head to the November 2024 ballot for voters to decide whether to authorize work requirements.

A bill filed by Rep. Ben Krohmer, R-Mitchell, aims to get rid of the twice-a-year time adjustment, instead sticking to "summer hours year-round." A 2022 bill would have established permanent daylight saving time for South Dakota once federally permissible, but it quickly died in a committee.

*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.*

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**T** Tigers

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Tiospa Zina Boys JV  
Dakota Valley Boys JV  
Dakota Valley Girls JV  
Milbank Girls JV  
Milbank Boys JV  
Great Plains Lutheran Girls C  
Great Plains Lutheran Girls JV  
Northwestern Girls JV  
Webster Boys C  
Webster Boys JV  
Webster Girls JV  
Florence/Henry Girls JV  
Deuel Girls JV  
Deuel Boys JV  
Vermillion Boys JV



## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What are energy droughts and how can we get around them? – B.B., Houston, TX

Solar and wind power may be free and renewable, but they rely on natural processes that are beyond our control. Proponents of fossil fuels point out that if the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow for an extended period, the grid could suffer a so-called "energy drought" where there just isn't enough power to meet the demand. A recent study by researchers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) found that in some parts of the U.S., such energy droughts are not uncommon and can last anywhere from a few hours to almost a week.

"For solar energy, it would be when it's really cloudy or hazy, maybe even smoky. And for wind, it would be atmospheric conditions that just have no wind blowing," says PNNL's Cameron Bracken, lead author on the study. "When we have a completely decarbonized grid and depend heavily on solar and wind, energy droughts could have huge amounts of impact on the grid."

There are several ways to mitigate the risk of energy droughts. For one, minimizing demand for energy—and reducing consumption via the adoption of energy-sipping appliances and devices—is pivotal in circumventing energy droughts. Implementing energy-saving technologies across industries, homes and transportation reduces overall demand, lessening strain on the grid during peak times. Initiatives promoting energy conservation, like better insulation, efficient appliances, and public transport systems, contribute significantly to offsetting energy scarcity and can be important hedges against energy droughts.

Furthermore, grid modernization is vital for best management of energy supply and demand. Smart grids with advanced monitoring and control technologies enhance reliability, detect faults promptly, and enable efficient energy distribution. Integrating energy storage solutions like batteries or pumped hydroelectric storage helps store excess energy during surplus times for use during shortages, enhancing grid stability. Another way to protect against crippling energy droughts is through the development of microgrids—small, controllable power systems composed of one or more generation units connected to nearby users that can function independently or in conjunction with the main grid. These microgrids can sustain essential services during larger grid outages, bolstering resilience against energy droughts.

Developing better energy storage systems, i.e. batteries, is key to the fossil-fuel-free grid of the future if it is to be fed by intermittent renewables like solar and wind. Tesla's Powerwall, an integrated battery system that stores solar energy for backup when the grid goes down, is a great first step. But critics argue that we cannot tolerate the scale of lithium mining it would take to create enough lithium-ion batteries (the technology behind the Powerwall) to store enough energy to power a world without coal, natural gas and the other fossil fuels. A revolution in battery storage could prove to be key to whether or not we can successfully transition away from fossil fuels in time to save the planet from cataclysmic climate change.

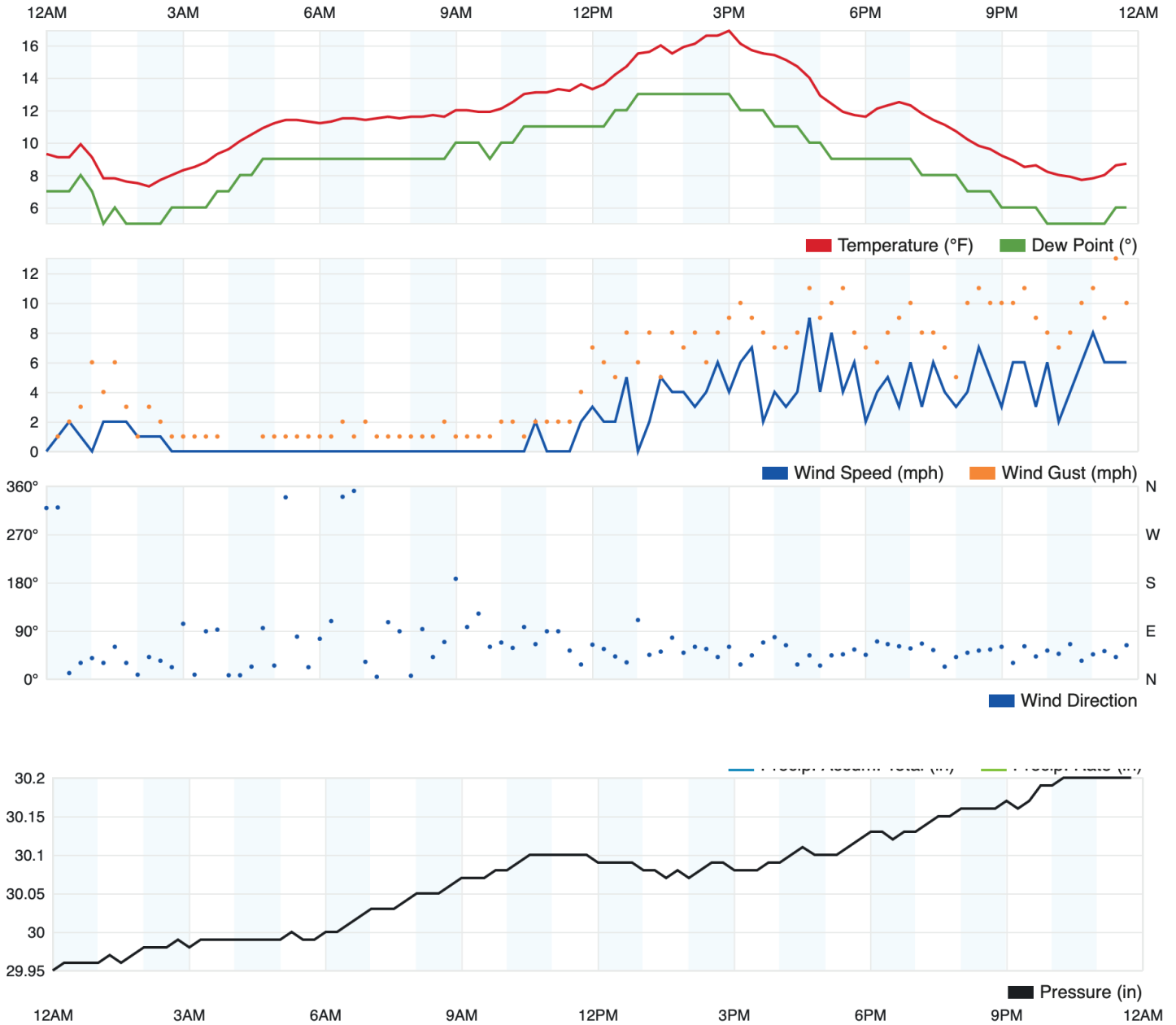


**Energy droughts are a risk as we transition to renewables since the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine.** Credit: Pexels.com.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Mon Jan 8	Tue Jan 9	Wed Jan 10	Thu Jan 11	Fri Jan 12	Sat Jan 13	Sun Jan 14
20°F	16°F	25°F	11°F	7°F	-1°F	-2°F
6°F	9°F	6°F	-1°F	-4°F	-13°F	-9°F
NNE	N	S	WNW	N	NNW	WNW
13 MPH	7 MPH	12 MPH	15 MPH	16 MPH	17 MPH	11 MPH
70%		50%		30%	40%	20%



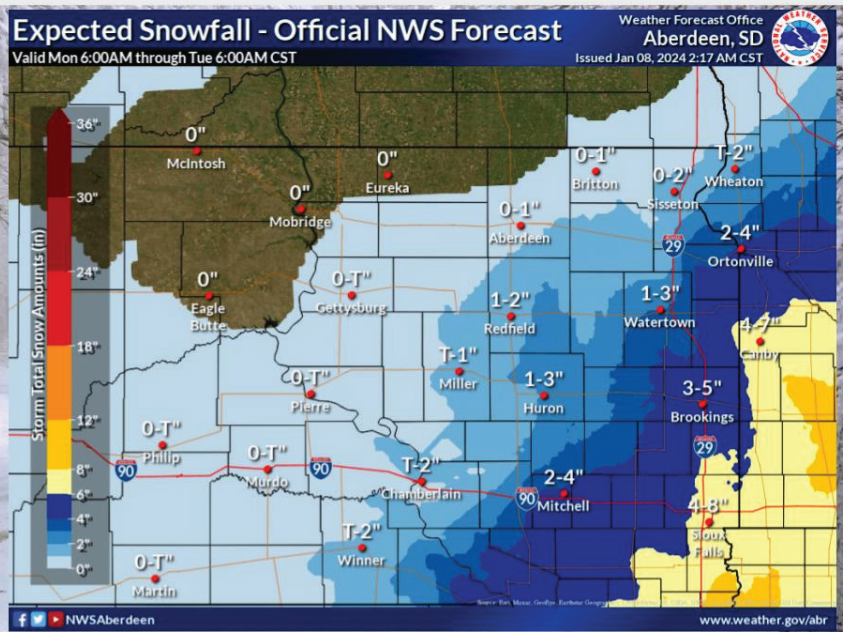
## Forecast Snow Accums Today/Tonight

January 8, 2024  
2:47 AM



### Key Items

- Heaviest snow expected over southeast SD, southwest MN
- Little if any snow NC SD
- Accumulations occurring today through late tonight
- Travel impacts possible, especially over southeast SD, southern MN



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## Snow Timing

January 8, 2024  
2:50 AM

	Snow Timing											1/9 Tue													
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am
Aberdeen	25%	45%	65%	50%	40%	35%	30%	20%																	
Britton	20%	35%	50%	45%	45%	40%	40%	30%	25%	20%			15%	15%	15%										
Chamberlain	80%	60%	50%	45%	35%	40%	45%	45%	45%	45%	40%	25%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%								
Clark	90%	95%	100%	85%	70%	60%	55%	60%	60%	50%	40%	40%	35%	35%	35%	30%	20%	15%							
Eagle Butte	30%	25%	25%	20%	15%																				
Ellendale	15%	20%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	15%																	
Eureka	20%	20%	20%	15%	15%																				
Gettysburg	65%	55%	45%	40%	30%	20%																			
Kennebec	65%	55%	40%	35%	30%	20%	15%																		
McIntosh	20%	15%																							
Milbank	25%	55%	90%	85%	75%	85%	90%	95%	100%	100%	100%	85%	75%	75%	75%	60%	55%	50%	45%	35%	25%	25%	20%		
Miller	90%	85%	80%	65%	45%	35%	25%	25%	20%	20%	20%														
Mobridge	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%																				
Murdo	50%	40%	30%	25%	20%																				
Pierre	80%	60%	40%	35%	25%	20%	15%																		
Redfield	90%	95%	95%	80%	65%	50%	35%	30%	25%	20%	15%														
Sisseton	15%	40%	60%	60%	65%	65%	60%	60%	60%	55%	45%	45%	45%	45%	25%	20%	15%								
Watertown	80%	90%	100%	85%	70%	80%	85%	90%	90%	85%	80%	70%	65%	65%	65%	50%	40%	30%	25%	25%	20%	15%			
Webster	40%	65%	90%	80%	75%	65%	55%	50%	50%	40%	35%	35%	35%	35%	35%	20%	15%								
Wheaton		20%	35%	40%	50%	55%	65%	70%	75%	70%	60%	55%	50%	50%	40%	35%	25%	20%	15%	15%	15%	15%			

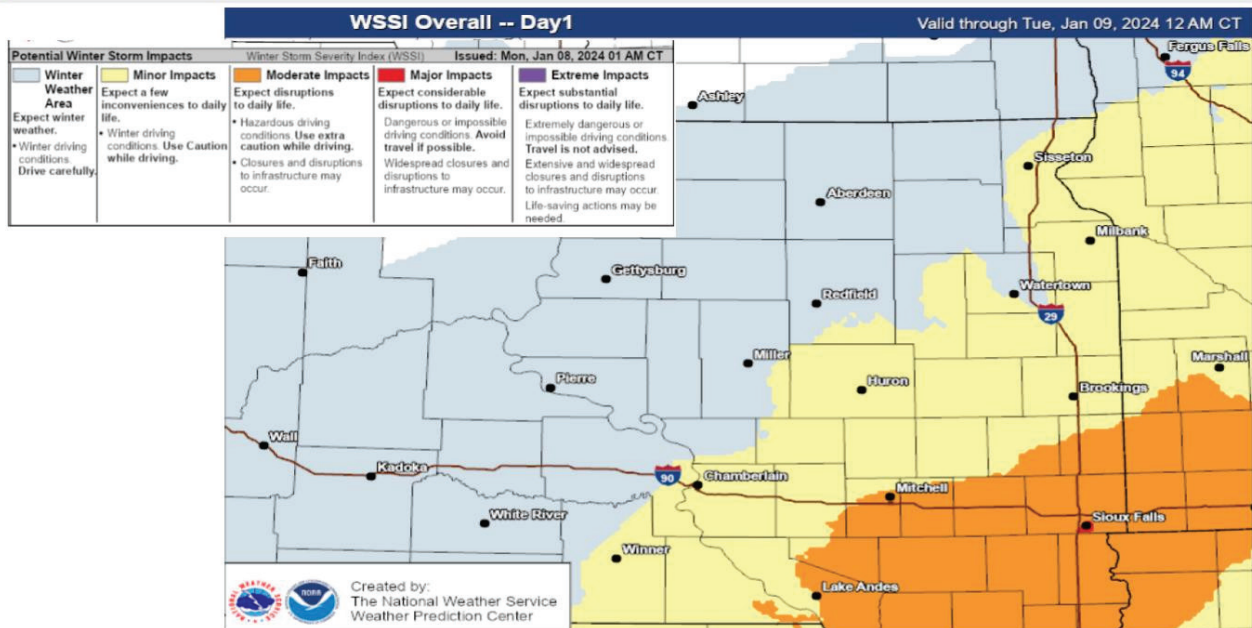
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD



## Travel Impacts through Tonight

January 8, 2024  
2:57 AM



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 17 °F at 2:53 PM

Low Temp: 7 °F at 2:04 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 5:19 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 58 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 55 in 1963

Record Low: -33 in 1912

Average High: 23

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.17

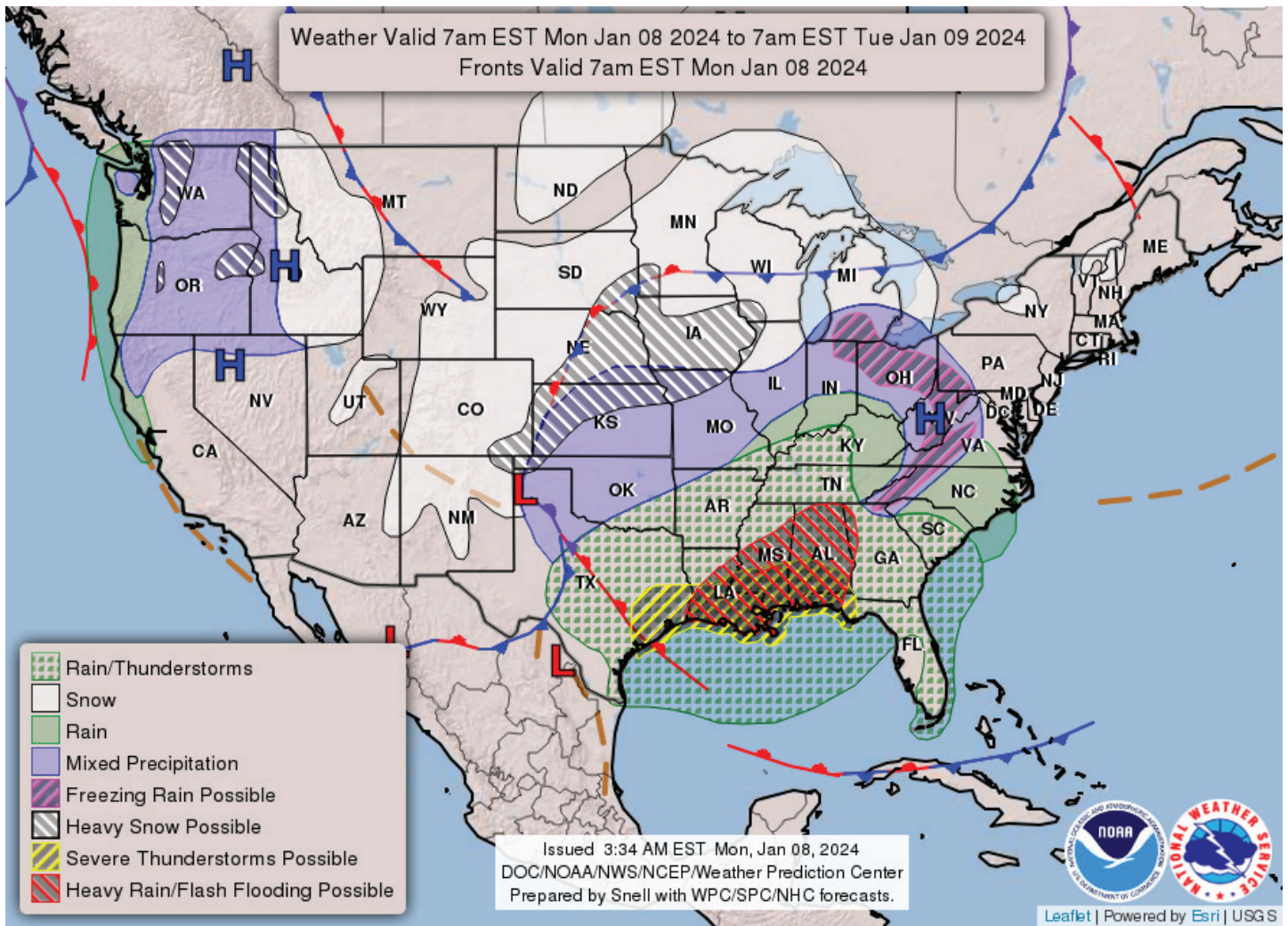
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.17

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:08:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:23 am



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## Today in Weather History

January 8, 2010: Arctic high pressure combined with strong northwest winds resulted in extreme wind chills from -35 to nearly 50 degrees below zero across central and northeast South Dakota. Some of the lowest wind chills included -40 in Aberdeen; -41 in Watertown; -42 in Highmore; -43 in Leola and Faulkton; -44 in Eagle Butte, Herreid, and Gettysburg; and -47 in Bowdle. Several record lows were also tied or broken during the morning hours of the 8th, including -22 degrees NW of Gann Valley and Victor; -23 degrees at Pierre and Sisseton; -24 degrees at Roscoe; and -34 degrees at Pollock.

1953 - A severe icestorm in the northeastern U.S. produced up to four inches of ice in Pennsylvania, and two to three inches in southeastern New York State. In southern New England the ice coated a layer of snow up to 20 inches deep. The storm resulted in 31 deaths and 2.5 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1973 - A severe icestorm struck Atlanta GA. The storm paralyzed the city closing schools and businesses, and damage from the storm was estimated at 25 million dollars. One to four inches of ice coated northern Georgia leaving 300,000 persons without electricity for up to a week. Between 7 PM and 9 PM on the 7th, 2.27 inches (liquid content) of freezing rain, sleet and snow coated Atlanta, as the temperature hovered at 32 degrees. (7th-8th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm moving out of the Southern Rockies into the Central Plains Region produced 14 inches of snow at Red River NM, and 17 inches in the Wolf Creek ski area of Colorado. Wichita KS was blanketed with seven inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm spread heavy snow across the northeastern U.S., with up to ten inches reported in southern New Jersey. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds and bitterly cold temperatures prevailed in the north central U.S. Winds in the Great Lakes Region gusted to 58 mph at Chicago IL, and reached 63 mph at Niagara Falls NY. Squalls in western New York State produced 20 inches of snow at Barnes Corners and Lowville. Snow squalls in Upper Michigan produced 26 inches around Keweenaw. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - High winds plagued the northwestern U.S., with the state of Oregon hardest hit. Two persons were killed in Oregon, and nine others were injured, and the high winds downed fifty-five million board feet of timber, valued at more than twenty million dollars. Winds gusted to 90 mph near Pinehurst ID, and wind gusts reached 96 mph at Stevenson WA. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2019: An unusual January tornado impacted Cortland, Ohio, during the mid-morning hours. The EF-1 tornado developed northeast of Champion Township in Trumbull County and moved east. The tornado brought down numerous trees and wires along the 4.5-mile path.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### PEOPLE POTENTIAL

Many years ago, an obscure inventor built a racing car. He didn't give it a name, he gave it a number: 999. After many tests, he hired a cyclist named Barney Oldfield to drive it in a race. During the race, the car hit a top speed of sixty miles an hour - a mile a minute. That race brought the driver and the builder of the car much attention and launched their careers.

Years later, the builder and the driver of the race car met one another for the first time. The builder looked at Oldfield and said, "You made me, Barney, and I made you."

"True," said Oldfield, "but it took both us working together to be successful."

Every day we look into the eyes of people who are waiting to be recognized. They want someone to reach out to them and give them hope. A great example is Andrew and Peter.

John, in his gospel, tells us that "the first thing" Andrew did after he began to follow Jesus was to "find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah...'"

The simple invitation "to follow Jesus" that Andrew extended to Peter changed the world. Things would one day be different for everyone because of what he would accomplish. So, it was necessary for "Cephas" to have a new "identity." Believing he could do great things, Jesus gave him a new name: Peter, meaning "rock." And, despite his fears and failures, his doubts and betrayals, he became a "solid rock" in the early church and became one of the "inner three" in the life of Jesus. When the "rock" heard the voice of God at Pentecost, his enthusiasm erupted, and he inspired many to do great things for God. All because someone recognized him!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to see people the way Jesus did - not as they are, but who they can become. May we encourage others to follow You and discover a new life! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter"). John 1:40-43



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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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.05.24

5 23 26 38 44 25

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$165,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.06.24

14 34 42 46 51 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,200,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 48 Mins 53  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.07.24

6 9 19 39 47 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 17 Hrs 3 Mins 53  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.06.24

3 9 22 25 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 3  
DRAW: Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.06.24

9 14 26 27 32 22

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 32 Mins 53  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.06.24

4 31 34 38 61 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$46,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 32 Mins 53  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the Associated Press

### **South Dakota lawmakers see alignment with Noem as session begins**

By JACK DURA Associated Press

Workforce needs, the budget and tax cuts will be on the minds of South Dakota lawmakers when the Legislature convenes Tuesday for a two-month session.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem will address the GOP-controlled Legislature on the session's opening day. Last month, she presented her vision for the budget to the Legislature, and now it's up to lawmakers to craft a plan for the next fiscal year, among other measures.

Republican House Majority Leader Will Mortenson said South Dakota's short session — 38 days spread over about two months — "helps keep us focused on only the most important topics."

"I tell my caucus often that our only two jobs we absolutely have to do are passing a budget and getting the hell out of there," Mortenson said.

Republican majority leaders largely support Noem's agenda, in part because of South Dakota's strong finances. State revenues have exceeded the Legislature's 2023 forecast by 11%, or \$115 million, from July through November, the first five months of the fiscal year, according to a state Bureau of Finance and Management comparison.

Republican priorities are new prison construction, college affordability, workforce needs and the sustainability of long-term care in rural communities. They expect to be working with less money after years of COVID-19 pandemic-era federal aid.

Democrats are focused on child care needs, pre-K education and teacher pay.

Noem has emphasized a lean budget amid rising inflation, proposing a nearly \$7.3 billion plan for fiscal year 2025. She called for 4% increases for the state's "big three" priorities of K-12 education, health care providers and state employees.

Budget writers will review the 4% proposal in the context of the entire budget, Mortenson said.

"I was encouraged that the governor focused the vast majority of our ongoing dollars on core priorities," he said.

Noem also has proposed making a temporary sales tax cut permanent. The four-year reduction was approved in 2023.

Republican state Rep. Chris Karr has filed a bill to make that change, citing years of state revenue surpluses.

"Government collects taxes to provide certain services. When those services are provided, any excess dollars should go back to the people because that's who it belongs to," Karr said. Sales taxes are the main driver of South Dakota's state revenues.

Mortenson predicted House Republicans will coalesce around a permanent sales tax cut.

Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree said Senate Republicans will consider other potential tax cuts, possibly including property taxes.

"I think the conversation is what do we cut and how much do we cut going forward," he said.

Workforce needs loom large, Mortenson said. South Dakota has more than 20,000 job openings advertised online and had a 2% unemployment rate as of November 2023, according to the state Department of Labor and Regulation.

Mortenson also sees college affordability as "absolutely critical for our state's future," to keep young people in South Dakota and attract others from out of state.

Democrats, who hold 11 of 105 seats, are pursuing bills "that really directly help working-class people," Senate Minority Leader Reynold Nesiba said.

He listed proposals to lengthen the period for people to file a worker compensation claim if injured at work, and to incrementally raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as voters did in neighboring Nebraska in 2022.

Advocates for LGBTQ and voting rights expressed concern about possible lawmaker actions.

Samantha Chapman, advocacy manager for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, called recent legislation restricting gender identity a "misuse of the way our government is supposed to work, to constantly be passing bills that are clawing away at a small portion of our population's rights."

Crabtree said that when discussions of those issues arise, "you're going to see common sense prevail."

Dakotans for Health co-founder Rick Weiland said he is leery of the Legislature potentially trying to raise the bar for ballot initiatives, citing a defeated 2022 measure that sought to require 60% of voters to support certain spending or tax measures for the initiatives to pass.

Republican state Rep. Jon Hansen, who sponsored the measure, said in a 2021 floor session that certain money issues deserve more support than a simple majority vote.

"I think each and every time they try to mess with the will of the voters and direct democracy, they get themselves in trouble," Weiland said.

He is leading efforts to put two measures on the 2024 ballot: one to place abortion rights in the state constitution, and another to repeal the state's grocery tax.

South Dakota outlaws all abortions but for life-saving circumstances. Weiland called it the most extreme abortion law in the country. Noem campaigned for reelection in 2022 on repealing the grocery tax, but the Legislature went a different route with the temporary sales tax cut of \$104 million annually.

Noem is in her second term as governor. Once seen as a potential 2024 presidential candidate, she has embraced former President Donald Trump's reelection bid, endorsing him at a rally last year.

## South Dakota State repeats as FCS champs with 29th consecutive win, 23-3 over Montana

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — South Dakota State never bought into all the hype as defending FCS national champions. With standout quarterback Mark Gronowski and a stifling defense, the Jackrabbits just went out and won another title.

"That first one was ... really, really sweet, just because it was that first one," said Gronowski, who started his third Football Championship Subdivision title game. "We got to see the other team do it three years ago and be up on that stage where we weren't, so I think that's part of the thing that makes this whole thing so much sweeter."

Gronowski ran for a touchdown and threw for another after halftime as SDSU repeated as champions with a 23-3 win over Montana on Sunday. The Jackrabbits have won 29 games in a row, including over North Dakota State last year for their first national title.

"With as much hype surrounding this football program, we never paid much attention to it. We stayed consistent. We worked extremely hard week in and week out, and this is the result," said Jimmy Rogers, the first-year head



From left to right, South Dakota State's Garret Greenfield, quarterback Mark Gronowski, Jason Freeman and Mason McCormick celebrate with the trophy after their win over Montana at the FCS Championship NCAA college football game Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024, in Frisco, Texas. (AP Photo/Richard W. Rodriguez)

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coach with a 15-0 record after being South Dakota State's defensive coordinator last season.

SDSU linebacker Adam Boch stuffed running back Eli Gillman for no gain on fourth-and-goal from the 1 on Montana's opening drive. SDSU allowed only 273 total yards, had five sacks and wrapped up a four-game playoff run in which it allowed only 15 points and had two shutouts.

"Best defense in FCS history," Rogers said. "I'm proud of that, proud of this football team, proud to go back-to-back."

South Dakota State had an impressive game-opening drive, but led only 7-3 at halftime. Gronowski then bulled into the end zone for a 10-yard score midway through the third quarter, and on the next possession threw a 23-yard TD to Jadon Janke.

Gronowski was 13-of-21 passing for 175 yards and ran eight times for 62 yards to join Carson Wentz and Brock Jensen, quarterbacks who won multiple championships with North Dakota State, as the only players selected as most outstanding player in consecutive FCS title games. Gronowski was a true freshman when he tore his left ACL on the opening series of the unusual May 2021 title game the Jackrabbits lost at the end of a pandemic-affected season.

"They have a heck of a leader back there. And he makes them go for sure," Montana linebacker Braxton Hill said.

Montana's 27 playoff appearances are the most in the second tier of Division I football. National champions in 1995 and 2001, the Grizzlies (13-2) have now finished as the runner-up six times, four under coach Bobby Hauck.

This was the Grizzlies' first title game since 2009, when they were runner-ups for the third time in Hauck's first seven seasons. Hauck then left for FBS team UNLV and also was on staff at San Diego State before returning to Montana in 2018.

Less than two weeks after South Dakota State was crowned champions last year, John Stiegelmeier retired after 26 seasons as head coach. He was succeeded by Rogers, a former Jackrabbits linebacker who was captain of their first playoff team in 2009 — when they lost to Montana after blowing a 27-point lead.

Both teams had only one possession in the first quarter Sunday. Montana's opening drive spilled into the first play of the second quarter, when Boch had the big fourth-down stop.

South Dakota State had opened the game with a 75-play, 11-play drive. Gronowski completed his first five passes for 55 yards and converted a third-and-4 with a 9-yard keeper right before Isaiah Davis' 6-yard TD run.

"The fourth down stop was a big play in the game," Hauck said. "They're just a big, physical senior-oriented team and they do a nice job."

## THE TAKEAWAY

Montana: Playmaking quarterback Clifton McDowell, who had been 11-0 as the Griz starter, was under increased pressure, especially after halftime. He completed 22 of 39 passes for 165 yards, but was sacked four times. After he was stripped of the ball when being sacked late in the third quarter, 295-yard defensive tackle Ryan Van Marel came up with the ball.

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits became the first team since North Dakota State (2017-19) to repeat as champions.

## UP NEXT

Montana: The Big Sky champion Grizzlies take on one of SDSU's Missouri Valley Conference rivals in their 2024 opener. They host Missouri State on Aug. 31.

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits open next season on the road Aug. 31 at Big 12 team Oklahoma State, the first major conference team they will play since a 7-3 loss at Iowa of the Big Ten in the 2022 opener that was their last loss.

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## With each strike, fears grow that Israel, the US and Iran's allies are inching closer to all-out war

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

In the last week alone, Israel has killed a senior Hamas militant in an airstrike in Beirut, Hezbollah has fired barrages of rockets into Israel, the U.S. has killed a militia commander in Baghdad and Iran-backed rebels in Yemen have traded fire with the American Navy.

Each strike and counterstrike increases the risk of the already catastrophic war in Gaza spilling across the region. And in the decades-old standoff pitting the U.S. and Israel against Iran and allied militant groups, there are fears that any one party could trigger a wider war if only to avoid appearing weak.

The divisions within each camp add another layer of volatility: Hamas might have hoped its Oct. 7 attack would drag its allies into a wider war with Israel. Israelis increasingly talk about the need to change the equation in Lebanon, even as the U.S. aims to contain the conflict.

As the intertwined chess games grow ever more complicated, the potential for miscalculation rises.

### GAZA IS GROUND ZERO

Hamas says the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war in Gaza was an act of purely Palestinian resistance to Israel's decades-long domination of the Palestinians. There is no evidence that Iran, Hezbollah or other allied groups played a direct role or even knew about it beforehand.

But when Israel responded by launching one of the 21st century's most devastating military campaigns in Gaza, a besieged enclave home to 2.3 million Palestinians, the so-called Axis of Resistance — Iran and the militant groups it supports across the region — faced pressure to respond.

The Palestinian cause has deep resonance across the region, and leaving Hamas alone to face Israel's fury would have risked unraveling a military alliance that Iran has been building up since the 1979 Islamic Revolution put it on a collision course with the West.

"They don't want war, but at the same they don't want to let the Israelis keep striking without retaliation," said Qassim Qassir, a Lebanese expert on Hezbollah.

"Something big has to happen, without going to war, so that the Israelis and Americans are convinced that there is no way forward," he said.

### HEZBOLLAH THREADS THE NEEDLE

Of all Iran's regional proxies, Hezbollah faces the biggest dilemma.

If it tolerates Israeli attacks, like the strike in Beirut that killed Hamas' deputy political leader, it risks appearing to be a weak or unreliable ally. But if it triggers a full war, Israel has threatened to wreak massive destruction on Lebanon, which is already mired in a severe economic crisis. Even Hezbollah's supporters may see that as too heavy a price to pay for a Palestinian ally.

Hezbollah has carried out strikes along the border nearly every day since the war in Gaza broke out, with the apparent aim of tying down some Israeli troops. Israel has returned fire, but each side appears to be carefully calibrating its actions to limit the intensity.

A Hezbollah barrage of at least 40 rockets fired at an Israeli military base on Saturday sent a message without starting a war. Would 80 have been a step too far? What if someone had been killed? How many casualties would warrant a full-blown offensive? The grim math provides no clear answers.

And in the end, experts say, it might not be a single strike that does it.

Israel is determined to see tens of thousands of its citizens return to communities near the border with Lebanon that were evacuated under Hezbollah fire nearly three months ago, and after Oct. 7 it may no longer be able to tolerate an armed Hezbollah presence just on the other side of the frontier.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly threatened to use military force if Hezbollah does not respect a 2006 U.N. cease-fire that ordered the militant group to withdraw from the border.

"Neither side wants a war, but the two sides believe it is inevitable," said Yoel Guzansky, a senior researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University. "Everybody in Israel thinks it's just a matter of time until we need to change the reality" so that people can return to their homes, he said.

### US DETERRENCE ONLY GOES SO FAR

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The U.S. positioned two aircraft carrier strike groups in the region in October. One is returning home but being replaced by other warships. The deployments sent an unmistakable warning to Iran and its allies against widening the conflict, but not all of them seem to have gotten the message.

Iran-backed militant groups in Syria and Iraq have launched dozens of rocket attacks on U.S. bases. The Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have attacked international shipping in the Red Sea, with potential consequences for the world economy. Iran says its allies act on their own and not on orders from Tehran.

The last thing most Americans want after two decades of costly campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan is another war in the Middle East.

But in recent weeks, U.S. forces have killed a senior Iran-backed militia commander in Iraq and 10 Houthi rebels who were trying to board a container ship, spilling blood that could call out for a response.

Washington has struggled to cobble together a multi-national security force to protect Red Sea shipping. But it appears hesitant to attack the Houthis on land when they appear close to reaching a peace deal with Saudi Arabia after years of war.

Israeli officials have meanwhile said the window for its allies to get both Hezbollah and the Houthis to stand down is closing.

HOW DOES THIS END?

The regional tensions are likely to remain high as long as Israel keeps up its offensive in Gaza, which it says is aimed at crushing Hamas. Many wonder if that's even possible, given the group's deep roots in Palestinian society, and Israel's own leaders say it will take many more months.

The U.S., which has provided crucial military and diplomatic support for Israel's offensive, is widely seen as the only power capable of ending it. Iran's allies seem to believe Washington will step in if its own costs get too high — hence the attacks on U.S. bases and international shipping.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock are all back in the region this week, with the aim of trying to contain the violence through diplomacy.

But the most important messages will still likely be sent by rocket.

"The Americans do not want an open war with Iran, and the Iranians do not want an open war with the United States," said Ali Hamadeh, an analyst who writes for Lebanon's An-Nahar newspaper. "Therefore, there are negotiations by fire."

## **A heavy wave of Russian missile attacks pounds areas across Ukraine, killing at least 4 civilians**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched its latest barrage of hypersonic and cruise missiles against Ukrainian targets early Monday, striking near the front lines of fighting in the east as well as in central and western parts of the country, officials said. At least four civilians were reported killed and at least 30 injured.

Western officials and analysts had previously warned that Russia was stockpiling its cruise missiles in preparation for a strategy of winter bombardment, as bad weather keeps the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line largely static after 22 months of war.

Unlike last winter, when the Kremlin's forces targeted Ukraine's power grid, Russia is now aiming at Kyiv's defense industry, they say. But the barrages have repeatedly hit civilian areas.

Monday's attacks struck a string of urban areas, including housing and a shopping mall, across Ukraine.

In the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk region, a woman died in a missile attack outside the city of Kryvyi Rih and 24 people were injured in a strike on the town of Novomoskovsk.

In Kryvyi Rih itself, which is Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home town, more than 20 houses and a shopping mall were damaged in the attack, said regional governor Serhii Lysak.

At least four missiles hit Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, injuring one person, said mayor Ihor Terekhov. A woman rescued from the rubble of a building later died, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

More people may be trapped, he said.

Authorities in the Khmelnytskyi region said two people died as at least six explosions were heard during the morning missile attack.

Meanwhile, Russian troops conducted 131 artillery attacks on the Kherson region, killing two people and injuring five, according to governor Oleksandr Prokudin.

Kherson and the surrounding region have been consistently targeted since Russian forces withdrew from the city to the eastern side of the Dnipro in the autumn of 2022.

In Zaporizhzhia, a major southern city along the Dnipro River, two people were injured in a missile strike on a residential district, said regional governor Yuri Malashko.

Two people injured in a Jan. 2 attack died on Monday, officials said.

The Ukrainian military said Monday that Russian forces have made unsuccessful efforts to advance during the past day in several areas, including around Lyman in the Kharkiv region and in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions.

In the Russia-occupied Luhansk region in Ukraine's east, a Russian warplane accidentally released a bomb on the town of Rubizhne, said Leonid Pasechnik, head of the region's rebel government.

The bomb, an FAB-250 that carries a high-explosive warhead, did not cause injuries, Pasechnik said.

The incident comes six days after Russia accidentally dropped munitions over the village of Petropavlovka in the Belgorod region that has come under repeated Ukrainian attack.

## **Palestinians flee from central Gaza's main hospital as fighting draws closer and aid groups withdraw**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Medics, patients and displaced people are fleeing from the main hospital in central Gaza as the fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants draws closer, witnesses said Monday. Losing the facility would be another major blow to a health system shattered by three months of war.

Doctors Without Borders and other aid groups withdrew from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in recent days, saying it is too dangerous. That spread panic among people sheltering there, causing many to join the hundreds of thousands who have fled to the south of the besieged territory.

Israel says it has largely wrapped up major operations in northern Gaza and is now focusing on the central region and the southern city of Khan Younis. Israeli officials have said the fighting will continue for many more months as the army seeks to dismantle Hamas and return scores of hostages taken during the militant group's Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

The offensive has already killed over 22,000 Palestinians, devastated vast swaths of the Gaza Strip, displaced nearly 85% of its population of 2.3 million and left a quarter of its residents facing starvation.

It has also threatened to ignite a wider war with Lebanon's Hezbollah and other Iran-backed militant groups allied with Hamas.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is back in the region this week. The U.S., which has provided crucial military and diplomatic support for the offensive, has called on Israel to take greater measures to spare civilians but has also joined it in rejecting international calls for a cease-fire.

### **'SICKENING SCENES' IN GAZA'S OVERWHELMED HOSPITALS**

Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in Gaza's hospitals, which are also struggling to treat dozens of people wounded each day in Israeli strikes. Only 13 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are even partially functioning, according to the U.N. humanitarian office.

Omar al-Darawi, an employee at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, said the facility has been struck multiple times in recent days. He said thousands of people left after the aid groups pulled out, and that patients have been concentrated on one floor so the remaining doctors can tend to them more easily.

"We have large numbers of wounded who can't move" he said. "They need special care, which is unavailable."

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More dead and wounded arrive each day as Israeli forces advance in central Gaza following heavy airstrikes. The Health Ministry said early Monday that 73 bodies and 99 wounded were brought to the hospital in just the last 24 hours.

World Health Organization staff who visited Sunday saw "sickening scenes of people of all ages being treated on blood-streaked floors and in chaotic corridors," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the U.N. agency, said in a statement. "The bloodbath in Gaza must end."

## DIRE CONDITIONS IN THE ISOLATED NORTH

The situation is even more dire in northern Gaza, which Israeli forces cut off from the rest of the territory in late October.

Entire neighborhoods have been demolished, and hundreds of thousands of people have fled, while those who remain face severe shortages of food and water. The WHO said late Sunday it has not been able to deliver supplies to northern Gaza in 12 days.

Even there, Israel is still battling what it describes as pockets of militants.

An airstrike early Sunday flattened a four-story home filled with displaced people in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp, killing at least 70, including women and children, according to Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for Gaza's civil defense. There was no immediate confirmation from the Health Ministry, which has struggled to maintain its operations in the north.

Search efforts were still underway on Monday. The civil defense circulated a graphic video showing the aftermath of attack, with several bodies scattered among the rubble.

Jabaliya, which was built for Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation and is now a dense, built-up neighborhood, has seen weeks of heavy fighting.

More than 22,800 Palestinians have been killed, and more than 58,000 wounded, since the war began, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The death toll does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. Health officials say about two-thirds of those killed have been women and minors.

Israel blames Hamas for civilian casualties because the group operates in heavily populated residential areas, but the military rarely comments on individual strikes. The military says it has killed some 8,000 militants, without providing evidence, and that 176 of its own soldiers have been killed in the offensive.

## SEEKING TO HEAD OFF A WIDER WAR

Blinken, who met with the leaders of Jordan and Qatar on Sunday, once again spoke of the need for Israel to adjust its military operations to minimize harm to civilians and allow more aid into the territory. But his main focus appeared to be preventing the war from spreading.

The killing of a senior Hamas leader in a strike in Beirut last week ratcheted up tensions along the Israeli-Lebanese border, where Israel and Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, have been regularly trading fire since the start of the war.

A Hezbollah rocket barrage hit a sensitive air traffic base in northern Israel on Saturday in one of the biggest attacks in three months of low-intensity fighting along the border. The militant group said was an "initial response" to the killing of Hamas' deputy political leader Saleh Arouri.

Israel has mostly sought to limit the fighting in its north, but its leaders say their patience is wearing thin, and that if the tensions cannot be resolved through diplomacy, they are prepared to go to war.

Hezbollah began firing rockets shortly after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war. Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people in southern Israel that day, mostly civilians, and took some 250 people hostage, over 100 of whom were released during a cease-fire in November.

Hezbollah has said its attacks, which have driven tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes, aim to ease pressure on Gaza. But the group appears wary of risking an all-out war that would bring massive destruction to Lebanon.



## **Boeing jetliner that suffered inflight blowout was restricted because of concern over warning light**

By CLAIRE RUSH and DAVID KOENIG Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Boeing jetliner that suffered an inflight blowout over Oregon was not being used for flights to Hawaii after a warning light that could have indicated a pressurization problem lit up on three different flights, a federal official said Sunday.

Alaska Airlines decided to restrict the aircraft from long flights over water so the plane “could return very quickly to an airport” if the warning light reappeared, said Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Homendy cautioned that the pressurization light might be unrelated to Friday’s incident in which a plug covering an unused exit door blew off the Boeing 737 Max 9 as it cruised about three miles (4.8 kilometers) over Oregon.

The warning light came on during three previous flights: on Dec. 7, Jan. 3 and Jan. 4 — the day before the door plug broke off. Homendy said she didn’t have all the details regarding the Dec. 7 incident but specified the light came on during a flight on Jan. 3 and on Jan. 4 after the plane had landed.

The NTSB said the lost door plug was found Sunday near Portland, Oregon, by a school teacher — for now, known only as Bob — who discovered it in his backyard and sent two photos to the safety board. Investigators will examine the plug, which is 26 by 48 inches (66 by 121 centimeters) and weighs 63 pounds (28.5 kilograms), for signs of how it broke free.

Investigators will not have the benefit of hearing what was going on in the cockpit during the flight. The cockpit voice recorder — one of two so-called black boxes — recorded over the flight’s sounds after two hours, Homendy said.

At a news conference Sunday night, Homendy provided new details about the chaotic scene that unfolded on the plane. The explosive rush of air damaged several rows of seats and pulled insulation from the walls. The cockpit door flew open and banged into a lavatory door.

The force ripped the headset off the co-pilot and the captain lost part of her headset. A quick reference checklist kept within easy reach of the pilots flew out of the open cockpit, Homendy said.

The plane made it back to Portland, however, and none of the 171 passengers and six crew members was seriously injured.

Hours after the incident, the FAA ordered the grounding of 171 of the 218 Max 9s in operation, including all those used by Alaska Airlines and United Airlines, until they can be inspected. The airlines were still waiting Sunday for details about how to do the inspections.

Alaska Airlines, which has 65 Max 9s, and United, with 79, are the only U.S. airlines to fly that particular model of Boeing’s workhorse 737. United said it was waiting for Boeing to issue a “multi-operator message,” which is a service bulletin used when multiple airlines need to perform similar work on a particular type of plane.

Boeing was working on the bulletin but had not yet submitted it to the FAA for review and approval, according to a person familiar with the situation. Producing a detailed, technical bulletin frequently takes a couple days, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe a matter that the company and regulators have not publicly discussed.

Boeing declined to comment.

Without some of their planes, cancellations began to mount at the two carriers. Alaska Airlines said it canceled 170 flights — more than one-fifth of its schedule — by mid-afternoon on the West Coast because of the groundings, while United had scrapped about 180 flights while salvaging others by finding different planes.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington, chair of the Senate’s Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, said she agreed with the decision to ground the Max 9s.

“Aviation production has to meet a gold standard, including quality control inspections and strong FAA oversight,” she said in a statement.

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Before the discovery of the missing plug, the NTSB had pleaded with residents in an area west of Portland called Cedar Hills to be on the lookout for the object.

On Sunday, people scoured dense thickets wedged between busy roads and a light rail train station. Adam Pirkle said he rode 14 miles (22 kilometers) through the overgrowth on his bicycle.

"I've been looking at the flight track, I was looking at the winds," he said. "I've been trying to focus on wooded areas."

Before the school teacher named Bob found the missing door plug, searchers located two cell phones that appeared to have belonged to passengers on Friday's terrifying flight. One was discovered in a yard, the other on the side of a road. Both were turned over to the NTSB, which vowed to return them to their owners.

Alaska Airlines flight 1282 took off from Portland at 5:07 p.m. Friday for a two-hour trip to Ontario, California. About six minutes later, the chunk of fuselage blew out as the plane was climbing at about 16,000 feet (4.8 kilometers).

One of the pilots declared an emergency and asked for clearance to descend to 10,000 feet (3 kilometers), where the air would be rich enough for passengers to breathe without oxygen masks.

Videos posted online by passengers showed a gaping hole where the paneled-over door had been. They applauded when the plane landed safely about 13 minutes after the blowout. Firefighters came down the aisle, asking passengers to remain in their seats as they treated the injured.

It was extremely lucky that the airplane had not yet reached cruising altitude, when passengers and flight attendants might be walking around the cabin, Homendy said.

The aircraft involved rolled off the assembly line and received its certification two months ago, according to online FAA records. It had been on 145 flights since entering commercial service Nov. 11, said Flight-Radar24, another tracking service. The flight from Portland was the aircraft's third of the day.

The Max is the newest version of Boeing's venerable 737, a twin-engine, single-aisle plane frequently used on U.S. domestic flights. The plane went into service in May 2017.

Two Max 8 jets crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. All Max 8 and Max 9 planes were grounded worldwide for nearly two years until Boeing made changes to an automated flight control system implicated in the crashes.

The Max has been plagued by other issues, including manufacturing flaws, concern about overheating that led FAA to tell pilots to limit use of an anti-ice system, and a possible loose bolt in the rudder system.

## **A chaotic Golden Globes night had a bit of everything: The silly, the serious, and Taylor Swift, too**

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

They may not have had lukewarm chardonnay on the tables, as nominee Jennifer Lawrence had predicted. But the 81st Golden Globes had a bit of everything else: Some silliness, some seriousness, a bit of history, a few good jokes and many bad ones, loads of stars — and one Taylor Swift, who didn't ascend the podium but still made her presence known as perhaps only Swift can.

One decisive trend emerged: In the great "Barbenheimer" showdown of awards season 2024, round one went to the "heimer" part. Christopher Nolan's sweeping biopic "Oppenheimer" dominated the evening, among its wins the prize for best drama, best director for Nolan, and best actor ( Cillian Murphy ) and supporting actor (Robert Downey Jr.). Greta Gerwig's candy-colored "Barbie," meanwhile, lost to upset victor "Poor Things" in the comedy/musical category, but won the new cinematic and box office achievement award, as well as best song for Billie Eilish's wistful "What Was I Made For."

It would be unwise to count "Barbie" out, but it was a disappointing night for her fans, and also for another fearsome force: Swifties. The pop superstar, who spent 2023 smashing all records in sight, lost out on her fifth Globe nomination. But she stunned on the carpet in shimmering Gucci green, and later created a meme-worthy moment when she reacted with a seemingly icy glare to a joke about her by host Jo Koy.

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Swift was not alone in her displeasure; at one point the jokes were falling flat enough for Koy to stop and explain that he'd had only 10 days to prepare.

The crowd laughed harder at Will Ferrell and Kristen Wiig, who made an amusing bit of pretending — insisting — that the ceremony was “a serious night.” The joke was that few actually take the ceremony seriously. Noted presenter Mark Hamill: “It’s the only awards show with an open bar.”

But it was indeed a serious note that served as an emotional highpoint: Lily Gladstone, of “Killers of the Flower Moon,” became the first Indigenous winner of best actress in a drama, speaking in the Blackfeet language and reminding the crowd that there are still significant advances to be celebrated.

Some notable moments of the evening:

## A BUMPY START

Koy got a few laughs with a joke about the lengthy “Oppenheimer,” saying, “I needed another hour.” But as the monologue went on, it was clear that the comic needed something else: sharper jokes from the writers. Cameras caught negative reactions from celebs like Harrison Ford and Selena Gomez, and the “Barbie” team did not appear amused when he noted that “Oppenheimer” was based on serious material but their own film was based on “a plastic doll with big boobies.”

Koy sought to defend himself. “Yo, I got the gig 10 days ago. You want a perfect monologue?” He added: “I wrote some of these, and they’re the ones you’re laughing at.”

## THEY’RE NOT CALLED THAT...

When Da’Vine Joy Randolph won for her acclaimed supporting actress performance in “The Holdovers,” she duly thanked the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. Only problem: The HFPA is now defunct, and many in the audience responded audibly: “They’re not called that.” After several years of turmoil that followed the revelation that the HFPA had no Black members, the Golden Globes were acquired last year by Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions and turned into a for-profit venture. Some 300 entertainment journalists now vote for the awards. Later, Randolph spoke about the vibe of the evening. “It’s a party in there,” she said. “It’s a good time. We got through the pandemic. We stuck through our two strikes. There’s a sense of buzz in there.”

## ...AND HE WASN’T CALLED THAT

Winning an early award for best supporting actor, Downey Jr. told the crowd he had taken a beta-blocker, so “this is going to be a breeze.” He then misspoke the name of his character, government official Lewis Strauss. “Dozens of folks have come up to me since the summertime saying that I was, I quote, ‘unrecognizably subtle as Leonard Strauss,’” the actor said. “To my fellow nominees, let’s not pretend this is a compliment.”

## ‘SUCCESSION’ SUCCEEDS SUCCESSFULLY

To nobody’s surprise, “Succession,” the HBO drama about the Roy family dynasty, had lots of success, winning best drama as well as major acting awards for Kieran Culkin, Matthew Macfadyen and Sarah Snook. Macfadyen said he’d enjoyed every second of playing the “weird and wonderful human grease stain” that was Tom Wambsgans. Culkin, who played troubled son Roman Roy, told the crowd how he’d been nominated for a Golden Globe 20 years ago and never thought he’d be back, and playfully taunted his co-nominee, Pedro Pascal of “The Last of Us,” quipping: “Suck it, Pedro. Mine!” And Snook, who played Shiv Roy, ascended the stage and said: “Oh, wow. I was kind of hoping I didn’t have to get up. Kieran’s usually better at these speeches, right? Don’t you want to get up instead?”

## DON’T BE MEAN

Also on the TV side, Hulu’s kitchen-based “The Bear” won big – taking best comedy series. Jeremy Allen White won for the second time, and Ayo Edebiri won her first Globe for her own lead performance, charming the ballroom crowd when she thanked the assistants of her agents and managers. “To the people who answer my emails, you’re the real ones,” she said, She added: “If I forgot to thank you, I’m sorry. Unless you were mean or something. Okay, bye!”

## IF LOOKS COULD KILL

When “Barbie” won the new award for cinematic and box office achievement, it beat out the nominee many thought would win: “Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour.” Still, Swift, whose attendance was in question

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until her boyfriend, Travis Kelce of the Kansas City Chiefs, was ruled inactive for the day's game against the Los Angeles Chargers, was a glamorous addition to the evening (Bruce Springsteen was there, too) in her custom Gucci gown. The camera cut to her several times, but she was not happy when Koy joked that the difference between the Globes and the NFL was that the NFL had more reaction shots of Swift. She stared ahead and took a sip of her drink.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORDS

It wasn't far from anyone's minds that Hollywood is emerging from historic actors and writers strikes, and one of the more clever presenter bits highlighted the importance of screenwriters. Daniel Kaluuya, Shameik Moore and Hailee Steinfeld joked that they'd asked for their segment to be written not by writers but by studio executives. "What is up, Shameik," Kaluuya said, robotically. "Not much, Daniel. How are you, Hailee?" Moore said. "I am relatable," Steinfeld said. The screenplay award they presented had a surprise winner: Justine Triet, writer-director of "Anatomy of a Fall," beating out both "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer."

## A HISTORIC WIN

The evening's emotional highpoint came with the penultimate award, when Gladstone won best actress in a drama for Martin Scorsese's epic "Killers of the Flower Moon," becoming the first Indigenous winner in the category. She opened her speech in the Blackfeet language, explaining backstage that "it was one of the more natural things I could do in the moment." In her speech, Gladstone, who played Osage community member Mollie Burkhart, pronounced her win historic and said: "This is for every little rez kid, every little urban kid, every little Native kid out there who has a dream, who is seeing themselves represented and our stories told — by ourselves, in our own words — with tremendous allies and tremendous trust from and with each other."

## First US lunar lander in more than 50 years rockets toward moon with commercial deliveries

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first U.S. lunar lander in more than 50 years rocketed toward the moon Monday, launching private companies on a space race to make deliveries for NASA and other customers.

Astrobotic Technology's lander caught a ride on a brand new rocket, United Launch Alliance's Vulcan. The Vulcan streaked through the Florida predawn sky, putting the spacecraft on a roundabout route to the moon that should culminate with an attempted landing on Feb. 23.

"So, so, so excited. We are on our way to the moon!" Astrobotic chief executive John Thornton said.

The Pittsburgh company aims to be the first private business to successfully land on the moon, something only four countries have accomplished. But a Houston company also has a lander ready to fly, and could beat it to the lunar surface, taking a more direct path.

"First to launch. First to land is TBD," to be determined, Thornton noted.

NASA gave the two companies millions to build and fly their own lunar landers. The space agency wants the privately owned landers to scope out the place before astronauts arrive while delivering NASA tech and science experiments as well as odds and ends for other customers. Astrobotic's contract for the Perseus lander: \$108 million.

The last time the U.S. launched a moon-landing mission was in December 1972. Apollo 17's Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt became the 11th and 12th men to walk on the moon, closing out an era that has remained NASA's pinnacle.

The space agency's new Artemis program — named after the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology — looks to return astronauts to the moon's surface within the next few years. First will be a lunar fly-around with four astronauts, possibly before the end of the year.

Highlighting Monday's moonshot was the long-delayed initial test flight of the Vulcan rocket from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The 202-foot (61-meter) rocket is essentially an upgraded version of ULA's hugely successful workhorse Atlas V, which is being phased out along with the company's Delta IV. Jeff

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Bezos' rocket company, Blue Origin, provided the Vulcan's two main engines.

ULA declared success once the lander was free of the rocket's upper stage, nearly an hour into the flight. "Yee-haw!" shouted chief executive Tory Bruno. "I am so thrilled, I can't tell you how much."

The Soviet Union and the U.S. racked up a string of successful moon landings in the 1960s and 70s, before putting touchdowns on pause. China joined the elite club in 2013 and India in 2023. But last year also saw landers from Russia and a private Japanese company slam into the moon. An Israeli nonprofit crashed in 2019.

Next month, SpaceX will provide the lift for a lander from Intuitive Machines. The Nova-C lander's more direct one-week route could see both spacecraft attempting to land within days or even hours of one another.

The hourlong descent to the lunar surface — by far the biggest challenge — will be "exciting, nail-biting, terrifying all at once," Thornton said.

Besides flying experiments for NASA, Astrobotic drummed up its own freight business, packing the 6-foot-tall (1.9-meter-tall) Peregrine lander with everything from a chip of rock from Mount Everest and toy-size cars from Mexico that will catapult to the lunar surface and cruise around, to the ashes and DNA of deceased space enthusiasts, including "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry and science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke.

The Navajo Nation recently sought to have the launch delayed because of the human remains. saying it would be a "profound desecration" of a celestial body revered by Native Americans. Thornton said the December objections came too late but promised to try to find "a good path forward" with the Navajo for future missions.

One of the spaceflight memorial companies that bought room on the lander, Celestis, said in a statement that no single culture or religion owns the moon and should not be able to veto a mission. More remains are on the rocket's upper stage, which was boosted into a perpetual orbit around the sun reaching as far out as Mars.

Cargo fares for Peregrine ranged from a few hundred dollars to \$1.2 million per kilogram (2.2 pounds), not nearly enough for Astrobotic to break even. But for this first flight, that's not the point, according to Thornton.

"A lot of people's dreams and hopes are riding on this," he said.

## **Explainer: Now-found door 'plug' may hold vital clues to how a gaping hole blew open on a jetliner**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Investigators said Sunday they had found the piece of fuselage that blew off a Boeing airliner over Oregon on Friday, and hoped it would provide physical evidence of what went wrong.

The gaping hole in the side of the Alaska Airlines jet opened up where aircraft maker Boeing fits a "plug" to cover an emergency exit that the airline does not use.

The plugs are on most Boeing 737 Max 9 jets. The Federal Aviation Administration has temporarily grounded those planes until they undergo inspections of the area around the door plug.

### **WHY THE PLUG IS THERE**

Some larger Boeing 737s have emergency exits on fuselages behind the wings to meet a federal requirement that planes be designed so passengers can evacuate within 90 seconds even if half the exits are blocked.

The more passenger seats there are on a plane, the more exits are required.

Some carriers, including Indonesia's Lion Air and Corendon Dutch Airlines, cram more than 200 seats into their Max 9s, so they must have extra emergency exits. However, Alaska Airlines and United Airlines configure their 737 Max 9s to have fewer than 180 seats, so the planes don't need the two mid-cabin exits to comply with U.S. evacuation rules.

On Alaska and United, the only two U.S. airlines using the Max 9, those side exits near the back of the

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plane are replaced with a permanent plug the size of an exit door.

ARE THEY ONLY ON MAX 9s?

No. Boeing also makes bigger versions of its 737-900 — a predecessor to the Max — and the Max 8 with space for extra exits in the back. Buyers of those planes also may opt to have either exit doors or plugs installed.

WHO INSTALLS THE PLUGS?

A spokesman for Spirit AeroSystems — which is unrelated to Spirit Airlines — confirmed to The New York Times that the company installed door plugs on Max 9s, including the plug on the Alaska Airlines plane involved in Friday's incident. The spokesman told The Associated Press that the plugs are assembled into 737 fuselages at Spirit's factory in Wichita, Kansas, but declined further comment.

Boeing declined to comment on the issue.

THE BOEING SUPPLIER

Spirit is Boeing's largest supplier for commercial planes and builds fuselages and other parts for Boeing Max jets. The company has been at the center of several recent problems with manufacturing quality on both the Max and a larger plane, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Last year, Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems discovered improperly drilled fastener holes in a bulkhead that keeps 737 Max jets pressurized at cruising altitude.

THE INVESTIGATION

Officials with the National Transportation Safety Board, led by the board's chair, Jennifer Homendy, arrived in Portland, Oregon, on Saturday to begin an investigation that is likely to last a year or longer. Homendy declined to discuss possible causes when she briefed reporters on Saturday night.

The NTSB team includes a metallurgist, and Homendy said investigators will look at the exit-door plug, as well as its hinges and other parts.

Examining the damage to the door will be crucial to the investigation, according to independent experts.

"The good thing about metal is that metal paints a picture, metal tells a story," said Anthony Brickhouse, who teaches accident investigation at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Brickhouse said the exit doors, whether plugged or not, are not necessarily a weak point in the fuselage. He had never heard of an exit door plug falling off a plane before Alaska Airlines flight 1282.

WERE THERE WARNINGS?

The Boeing jetliner was not being used for flights to Hawaii after a warning light that could have indicated a pressurization problem lit up on three different flights, Homendy said Sunday.

Alaska Airlines decided to restrict the aircraft from long flights over water so that if the warning light reappeared, the plane "could return very quickly to an airport," she said at a news conference.

Homendy cautioned that the pressurization light might be unrelated to Friday's incident and more investigation was required.

OTHER FUSELAGE BLOWOUTS

There have been rare instances of holes opening in the fuselages of airliners. In most cases, they have been the result of metal fatigue in the plane's aluminum skin.

In the most horrific case, a flight attendant for Aloha Airlines was blown out of the cabin of a Boeing 737 over the Pacific Ocean in 1988 after an 18-foot-long (5.4-meter-long) chunk of the roof peeled away. Her body was never found. The tragedy led to tougher rules for airlines to inspect and repair microscopic fuselage cracks before they tear open in flight.

In 2009, a hole opened in the roof of a Southwest Boeing 737 flying 35,000 feet over West Virginia. And in 2011, a 5-foot (1.5-meter) gash unfurled in another Southwest Boeing 737, forcing pilots to make an emergency landing at a military base in Arizona. No one was injured in either of those cases, both of which were blamed on metal fatigue.

## Thousands forced from homes by a deadly Japan earthquake on New Year's face stress and exhaustion

By HIRO KOMAE, AYAKA MCGILL and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

WAJIMA, Japan (AP) — Thousands of people made homeless overnight are living in weariness and uncertainty on the western coast of Japan a week after a powerful earthquake left at least 168 dead and dozens missing.

The rescue effort since the magnitude 7.6 New Year's Day quake has drawn thousands of troops, firefighters and police who picked through collapsed buildings Monday hoping to find survivors.

Authorities warned of the danger of landslides, exacerbated by a heavy snowfall, throughout the quake's epicenter on the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture. The landscape blanketed in fluffy white revealed burned and crumbled houses, ashen blocks of a city, highways with gaping holes and cracks.

The deaths included 70 people in Wajima, 70 in Suzu, 18 in Anamizu and the rest were spread among four other towns. At least 323 people were still unaccounted for, a jump from some 100 earlier in the day as rescuers pour over a list of the region's population. Another 565 people were injured, and 1,390 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged.

A tsunami of several meters (feet) followed the initial major quake, adding to the damage. Aftershocks have continued daily.

Japanese meteorological officials warned strong quakes could persist for another month. Their frequency, while gradually diminishing, remained high compared to past quakes, totaling more than 1,000.

For the residents, recovery work has barely started. Shuji Yoshiura, a fisherman, said his boats were damaged and he could not go out on the sea.

Before the quake, Wajima was a tourist town with a shopping street offering seafood and traditional crafts. Much of it was destroyed in the fires that broke out after the Jan. 1 disaster.

Kentaro Mitsumori, who runs a corner grocery shop, slept in his car with his wife to guard against looting. Their store still stands but has no lock, electricity or running water. Everything sold out in three days. But he plans to close his business.

"Even if I manage to fix up the place, there just aren't going to be enough customers. I don't know how Wajima can survive," he said.

Nearly 30,000 people staying in schools, auditoriums and other evacuation centers worried about infections as cases of COVID-19 and other illnesses popped up.

In the shelters, people were still sleeping on cold floors. After initial help of a piece of bread and a cup of water for each person a day, more aid is allowing some facilities to begin serving hot food cooked in huge pots.

People were delighted by the temporary bathing facilities set up by soldiers, sitting in the hot water they had missed for days.

Still, exhaustion and stress are wearing them down. Many are in mourning. The main quake struck on New Year's Day, a time for families to gather in Japan. Some survivors said they were all alone because they lost their loved ones.

Mizue Kaba, 79, was lucky she survived, as did her daughter, son-in-law and grandson, who were visiting on New Year's from Osaka in central Japan.

Kaba is sleeping at a school, and no one is sure what might happen when schools open in a week after the New Year's break.

Three stoves were not enough to heat the school's big hall, and more heaters arrived.

"It's so cold," Kaba said.

## Israel says Hezbollah struck sensitive air traffic base in the north and warns of 'another war'

By JULIA FRANKEL, SAMY MAGDY and NAJIB JOBAIN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hezbollah has struck an air traffic control base in northern Israel, the Israeli military said Sunday, and warned of "another war" with the Iran-backed militant group.

The increase in fighting across the border with Lebanon as Israel battles Hamas militants in Gaza gave new urgency to U.S. diplomatic efforts as Secretary of State Antony Blinken prepared to visit Israel on his latest Mideast tour.

"This is a conflict that could easily metastasize, causing even more insecurity and even more suffering," Blinken told reporters after talks in Qatar, a key mediator. The escalation of cross-border fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has complicated a U.S. push to prevent a regional conflict.

The Israeli military said Hezbollah fire hit the sensitive air traffic control base on Mount Meron on Saturday but air defenses were not affected because backup systems were in place. It said that no soldiers were hurt and all damage will be repaired.

Nonetheless, it was one of the most serious attacks by Hezbollah in the months of fighting that has accompanied Israel's war in Gaza and forced tens of thousands of Israelis to evacuate communities near the Lebanese border.

Hezbollah described its rocket barrage as an "initial response" to the targeted killing of a top Hamas leader in a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut last week, which is presumed to have been carried out by Israel.

The Israeli military chief of staff, Lt. Col. Herzi Halevi, said military pressure on Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, was rising and it would either be effective "or we will get to another war." Military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari asserted that Israel's focus on Hezbollah's elite Radwan force was pushing it away from the border.

Israel has mostly sought to limit the fighting in its north. Hezbollah's military capabilities are far superior to those of Hamas. But Israeli leaders have said their patience is wearing thin, and that if the tensions cannot be resolved through diplomacy, they are prepared to use force.

"I suggest that Hezbollah learn what Hamas has already learned in recent months: No terrorist is immune," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet. We are determined to defend our citizens and to return the residents of the north safely to their homes."

Lower-intensity fighting along Israel's northern border broke out when Hezbollah began firing rockets shortly after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel triggered the war in Gaza, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking some 250 people hostage. Hezbollah has said its attacks aim to ease pressure on Gaza.

In a joint news briefing with Blinken, Qatar's government acknowledged that the killing of the senior Hamas leader in Lebanon could affect the complicated negotiations for the potential release of more hostages held by Hamas in Gaza but "we are continuing our discussions with the parties and trying to achieve as soon as possible an agreement."

Ten people died in violence in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, including a Palestinian man killed by attackers while driving a car with Israeli plates, and a young girl shot as Israeli police fired at a car that rammed a checkpoint.

Inside Gaza, the war against the militant group entered its fourth month Sunday.

The Israeli military has signaled that it has wrapped up major combat in northern Gaza, saying it has completed dismantling Hamas' military infrastructure there. Now it presses its offensive in the south, where most of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians are squeezed into smaller areas in a humanitarian disaster while being pounded by Israeli airstrikes.

Netanyahu insists the war will not end until the objectives of eliminating Hamas, getting Israel's hostages returned and ensuring that Gaza won't host a threat to Israel are met.

Biden administration officials have urged Israel to wind down its blistering air and ground offensive and shift to more targeted attacks against Hamas leaders.



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More than 22,800 Palestinians have been killed and more than 58,000 wounded since the war began, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The death toll does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. Health officials say about two-thirds of those killed have been women and minors.

Israel blames Hamas for civilian casualties because the group operates in heavily populated residential areas.

An airstrike near the southern city of Rafah killed two journalists on Sunday, including Hamza Dahdouh, the oldest son of Wael Dahdouh, Al Jazeera's chief correspondent in Gaza, according to the Qatari-owned Arabic-language channel and local medical officials. Al Jazeera broadcast footage of Dahdouh weeping and holding his son's hand. Israel's military had no immediate comment.

Al Jazeera strongly condemned the killings and other "brutal attacks against journalists and their families" by Israeli forces. Dahdouh also lost his wife, two children and a grandchild in an Oct. 26 airstrike, and was wounded in an Israeli strike last month that killed a co-worker.

"The world is blind to what's happening in the Gaza Strip," he said, blinking back tears.

Another airstrike hit a house between Khan Younis and the southern city of Rafah, killing at least seven people whose bodies were taken to the nearby European Gaza Hospital, according to an Associated Press journalist at the facility. One man hurried in carrying a baby, and later walked the blanket-wrapped child to the morgue.

"Everything happening here is outside the realms of law, outside the realms of reason. Our brains can't fully comprehend all this that is happening to us," said a grieving relative, Inas Abu al-Najja, her quavering voice rising. Men worked the rubble with picks and bare hands.

On Sunday, officials at Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis received the bodies of 18 people, including 12 children, killed in an Israeli strike late Saturday on a home in the Khan Younis camp set up decades ago to house refugees from the 1948 war over Israel's creation.

Israeli forces pushed deeper into the central city of Deir al-Balah, where residents in several neighborhoods were warned that they must evacuate.

The international medical charity Doctors Without Borders, known by the French acronym MSF, said it was evacuating its medical staff from Deir al-Balah's Al Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital.

A bullet penetrated a wall of the hospital's intensive care unit on Friday, and "drone attacks and sniper fire were just a few hundred meters from the hospital" over the past couple of days, said Carolina Lopez, the group's emergency coordinator there. She said the hospital received between 150 and 200 wounded people daily in recent weeks.

The International Rescue Committee and Medical Aid for Palestinians said they also were forced to withdraw from the hospital. "The amount of injuries being brought in over the last few days has been horrific," surgeon Nick Maynard with the IRC medical team said.

## Josh Allen rallies Bills for 21-14 win over Dolphins. Buffalo secures No. 2 seed in AFC

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Josh Allen walked toward the thousands of Bills fans who made their way to South Florida for the weekend, waving his arms as they showered him with postgame cheers.

It felt like home.

And that's where surging Buffalo will be next weekend. The Bills are AFC East champions for the fourth straight season and the No. 2 seed in the AFC playoffs.

"What a resilient group," said Allen, who threw a go-ahead touchdown pass to Dawson Knox midway through the fourth quarter to rally Buffalo past the Miami Dolphins 21-14 on Sunday night.

"So proud of our guys," Allen continued. "They battled their tails off. The final couple of drives I felt we found a groove on the offensive side of the ball. The ball was coming out of my hands the best all year."

Allen made things difficult with three turnovers in Miami territory, but he finished with 359 yards and two touchdown passes for the Bills, who didn't clinch a playoff berth until Tennessee beat Jacksonville earlier

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Sunday. Buffalo will host seventh-seeded Pittsburgh in the wild-card round next Sunday.

The Bills were 5-5 in mid-November and faced long odds just to make the playoffs. They fired offensive coordinator Ken Dorsey after a Week 10 collapse against Denver. From there, they won six of seven — including five straight to close out the season.

Miami, which made the playoffs with its Week 16 win over Dallas, fell to the sixth seed and will play at AFC West champion Kansas City on Saturday night.

"We're going to have to come in tomorrow, we're going to have to watch the film, see things we can get corrected and then move on," quarterback Tua Tagovailoa said. "It's a short week. We know that and it's going to be a tough road game for us."

The Bills dominated time of possession and outgained Miami by nearly 200 yards, but offensive miscues in the first half stalled their momentum. Buffalo trailed 14-7 before Deonte Harty returned a punt 96 yards for a touchdown early in the fourth quarter.

"I blacked out," Harty said afterward. "I can't tell you what happened. I'd just seen a crease. I hit it. And the next thing you know, I was free."

Buffalo then forced a three-and-out, and Allen directed an eight-play, 74-yard drive, capped by his 5-yard toss to Knox with 7:16 left.

"Give all the glory to the Lord," said Knox, whose late brother, Luke, played football at Florida International University less than 30 miles from Hard Rock Stadium. "I'm just thankful that my number was called but I think anyone in here when their number was called, they stepped up tonight."

Miami had one last chance, but Taylor Rapp intercepted Tagovailoa on a pass intended for Chase Claypool with 1:13 left.

Allen finished 30 of 38 and was intercepted on back-to-back drives to open the game. He squandered another scoring chance when he completed a pass to Ty Johnson short of the goal line at the end of the first half, allowing time to expire.

Another promising Buffalo drive in the third quarter ended when Allen was strip-sacked by Christian Wilkins.

Tagovailoa finished 17 of 27 for 173 yards with two interceptions. He had a 3-yard touchdown throw to Tyreek Hill in the second quarter and finished with an NFL-best 4,624 yards passing. Rookie running back De'Von Achane's shifty 25-yard score in the second quarter put Miami ahead 7-0.

Hill, finished with seven catches for 82 yards, bringing his league-leading total to 1,799. He celebrated his 13th touchdown of the season with a back flip in the end zone four days after firefighters put out a blaze at his South Florida home.

Both teams were sloppy early.

Buffalo safety Christian Benford undercut Tagovailoa's pass intended for Hill to end Miami's opening drive. Then, Dolphins cornerback Eli Apple intercepted Allen in the end zone on Buffalo's first possession to halt a 12-play, 79-yard drive.

Allen had entered the game as one of the league's most turnover-prone quarterbacks with 14 interceptions, and he had another one on Buffalo's second drive on a fourth-down heave across his body. Dolphins safety DeShon Elliott came down with it.

But Miami's offense fizzled as Buffalo forced four punts and a turnover down the stretch. The Dolphins closed the season with two straight losses and now will face a Chiefs team that beat them 21-14 in Germany in Week 9.

"It's a team game," Dolphins cornerback Jalen Ramsey said. "If the other side is struggling, we have to do even more to help them get in position to make plays. We have to find a way to play complementary ball."

## INJURIES

Bills: WR Gabe Davis left in the second quarter with what appeared to be a non-contact left knee injury and did not return. ... LB Tyrel Dodson left with a shoulder injury. ... CB Rasul Douglas (knee) left in the second quarter. ... RB Ty Johnson did not return after halftime because of a concussion.

Dolphins: Elliott pulled his calf in pregame warmups but played through it. ... LB Andrew Van Ginkel left

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with a foot injury in the third quarter and did not return. ... LB Cameron Goode was carted off the field with a leg injury early in the fourth quarter.

## Inside the 2024 Golden Globes: What you didn't see on camera

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — The Golden Globe Awards likes to think of itself as the party of the year, but instead of a debauched, champagne-fueled romp, it can sometimes feel more like a strange high school reunion for the extremely famous.

Some are catching up with old friends and co-stars, some are kissing their dates in plain sight and some fawn over the cool kids they haven't yet met. Sometimes it happens on camera, as with "Poor Things" director Yorgos Lanthimos swooning over his proximity to a personal idol, Bruce Springsteen, but most of the time those interactions are saved for when the cameras are off — though Timothée Chalamet and Kylie Jenner clearly didn't get the memo that there were still live cameras even during the commercial breaks.

You'd never know that the Golden Globes were coming back from several scandal-plagued years inside the same ballroom where they've been held for years. The chatter was about how fun it felt to be back, whether or not Travis Kelce would show with Taylor Swift (he didn't) and who was going to get the Oscar boost out of it. Some grumbled about the last minute seating assignments for high-profile attendees who weren't told who their tablemates would be until late Saturday afternoon.

### THE RUSH BEFORE SHOWTIME

It's always a flurry of excitement in the moments before the show begins, as the biggest stars rush in from the red carpet to make the opening monologue. Jennifer Lawrence, noted appreciator of "lukewarm chardonnay," walked in with minutes to go, martini in hand and purpose in her eyes. Right behind her was Oprah Winfrey, seemingly the only A-lister in the room with a full security detail clearing the way for her and Gayle King.

Many of the most famous faces were seated on the stage level where Harrison Ford took his seat early, at a table with Selena Gomez who was excited about the Nobu sushi being served. Attendees were largely thrilled with the upgraded food choice after years of chicken and fish and root vegetables that were usually long gone by the time everyone took their seats.

Soon Martin Short joined Gomez, in a place clearly marked "Meryl Streep." Short quickly got up to speak with Ford who gestured to him to stay seated. Short ignored, and both were soon in stitches laughing. Later Ford made his way over to his "Indiana Jones" director Steven Spielberg and old co-star Kate Capshaw to catch up.

As they talked Ben Affleck made a beeline to studio exec Tom Rothman, who chatted and laughed before Affleck left to take his seat next to his pal Matt Damon. Kristin Wiig also made sure to stop Paul Giamatti to congratulate him for his performance in "The Holdovers."

In a different part of the room, Gary Oldman gave his "Oppenheimer" director Christopher Nolan a kiss on the cheek as they passed one another and the voice over the loudspeaker urged everyone to get to their seats as soon as possible.

Elsewhere "Priscilla" star Cailee Spaeny looked starry eyed along her way to her seat, while a waiter gushed to Quinta Brunson how gorgeous she looked.

### CHOICE SEATS, SNAPS AND CONVERSATIONS

Unlike in years past the TV tables were just as big as an attraction as the movie ones, with "The Bear" cast seated in a high traffic area that only got more crowded with their subsequent wins. Ayo Edebiri and Jeremy Allen White stayed close most of the night, while Edebiri snapped photos of her co-star Matty Nathanson with a digital camera she brought.

"Beau is Afraid" star Joaquin Phoenix stayed close to his director Ari Aster as well, while behind them Emily Blunt and John Krasinski greeted Martin Scorsese with a hug and Katharine McPhee took a shot of the room with her phone.

Jo Koy's awkward monologue sent many in search of another drink early in the show. The Globes smartly tucked the bar, the dessert table and some sushi extras in a separate room in the back of the ballroom

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which over the course of the night filled up with the likes of Florence Pugh, Helen Mirren, Shameik Moore, Barry Keoghan and Christina Ricci.

Back in the room, Ali Wong had a meaningful chat with "All of Us Strangers" star Andrew Scott about his heartbreaking film.

"I didn't know what it was about" before seeing it, Wong said. "It broke me."

Scott also had an animated chat with Pedro Pascal, while Allison Williams took a picture with her old "Girls" boyfriend and current cast member of "The Bear" Ebon Moss-Bachrach.

"The Bear" cast was seated right next to "The Crown" table, Elizabeth Debicki was one of many who'd make her way over to talk and laugh with White and Edebiri. Robert Downey Jr. opted for the shouting across the room method. "What's up BEAR," he shouted, blowing kisses at them.

His "Oppenheimer" co-star Florence Pugh, who stayed close to pal Zoe Lister-Jones all night, also made her way to congratulate Ebediri but was quickly pulled away by Gillian Anderson who promptly took a selfie with her friend.

Pugh and Lister-Jones were on their way to the bar for some sushi and a drink. "I'm hungry!" Pugh exclaimed. Everywhere you looked there were fun conversations happening, like Riley Keogh laughing with Colman Domingo or Charles Melton talking to Barry Keoghan (hopefully about prosthetics).

NEAR THE END

The night started getting long about two hours in, where many took a break in the restroom. It was there that Natasha Lyonne spotted Elizabeth Olsen and gushed about her dress, and where a few other Marvel stars laughed to find themselves both at the sink at the same time.

"I want to change," Pom Klementieff said to her "Guardians of the Galaxy" co-star Karen Gillan.

Gillan agreed and Klementieff sighed, "Let's go back, back to hell."

After the show in the lobby, a shoeless Brie Larson hopped over to Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach in the lobby outside shouting "Gret-A, Gret-A!" before jumping up to hug the "Barbie" director.

They were just some of the many A-listers walking through the lobby on to various studio and agency parties happening around Los Angeles, where many will be analyzing what the night's results mean for the Oscars. Is "Oppenheimer" now the solid frontrunner? Can "Maestro" and "May December" make a comeback? Why did "Barbie" win ONLY two awards?

Or perhaps it'll stay light and fun. Because at those parties, the cameras really are off.

## **Trump is raising expectations heading into the Iowa caucuses. Now he has to meet them**

By STEVE PEOPLES and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa (AP) — When Donald Trump launched his 2024 presidential campaign after a disappointing midterm election for Republicans, his trajectory was something of a mystery. But seven days before Iowa's kick-off caucuses, his standing among the GOP faithful is hardly in doubt.

Voters, campaign operatives and even some of the candidates on the ground here overwhelmingly agree that the Republican former president is the prohibitive favorite heading into the Jan. 15 caucuses — whether they like it or not.

"Everybody sees the writing on the wall," said Angela Roemer, a 56-year-old Republican from Solon, Iowa, as she waited for former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley to arrive for a weekend rally at Field Day Brewing Co. in North Liberty.

"It's a little depressing," Roemer said as her order of tortilla chips arrived, lamenting "all the drama" surrounding Trump. "We don't need another four years. But Trump's going to win."

Just beneath all the perceived certainty about Trump's victory, however, lies serious risks for the front-runner. Trump continues to fuel sky-high expectations, despite questions about the strength of his voter-turnout operation, a closing message clouded by lies about the 2020 election and stormy weather forecasts that could dissuade supporters from showing up.

Few believe such issues will lead to a straight-up loss next week in Iowa, but in the complicated world

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of presidential politics, a win is not always a win.

Meeting expectations

Should Trump fail to meet expectations with a resounding victory in Iowa, he would enter next-up New Hampshire and South Carolina much more vulnerable. Haley and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis continue to pour millions of dollars into Iowa advertising as they cross the state, backed by well-funded allies with robust get-out-the-vote operations, in a relentless effort to narrow Trump's margin of victory.

At the same time, Trump's team privately acknowledges that it has cut back on its door-knocking, get-out-the-vote operation heading into the final week. They insist they can ensure his loyalists show up on caucus day more effectively by relying on rallies, phone calls and a peer-to-peer text message program. That's even as allies of DeSantis and Haley push ahead with traditional get-out-the-vote plans at voters' doorways.

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, who has endorsed Haley and spent the weekend campaigning with her across Iowa, conceded that "it will be tough" to beat Trump here.

"There's obviously a strong implication Trump's gonna likely win the Iowa caucus," Sununu told The Associated Press, even as he insisted momentum was building for Haley that will show up more clearly in New Hampshire's Jan. 23 first-in-the-nation primary. "In New Hampshire, she clearly has a chance to do something no one thought was possible, which was to beat Trump in an early state."

Aware of the risks, the former president's team is scrambling to lower expectations for Iowa.

Trump's advisers in recent days have been quick to remind reporters — at least privately — that no Republican presidential candidate has won a contested Iowa caucus by more than 12 points since Bob Dole in 1988.

The Trump campaign sees Dole's margin as the floor for Trump's victory, a senior adviser told The Associated Press, requesting anonymity to share internal discussions. The adviser described the mood on the campaign as confident but not comfortable, acknowledging questions about the strength of rival organizations and, as always, the weather, which could affect turnout if there is snow or extreme cold.

Frigid forecast

Heavy snowfall, blowing and drifting snow and dangerous travel conditions are expected Monday and Tuesday of this week to be followed by frigid temperatures that could drift below 0 degrees by caucus day.

The weather has already forced the Trump campaign to cancel multiple appearances by Arkansas Gov. Sarah Sanders and her father, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who had been scheduled to court Iowa voters on Trump's behalf Monday.

Ever defiant, Trump projected confidence as he raced across the state for a series of "commit to caucus" rallies over the weekend before returning to his Florida estate. He's scheduled to return to Iowa on Wednesday for a Fox News town hall.

At every stop over the weekend, he talked about his dominant standing in the polls. He's also frequently repeated lies that the 2020 election was stolen from him by voter fraud, a claim refuted by the courts and his own administration but one that fueled a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Still, weather is the more immediate concern heading into the final full week of campaigning in Iowa.

Trump told an audience of more than 2,000 in Clinton on Saturday night that his aides told him he shouldn't worry about cold weather, although his opponents probably should.

"The other side will never vote, because they don't have any enthusiasm," Trump said. Stoking the crowd, he added, "We won't lose one vote, because our people, they're going to walk on glass."

That's not to say there's no risk.

"The biggest risk is you say, you know, 'We're winning by so much, darling, let's stay home and watch television,'" Trump said the night before in Mason City. "And if enough people do that, it's not going to be pretty."

Trump's risks

Indeed, Trump has a loyal base of support but he's also targeting a significant number of first-time caucus participants who don't necessarily know where to go next Monday or how the complicated caucus

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process works. The events feature a series of speeches and votes that can span multiple hours, and in many cases, they're not held at regular polling locations.

A Des Moines Register poll conducted in December found that 63% of likely first-time Republican caucus participants say Trump is their first choice.

One of the first-time participants may be William Caspers, a 37-year-old farmer from Rockwell, Iowa. He said he had never attended a political event of any kind before Trump's Mason City event on Friday. While he's supporting Trump "100%" in 2024, he said he was only "pretty sure" he would caucus for him.

"Where is it going to be? Where do I go? I'm kind of confused about that," Caspers said. He noted that he was in the bathroom when a caucus explainer video played at the big screen at the front of the event hall. Several hundred other voters were still in line outside during the video.

"So, the caucus is this Monday?" Caspers asked an AP reporter, who clarified that it was Monday Jan. 15.

Not far away, Jackie Garlock, of nearby Clear Lake, was wearing a white hat indicating her status as one of Trump's "caucus captains." The campaign has promoted its efforts to recruit and train hundreds of such captains, who will represent the campaign within a given precinct on Monday night.

Garlock said she only briefly attended one virtual training on Zoom, which she described as largely a pep rally. She also said that she's not particularly good or experienced at political organizing.

But she's not worried.

"I have a lot of confidence," she said of Trump's chances next week as she scanned the crowded North Iowa Events Center. "I just look at the number of people who are here and I think, how can they all be wrong?"

Haley and DeSantis

Meanwhile, Haley and DeSantis are spending big money to attack each other on Iowa television, although Haley has had a decided spending advantage in the caucus' final days.

Overall, Haley and her allies are on pace to spend more than \$15 million in Iowa television advertising this month alone; DeSantis' team is spending less than \$5 million, according to an AP analysis of data from the media tracking firm AdImpact.

Virtually none of the attack ads from Haley or DeSantis is directed at Trump. That's even as Haley's primary super PAC is running multiple ads describing DeSantis as "a dumpster fire," and one of DeSantis' evolving group of super PACs recently launched an ad campaign calling Haley "Tricky Nikki."

Trump and his allies are spending nearly \$10 million this month in Iowa. And he's shifted some of his attacks away from DeSantis and toward Haley. But he's also investing in ads targeting Democratic President Joe Biden, his likely general election opponent.

Of all the candidates on the ground in Iowa this week, only DeSantis is predicting an outright victory over Trump. He moved his entire campaign leadership to the state in recent months and visited each of Iowa's 99 counties.

"You're going to see an earthquake on Jan. 15," DeSantis told dozens of supporters at a downtown bar in Dubuque.

## Lily Gladstone is the Golden Globes' first Indigenous best actress winner

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — When Lily Gladstone took the stage Sunday night to accept her first Golden Globe, she spoke to the live TV audience in the Blackfeet language.

"This is a historic win," she said, becoming the Globes' first Indigenous winner of best actress in a drama. "This is for every little rez kid, every little urban kid, every little Native kid out there who has a dream, who is seeing themselves represented and our stories told — by ourselves, in our own words — with tremendous allies and tremendous trust from and with each other."

Gladstone, 37, won for her role as Mollie Burkhart in Martin Scorsese's epic "Killers of the Flower Moon." In the film, her character's family was murdered in a reign of terror in which the Osage were targeted for the headrights to their oil-rich land in Oklahoma.

In the audience, co-star Leonardo DiCaprio wore a pin in solidarity.

"I have my Osage pin on tonight because, you know, the Osage nation, we're standing in unison with them for this movie," he said before the show.

Gladstone and DiCaprio walked the red carpet with their respective mothers. After her win backstage, she paid homage to her parents for supporting her dreams.

The actor said her father watched from home, where they will have a "big ol' feast."

"Every time I've felt a level of guilt or it wasn't really possible, my mom and my dad my whole life never once questioned that this is what I was meant to do," said Gladstone, who is an only child. "They would always support me when it was the times of famine and the times of feast."

It's "a beautiful community, nation, that encouraged me to keep going, keep doing this," Gladstone said of the Blackfeet Nation. "I'm here with my mom, who, even though she's not Blackfeet, worked tirelessly to get our language into our classrooms so I had a Blackfeet-language teacher growing up."

The actor, who grew up between Seattle and the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, was named one of 2023's AP Breakthrough Entertainers.

Gladstone said she typically greets people in her Blackfeet language.

"It's often how I introduce myself in a new group of people, especially when it's significant," she said. "It was one of the more natural things I could do in the moment."

On the subject of a possible Oscar win, Gladstone told The Associated Press: "It would be an incredible moment in my life, but it would mean so much more than just me."

"It is, of course, something I have to think about, insofar as I would just really love to speak some of my language — and teach myself a little bit more of my language — to have and to hold in that moment," she continued.

Gladstone is the second Native actress to receive a nomination at the Globes after Irene Bedard, who received a nod for the 1995 television movie "Lakota Woman: Siege at Wounded Knee."

"I don't have words," Gladstone said. "I'm so grateful that I can speak even a little bit of my language, which I'm not fluent in, up here, because in this business, Native actors used to speak their lines in English, and then the sound mixers would run them backwards to accomplish Native languages on camera."

Speaking of the award, Gladstone said: "It doesn't belong to just me. I'm holding it right now. I'm holding it with all my beautiful sisters in the film."

## **Defendant who attacked judge in wild courtroom video will face her again in Las Vegas**

Associated Press undefined

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A defendant who was captured in courtroom video leaping over a judge's bench and attacking her, touching off a bloody brawl, is scheduled to appear before her again Monday morning.

In his Jan. 3 appearance before Clark County District Court Judge Mary Kay Holthus, Deobra Redden, who was facing prison time for a felony battery charge stemming from a baseball bat attack last year, tried to convince the judge that he was turning around his violent past.

Redden asked for leniency while describing himself as "a person who never stops trying to do the right thing no matter how hard it is."

But when it became clear Holthus was going to sentence him to prison time, and as the court marshal moved to handcuff and take him into custody, Redden yelled expletives and charged forward. People in the courtroom audience, including his foster mother, began to scream.

Redden vaulted a defense table, dove over the judge's bench and landed atop Holthus. The video showed the judge falling back against a wall and an American flag toppling on them.

Redden "supermanned over the judicial bench," Jerry Wiese, the court's chief judge, said in a description of the leap to reach Holthus.

The defendant, who had grabbed the judge's hair, had to be wrestled off her by her clerk, Michael Lasso, and several court and jail officers, some of whom threw punches. Lasso was treated for cuts on his hands

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and a marshal was hospitalized for a dislocated shoulder and a gash on his forehead.

Holthus suffered some injuries but was back to work the next day.

Wiese credited Lasso for acting quickly, saying he was the "primary person" who pulled Redden off the judge "and probably kept her from having more severe injuries."

Redden's defense attorney, Caesar Almase, declined to comment.

Redden was jailed on \$54,000 bail in connection with the attack but refused to return to court the next day on the new charges, so a judge rescheduled his next appearance in that case for Tuesday. Records show he faces charges including extortion, coercion with force and battery on a protected person, referring to the judge and the officers who came to her aid.

At the Monday appearance, Holthus is expected to continue sentencing in Redden's other case, involving the baseball bat attack. He initially was charged with assault but reached a deal with prosecutors and pleaded guilty in November to a reduced charge of attempted battery resulting in substantial injuries.

Redden's criminal record is marked by mostly violent offenses and includes prior convictions for three felonies and nine misdemeanors, District Attorney Steve Wolfson said.

"He's been violent his entire adult life," Wolfson said.

Redden, 30, had tried to convince the judge otherwise Wednesday.

"I'm not a rebellious person," he told her, adding that he didn't think he should be sent to prison. "But if it's appropriate for you, then you have to do what you have to do."

Redden was not shackled or wearing jail attire at the time of the attack because he had been released from custody while awaiting sentencing.

## Golden Globes fashion: Taylor Swift stuns in shimmery green and Margot Robbie goes full Barbie

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Lifestyles Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Swift stunned in shimmery acid green custom Gucci at the newfangled Golden Globes, Sandra Hüller swept onto the red carpet in goddess green and Margot Robbie went full Barbie in pink custom Armani Privé at Sunday's start of the rush-rush awards season.

Colman Domingo honored the man he portrays in "Rustin" — activist Bayard Rustin — in a Nehru tuxedo adorned with pins, while Lily Gladstone, a star of "Killers of the Flower Moon" and a red carpet newcomer, wore Valentino, a white gown with a black overcoat. She had a Bulgari diamond choker around her neck, later winning a Globe for best actress in a dramatic film.

Fashion risk-taker Timothée Chalamet, the latest "Wonka," donned a bedazzled black jacket with black skinny trousers and a low-buttoned black shirt. His designer: Celine Homme.

Swift's stunner by Gucci's Sabato De Sarno included three straps at the back. Robbie, the star and a producer of the blockbuster and heavily nominated "Barbie" film, wore a hot pink sequined gown with a pink tulle boa. Her look was modeled on Superstar Barbie from 1977.

"Taylor Swift wearing Gucci was an absolute coup for Sabato De Sarno. With only one season at the iconic house under his belt, he's already dressing one of the most famous pop icons in the world," said Madeline Hirsch, news director for InStyle. "The look felt very Taylor. She loves sparkle, but with its bright color and slinky silhouette, it was definitely one of her more interesting looks in recent memory."

Hüller, the "Anatomy of a Fall" star, chose a color from Louis Vuitton somewhere between emerald and sea green in Beverly Hills, California. Her bodice was fitted with skinny straps paired with a skirt of gentle pleats that fell to a train.

Show host Jo Koy, Christian Friedel, Matty Matheson, Daniel Pemberton and Justin Hartley all went wide on the lapels of their tuxedos. Colman Domingo went in a different direction in a custom black look by Louis Vuitton's new men's creative director, Pharrell Williams. He accessorized with pins of pearl and red jewels, and a single pearl earring.

"(Jawaharlal) Nehru was actually, you know, the first prime minister of India, and he was a colleague of Bayard Rustin, who I am representing tonight as a leading actor in a film. So it all tells the story. So for me,



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I was like, oh, Nehru. He represented peace and strength and love," Domingo told The Associated Press. As for his earring, he smiled: "Pearl. Why not? Because why not?" The buttons of his jacket were also pearl.

Dua Lipa showed up in custom Schiaparelli with a Tiffany & Co. necklace from 1962. Helen Mirren went for two hues of purple, including a coat, from Dolce & Gabbana. Julia Schlaepfer, meanwhile, walked in a white Old Hollywood gown from Danielle Frankel with a flawless drape at the high neck and no back.

## CLASSIC CARPET GLAM ON DISPLAY

Jennifer Lopez also went Old Hollywood in strapless light pink with huge floral sleeves by Nicole + Felicia Couture. Greta Gerwig, the "Barbie" director, wore custom Fendi couture in black, including long black gloves to go with the sculptural silk duchesse look. Jennifer Aniston also went for black, her dress a strapless look with a scallop-pattern skirt. It was Dolce & Gabbana. She rocked her iconic "Rachel" haircut from her "Friends" days.

"It may sound cheesy but it really is true that Old Hollywood glamour is making a comeback on the post-writer strike red carpet," said Brooke Bobb, fashion news director for Harper's Bazaar.

Gillian Anderson won the night when it came to motifs. The "Sex Education" star was dressed in an ivory strapless gown by Gabriela Hearst embroidered with vaginas.

Why? She told Deadline there were many reasons, the top one this: "It's brand appropriate."

## PLENTY OF SPARKLE AND METALLICS

Quinta Brunson, often a fashion standout, wore a sparkly Balmain gown in champagne that fell to her ankles with a crossover neck and an understated sparkle.

"If the Golden Globes were any indication, we're in the midst of a new Hollywood Gilded Age when it comes to fashion," Hirsch said. "Everyone from Emma Stone to Quinta Brunson glimmered and glittered in shimmering gowns that caught the light. Even Taylor Swift got in on the action wearing a very reputation-coded green sequin gown."

A gaggle of stars made a statement in red: Da'Vine Joy Randolph with a broad peplum at the waist and ruffles at her low-cut neckline from Rodarte, and Alma Pöysti in a shiny off-shoulder number and a full ballgown skirt. Heidi Klum also represented the red crew in a strapless look with a huge, high-slit skirt. Selena Gomez, also in red, wore a fun gown with an asymmetrical hemline that began above the knee.

## THE COLOR RED RULES

Rachel Brosnahan (Sergio Hudson), Julianne Moore (Bottega Veneta), Florence Pugh (Valentino), Danielle Brooks (Moschino) and Ayo Edebiri (Prada) also wore red. So did a couple of standout men, including Barry Keoghan of "Saltburn" in Louis Vuitton and John Krasinski, who paired his shiny red jacket with purple trousers.

"I love how every carpet, one color sort of pops. We've had a lot of yellow and pink but red is such a classic red carpet color," said Andrea Lavinthal, editorial director for style and beauty at People.

Pugh debuted a brand new mohawk on the carpet.

"She always delivers an interesting hair look, and this night was no exception. The cool blonde color and 80s-rockstar styling were punk perfection, and paired with her sheer Valentino gown, all eyes were on her this evening," Hirsch said.

Others sparkled in silver, including Julia Garner in a risque look with chunky embellishment and cut-out sides by Gucci. Issa Rae went for metallic orange from Pamela Roland's spring/summer 2024 collection. It had a geometric tile sequin design.

Oprah, in celebration of the film adaptation of "The Color Purple" musical, continued her purple streak in a fitted long-sleeve gown. The look was embroidered in a geometric motif with a draped neckline. It was custom Louis Vuitton. Natalie Portman wore a garden of sequins by Dior Couture.

## LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE GUYS

The men were mostly in solids. Not Chris Perfetti. He went shirtless in bold pinstripes and a huge black rose on one lapel. Tyler James Williams (in Dolce & Gabbana) went the same route, though his flower was cream. Jeffrey Wright opted for a traditional black tux. Lenny Kravitz rocked a black, wide-legged

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Alexander McQueen jumpsuit with side cutouts.

"Barry Keoghan and Jonathan Bailey have some of the most interesting suits of the evening," said Trishna Rikhy, associate style commerce editor for Esquire. "Keoghan's, with contrasting prints in the same shade of red on his blazer and pants, and Bailey's, with a clean, all-white look tailored to a tee. These bright monochromatic looks are also refreshing after Hollywood's long history of monochrome, meaning all black."

There were some curious looks, including Meryl Streep in a liquid black skirt and jacket with a white pussy bow blouse and Natasha Lyon in a white gown with a spiky bodice that poked well above her neck.

Billie Eilish, her hair bright red and black, went school marm in a white blouse, brown skirt and an oversized black jacket, eyeglasses in place. Her look was by Willy Chavarria.

Jodie Foster channeled the same school marm, only this one was dressed up for a party with a high sequined collar and belt at the waist above a bulky pleated skirt. The designer: Alberta Ferretti.

## **Tyre Nichols' family gathers for vigil 1 year after police brutally beat him**

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — One year ago, Tyre Nichols was driving home to have dinner with his family when he was pulled over by Memphis police who claimed the Black man was driving recklessly and yanked him out of his car.

Officers hit him with a stun gun and pepper sprayed him, but he managed to get away and tried to run home. Five officers caught up with him just steps from his house, and, as he called out for his mother, they kicked him, punched him and hit him with a police baton. The attack was captured on the officers' body cameras and a stationary police pole camera.

Nichols died in a hospital of his injuries three days later on Jan. 10, 2023. His death shook Memphis to its core and led to impassioned protests throughout the U.S. On Sunday night, Nichols' family members and their supporters gathered at the site of the beating to remember the life of the father, FedEx employee, skateboarding aficionado and amateur photographer who was taken from them at the age of 29.

More than 100 people held candles that flickered in the chilly Memphis air as they heard Nichols' mother, stepfather and three siblings talk about how difficult the past year has been for them. His mother, Row-Vaughn Wells, recalled how her stomach began hurting the night of the traffic stop, not knowing that her son was being beaten just steps from her house.

Wearing Converse sneakers her son gave her last Christmas, Wells cried as she talked about missing her son.

"Regardless of wherever my kids are, they're going to call me, they're going to come by if they're close enough," Wells said. "This year, I didn't get that from Tyre. I didn't get a phone call. I didn't get a text message. I didn't get a 'Merry Christmas.' I didn't get none of that from my baby this year.

"That's the most hurtful thing because he used to try to be the first one to call," Wells said. "Mama, was I the first one to call you today?"

Nichols' beating was one in a string of instances of police violence against Black people that sparked protests and renewed debate about police brutality and the need for police reform in the U.S.

His death also led to serious repercussions for the Memphis Police Department and the city. Seven officers were fired for violating department policies during the traffic stop and beating, while an eighth was allowed to retire before he could be fired.

Five of the fired officers — Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith — were charged with second-degree murder and other offenses in state court, and with civil rights violations in federal court. The five officers are Black.

Mills pleaded guilty in November to federal charges of excessive force and obstruction of justice. The plea is part of a larger deal in which prosecutors said he had also agreed to plead guilty later to state charges. The four other officers have pleaded not guilty to the state and federal charges.

The officers said they pulled Nichols over because he was driving recklessly, but police Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis has said no evidence was found to support that allegation.

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An autopsy report showed Nichols died from blows to the head and that the manner of death was homicide. The report described brain injuries and cuts and bruises to the head and other parts of the body.

After Nichols' death, the crime-suppression unit the officers were part of was disbanded. Former members of the so-called Scorpion team have been assigned to other units within the police department.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced an investigation in July into how Memphis police officers use force and conduct arrests, one of several "patterns and practices" investigations it has undertaken in other cities.

In March, the Justice Department said it was conducting a separate review concerning use of force, de-escalation strategies and specialized units in the police department.

The police department, the city and the former officers are also being sued by Nichols' mother in federal court. Filed in April, the \$550 million lawsuit blames them for his death and accuses Davis of allowing the Scorpion unit's aggressive tactics to go unchecked despite warning signs.

Also last year, the Memphis City Council approved several ordinances in the wake of Nichols' death, including one preventing traffic stops for minor infractions. News outlets have reported that then-Mayor Jim Strickland sent a letter to the council in December saying he did not enforce the ordinances because he believed they were illegal.

New Mayor Paul Young, who took office Jan. 1 after Strickland's two terms expired, told media on Tuesday that he would enforce the ordinances.

## Love comes through as Packers beat Bears 17-9 to clinch a playoff berth

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Jordan Love accomplished something in his first season as a starting quarterback that his four-time MVP predecessor failed to achieve last year.

He has the Green Bay Packers in the playoffs.

Love threw for 316 yards and connected with Dontayvion Wicks on a pair of touchdowns as the Packers earned a wild-card berth with a 17-9 victory over the Chicago Bears on Sunday.

The Packers bounced back from a 2-5 start by winning seven of their last 10 games, including three straight.

"I think everyone knew what we were capable of," Love said. "All the games we lost were close games that we knew there were little things we could fix that would put us over the hump to win those games. I think we were always right there in every game, so that was the thing that was easy for us to keep believing."

The Packers (9-8) needed a win to reach the playoffs. Green Bay delivered by beating the Bears (7-10) for a 10th consecutive time.

Green Bay was in a similar situation for its regular-season finale last year, but lost 20-16 at home to the Detroit Lions in Aaron Rodgers' last game with the Packers. The Packers traded Rodgers to the New York Jets less than four months later to make way for Love, a 2020 first-round draft pick from Utah State.

Love guided the NFL's youngest team to the postseason by throwing 18 touchdown passes and one interception over his last eight games.

"I said it back in camp: He's the best quarterback in the league," Packers cornerback Jaire Alexander said. "And he's been proving it these past few weeks."

Green Bay is the NFC's No. 7 seed and will visit NFC East champion Dallas (12-5) next Sunday in a matchup with Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy, who guided the Packers from 2006-18 and led them to their last Super Bowl title.

Love went 27 of 32 as Green Bay never punted all day. Love threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Wicks that put Green Bay ahead for good midway through the second quarter and found the rookie fifth-round pick in the end zone again for a 12-yard score in the third.

"He's a tough-minded sucker," Packers coach Matt LaFleur said of Love. "His family did a hell of a job raising him just in terms of what he's all about."

Love spent most of this season throwing primarily to rookies and second-year pros. Those guys helped win the game Sunday, though they didn't win any praise from Bears safety Jaquan Brisker.

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Jayden Reed caught four passes for 112 yards. Wicks had six catches for 61 yards to go with his two touchdowns. Bo Melton had five receptions for 62 yards less than a week after the Packers signed him to their active roster from the practice squad.

"I feel like we could have tightened up on the receivers a lot more than we did today," said Brisker, who recovered a fumble by Love. "We gave them too much room. I don't really have no respect for them at all, just to be honest."

Green Bay's Aaron Jones rushed for 111 yards on 22 carries, his third straight 100-yard performance.

Chicago now heads into the offseason facing a major question about its quarterback situation. The Bears have the No. 1 pick in the upcoming draft and must decide whether to keep Justin Fields or select his potential replacement.

"I control what I can control," Fields said. "And I'm going to get healthy this offseason, spend time with my family and get better. Like I said, we went through the same thing last year. We had the No. 1 pick, everybody was asking, 'What if? What if? What if?' And nothing happened. I'm not saying that nothing might happen, because, shoot, we all don't know."

The Bears had the first overall pick last year but traded it to Carolina, which used it to select Alabama quarterback Bryce Young. Part of the package the Bears got in exchange was Carolina's No. 1 selection this year, which will be the top overall selection since the Panthers (2-15) had the NFL's worst record.

Fields went 11 of 16 for 148 yards on Sunday, but he couldn't get the Bears into the end zone. He was sacked five times and had eight carries for 27 yards.

The Bears reached Packers territory on each of their six series, but had only nine points to show for it.

Cairo Santos capped the game's first series with a 50-yard field goal that bounced off the left upright before going through. Santos also had a 39-yarder late in the second quarter and a 35-yarder early in the fourth.

The Bears got inside Green Bay's 35 midway through the fourth quarter, but a holding penalty and a sack caused the drive to stall and forced a punt. Green Bay took over at its own 6 with 6:08 left and held the ball the rest of the game.

"We knew going into that last drive that we wanted to finish with the ball and keep the defense off the field and not even give them a chance to get the ball back," Love said. "I think that's just that killer mindset that everyone in the locker room on offense has."

## INJURIES

Bears RG Nate Davis hurt his foot and Packers WR Romeo Doubs injured his chest in the first half. ... Bears DB Terrell Smith hurt his quadriceps and Bears TE Cole Kmet injured his forearm in the second half.

## Lawrence stopped short of goal line as Jags eliminated from playoff race in 28-20 loss to Titans

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Trevor Lawrence called his own number on fourth-and-goal at the 1, stretching the ball out with the right arm that had him questionable for a game the Jacksonville Jaguars had to win to reach the playoffs for a second straight season.

Tennessee stopped him short with 7:13 left. With one final chance, Lawrence couldn't pick up a first down before turning the ball over on downs again with 1:47 left as the Tennessee Titans eliminated the Jaguars 28-20 Sunday in their regular-season finale.

Lawrence defended his decision to change to a play he's scored on previously near the goal line.

"They trust me with those things, and it didn't work," Lawrence said. "I've got to take accountability for that and, at the end of the day, that's on me if I decide to do it and don't get in. It's one of those plays where, if you do it, you better score and I didn't. It's unfortunate."

The Jaguars (9-8) missed a chance at their first back-to-back AFC South titles since 1998 and 1999. Their loss makes Houston the division champs, costing the Jaguars their only way into the postseason after Pittsburgh also won Saturday.

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Jacksonville controlled its fate starting 8-3 only to finish losing five of six. Lawrence, who returned after missing last week with a sprained shoulder, was intercepted twice. The Jaguars also turned the ball over on downs three times — twice when it mattered most.

Lawrence tried to rally the Jaguars from a 15-point deficit with a 14-yard TD pass to Evan Engram at the start of the fourth quarter.

Jaguars coach Doug Pederson passed up a field goal on that key fourth-and-goal, wanting a touchdown and 2-point conversion to tie it up. He called it “unfortunate” being a couple of inches away.

“Obviously, he had success in the past on it, just came up inches short,” Pederson said of Lawrence switching the fourth down play. “But you can’t fault him for trying to make a play.”

The Titans, with the NFL’s stingiest defense inside their 20, stopped Lawrence about a foot short as he tried to reach the ball across the goal line.

“Told them at halftime, ‘Guys, you’re the best red zone defense in the league, and we’re going to need a stop to win the game,’” Titans coach Mike Vrabel said. “And that’s what they did.”

Once the Jaguars got the ball back with 2:18 remaining and no timeouts, Lawrence scrambled on first down. His deep pass went off Calvin Ridley’s fingertips, then Lawrence threw incomplete on the next two downs with the last one nowhere close to Engram.

The Jaguars tight end finished with 10 catches for 79 yards, giving him 114 receptions this season for the second most by a tight end in NFL history.

“I’m lost for words, honestly,” Engram said.

Tennessee’s win makes the Texans the AFC South champs and the No. 4 seed, who will host No. 5 seed Cleveland in the wild-card round. Pittsburgh and Buffalo, who visits Miami in the final game of the regular season on Sunday night, both clinched playoff berths with Jacksonville eliminated.

Pittsburgh now needs Miami to beat Buffalo to clinch the No. 6 seed, though the Steelers would be the seventh seed with a Bills’ win. Some Steelers fans waved Terrible Towels at Nissan Stadium, cheering as the Titans helped their team reach the playoffs.

Jaguars linebacker Josh Allen called this disappointing in a series where Jacksonville had won three straight.

“Nobody came here and expected us to lose, obviously,” Allen said.

Derrick Henry ran for a season-high 153 yards and a touchdown even with the Jaguars putting eight and nine defenders close to the line. That helped the Titans (6-11) finish on a winning note after they had been eliminated from playoff contention earlier than at any prior point in Vrabel’s six-season tenure.

This win snapped a three-game skid and also gave them a measure of revenge after the Jaguars kept the Titans from a third straight AFC South title in last season’s finale.

Henry, fresh off being voted to his fourth Pro Bowl, got a huge ovation when introduced last. He turned 30 on Thursday, and this is his last game under contract. The two-time NFL rushing champ put on a show. Henry ran for an 18-yard touchdown to put Tennessee up 7-3 early.

Henry broke off a 69-yard run on the first drive of the third, setting up Tannehill’s 6-yard TD pass to DeAndre Hopkins for a 28-13 lead. Tannehill also started his last game under contract with rookie Will Levis sidelined by an injured right foot.

“This is a great way to go out, especially against a division opponent, an opponent that I grew down the street watching and looking at and following as a kid growing up,” Henry said. “So it’s all full circle, which is great to be able to finish with the win and finish with class.”

## TIMELY PICKS

Tennessee came in with only four interceptions all season. The Titans ended consecutive drives in the second quarter to help them take a 21-13 lead into halftime.

Safety Terrell Edmunds got his hands under a ball dropped by Engram for the Titans’ fifth interception this season. Tyjae Spears finished the short drive with a 3-yard TD run for a 21-10 lead late in the second. Lawrence overthrew Zay Jones on the next drive, and cornerback Sean Murphy-Bunting got the pick.

## Iowa's Christian conservatives follow their faith when voting, and some say it leads them to Trump

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Pastor Charles Hundley opened his worship service on a cold Sunday in northeast Des Moines with a prayer that made it clear one endorsement above all will matter in Iowa's caucuses eight days away.

"We thank you for the upcoming election, Lord — or caucus, as we call it in Iowa," said Hundley, speaking from the sanctuary of his evangelical Christian church in his slight Texas drawl as his parishioners bowed their heads.

"It doesn't matter what our opinion is," he went on. "It's really what's your opinion that matters. But you've given us the privilege of being able to exercise a beautiful gift. The gift of vote. We thank you for that."

While Hundley stops short of suggesting to his parishioners which candidate divine guidance should lead them to support, he is among more than 300 pastors and other faith leaders who've been described as supporters by former President Donald Trump's campaign. It's a message that some members of Hundley's First Church of God have taken to heart, saying their faith informs their intention to caucus for Trump.

The former president and his rivals for the Republican nomination in 2024 have for months been heavily courting social conservatives and white evangelical Christians, long seen as the most influential group in Iowa's Republican caucuses.

Ron Betts, a 72-year-old Republican who said he plans to caucus for "Trump all the way," said he felt the former president "exemplified what Jesus would do."

Hundley said he doesn't speak about politics from the pulpit or privately urge members of his congregation to support his favored candidate, but he encourages them to participate and use their faith to make their choices.

"I look at it from a Christian perspective," he said. "I expect them to look at it from a Christian perspective. What does God say of us?"

Before weather forced a postponement, the First Church of God on Monday was supposed to host a Trump campaign event featuring Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump's former press secretary, and her father, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister and former presidential candidate, as part of what's billed as a Team Trump Iowa Faith Tour.

Trump, who has a commanding polling lead in Iowa, has been emphasizing his endorsements from faith leaders and success in seating three Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn the Roe v. Wade decision that protected abortion rights nationwide. The former president, however, has faced some pushback from conservatives for failing to endorse national abortion restrictions.

Trump frequently features a prayer at the start of his campaign events, something his rivals have also included at their stops. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has portrayed himself as more conservative than Trump, features religious rhetoric as he campaigns and has the backing of more than 100 faith leaders, including the influential Iowa evangelical figure Bob Vander Plaats.

Trump has long seemed like an unlikely fit for the conservative faithful who shape the first contest of the Republican primary. He entered politics as a brash, thrice-married former reality television star who spent decades as a New York City tabloid fixture, boasted of his sexual prowess and once supported abortion rights. His frequent lies and distortions in his campaigns and presidency focused on everything from his political rivals to the pandemic to the 2020 election results. And last year a jury found him liable for sexual abuse.

In his first race for the White House in 2016, his image seemed to dog him as he struggled in Iowa, losing the state to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz. But as the former president again seeks the White House, he is finding strong support among the faithful.

While about one-third of U.S. adults, 37%, have a favorable opinion of Trump, he's seen more favorably among those who identify themselves as evangelicals or born-again Christians. About half of evangelicals in an AP-NORC poll conducted in October said they have a favorable view of Trump. That's even higher

among white born-again Christians, at 56%.

Trump has focused his third campaign around a message of retribution and harsh justice, a framework that doesn't seem to be hurting him with evangelicals. Some members of Hundley's church pointed to those themes as a reason Trump best aligns with their faith, suggesting his tough stance on the border and calls for harsher punishment for crimes reflect a sense of justice they see as rooted in Christianity.

The 72-year-old Betts likened Trump's legal troubles — from the 91 criminal charges he currently faces to the effort in some states to keep him off the 2024 presidential ballot because of his push to overturn his 2020 election loss — to a crucifixion.

"I think they are doing the same thing they did to Jesus on the cross," Betts said. "I can see a lot of correlation there."

Cliff Carey, a 73-year-old member of Hundley's congregation, said Trump supported things he supports as a Christian and pointed to his actions around abortion in particular, calling him "the greatest pro-life president we've ever seen."

"I think he's an imperfect individual just like the rest of us, but I think God used that man to govern in godly principles," he said.

His sister-in-law, Cindy Carey, agreed.

"I wouldn't vote for him as my pastor," she said. "I want him to lead our nation back to that city on a hill, shining city on a hill."

Carey feels Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan is about returning the country to the Christian principles she believes it was founded on.

"I definitely take my belief and my understanding of the Bible into the voting booth with me," she said. "I believe 100% that that's my responsibility."

## **Congressional leaders announce an agreement on spending levels, a key step to averting shutdown**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional leaders have reached an agreement on overall spending levels for the current fiscal year that could help avoid a partial government shutdown later this month.

The agreement largely hews to spending caps for defense and domestic programs that Congress set as part of a bill to suspend the debt limit until 2025. But it does provide some concessions to House Republicans who viewed the spending restrictions in that agreement as insufficient.

In a letter to colleagues, House Speaker Mike Johnson said Sunday the agreement would secure \$16 billion in additional spending cuts from the previous agreement brokered by then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden and is about \$30 billion less than what the Senate was considering.

"This represents the most favorable budget agreement Republicans have achieved in over a decade," Johnson writes.

Biden said the agreement "moves us one step closer to preventing a needless government shutdown and protecting important national priorities."

"It reflects the funding levels that I negotiated with both parties and signed into law last spring," Biden said in a statement. "It rejects deep cuts to programs hardworking families count on, and provides a path to passing full-year funding bills that deliver for the American people and are free of any extreme policies."

The agreement speeds up the roughly \$20 billion in cuts already agreed to for the Internal Revenue Service and rescinds about \$6 billion in COVID relief money that had been approved but not yet spent, according to Johnson's letter.

"It's a good deal for Democrats and the country," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told colleagues in a briefing call.

Essentially, Democrats see the trade-offs they made as mild. In a description provided to reporters, they said the COVID savings would have "no significant impact on any current projects or activities in motion." And they said that moving all of the \$20.2 billion in IRS cuts to this year instead of over two years would

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still leave the agency able to maintain "critical investments" that Congress provided in 2022. At the time, Congress provided the IRS with an additional \$80 billion that could be spent over 10 years.

Overall, the agreement calls for \$886 billion in defense funding. It would provide \$772 billion in domestic, non-defense spending, when including \$69 billion called for in a side deal to the debt ceiling bill that McCarthy had reached with the White House, Democrats said.

The most conservative House Republicans opposed the earlier debt ceiling agreement and even brought House proceedings to a halt for a few days to show their displeasure. Many were surely wanting additional concessions, but Democrats have been insistent on abiding by the debt ceiling agreement's spending caps, leaving Johnson in a difficult spot.

"It's even worse than we thought," the House Freedom Caucus said of the agreement in a tweet posted on X. "This is total failure."

Lawmakers needed an agreement on overall spending levels so that appropriators could write the bills that set line-by-line funding for agencies. Money is set to lapse Jan. 19 for some agencies and Feb. 2 for others.

The agreement is separate from the negotiations that are taking place to secure additional funding for Israel and Ukraine while also curbing restrictions on asylum claims at the U.S. border.

In a joint statement, Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries voiced their support for the agreement.

"It will also allow us to keep the investments for hardworking American families secured by the legislative achievements of President Biden and Congressional Democrats," Schumer and Jeffries said.

But they also warned House Republicans about trying to add conservative policy riders to the bills in the coming days, saying Democrats would not support "poison pill policy changes in any of the twelve appropriations bills put before the Congress."

Rep. Patrick McHenry, who helped lead the debt ceiling negotiations when McCarthy was speaker, noted that two-thirds of both parties in the House supported that agreement.

"This deal, which adheres to that framework, deserves equally as robust support," McHenry said.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., tweeted that he was encouraged that leaders identified a "path toward completing" the spending bills. It was a cautious recognition that some obstacles could lie ahead.

"America faces serious national security challenges, and Congress must act quickly to deliver the full-year resources this moment requires," McConnell said.

## **The Pentagon adds new details about Austin's secretive hospital stay and the delay in telling Biden**

By TARA COPP, COLLEEN LONG and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon released new details Sunday about Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's continued hospitalization, saying he had a medical procedure Dec. 22, went home a day later and was admitted to intensive care Jan. 1 when he began experiencing severe pain.

The latest information came as members of both parties in Congress expressed sharp concerns about the secrecy of Austin's hospital stay and the fact that the president and other senior leaders were kept in the dark about it for days.

The statement, released by Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, did not, however, provide any details about the medical procedure or what actually happened on Monday to require Austin to be in intensive care at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Ryan said Austin was placed in the hospital's intensive care unit "due to his medical needs, but then remained in that location in part due to hospital space considerations and privacy."

The Pentagon's failure to disclose Austin's hospitalization, including to President Joe Biden, the National Security Council and top Pentagon leaders, for days reflects a stunning lack of transparency about his illness, how serious it was and when he may be released. Such secrecy, when the United States is juggling



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myriad national security crises, runs counter to normal practice with the president and other senior U.S. officials and Cabinet members.

Ryder said the National Security Council and Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks were not notified until Thursday, Jan. 4, that Austin had been hospitalized since Jan. 1. Ryder said Austin's chief of staff, Kelly Magsamen, was ill and "unable to make notifications before then." He said she informed Hicks and the national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, on Thursday.

Once notified, Hicks began preparing statements to send to Congress and made plans to return to Washington. Hicks was in Puerto Rico on leave but had communications equipment with her to remain in contact and had already been tasked with some secretary-level duties on Tuesday.

The Pentagon did not say if Hicks was given an explanation on Tuesday for why she was assuming some of Austin's duties, but temporary transfers of authority are not unusual and are often done without detailed explanations. Hicks decided not to return after she was informed that Austin would resume full control on Friday.

Biden was told of Austin's medical stay on Thursday by Sullivan, according to three people with knowledge of the hospitalization who were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

In a statement issued Saturday evening, Austin took responsibility for the delays in notification.

"I recognize I could have done a better job ensuring the public was appropriately informed. I commit to doing better," he said, acknowledging the concerns about transparency. "But this is important to say: this was my medical procedure, and I take full responsibility for my decisions about disclosure."

Austin, 70, remains hospitalized and officials have been unable to say how long he will be at Walter Reed. In his statement, Austin said he is on the mend and is looking forward to returning to the Pentagon soon, but he provided no other details about his ailment.

Sen. Roger Wicker, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the episode erodes trust in the Biden administration and called on the department to provide lawmakers with a "full accounting of the facts immediately."

"I am glad to hear Secretary Austin is in improved condition and I wish him a speedy recovery," Wicker said in a statement. "However, the fact remains that the Department of Defense deliberately withheld the Secretary of Defense's medical condition for days. That is unacceptable."

It's not just Republicans expressing alarm. In a joint statement, Reps. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., and Adam Smith, D-Wash., said they were "concerned with how the disclosure of the Secretary's condition was handled."

Among the questions they had were what the medical procedure was and what the resulting complications were, how and when the delegation of his responsibilities was made, and the reason for the delay in notification to the president and lawmakers. Rogers is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and Smith is the panel's top Democrat.

"Transparency is vitally important," said the two lawmakers. "Austin must provide these additional details on his health and the decision-making process that occurred in the past week as soon as possible."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken voiced support for Austin at a news conference in Qatar on Sunday.

"He is an extraordinary leader in this country, in uniform and now out of uniform," Blinken said. "And it's been a highlight of my service to be able to serve alongside him." He added: "I'm very much looking forward to see him fully recovered and working side by side in the year ahead."

Ryder said Austin is able to do his full duties, has secure communications at Walter Reed, and is in contact with his senior team, getting updates and providing guidance. He said he doesn't know if Austin will do in-person briefings this coming week.

The Pentagon Press Association, which represents journalists who cover the Defense Department, sent a letter of protest on Friday evening, calling the delay in alerting the public "an outrage."

"At a time when there are growing threats to U.S. military service members in the Middle East and the U.S. is playing key national security roles in the wars in Israel and Ukraine, it is particularly critical for the

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American public to be informed about the health status and decision-making ability of its top defense leader," the group said in its letter.

Other senior U.S. leaders have been much more transparent about hospital stays. When Attorney General Merrick Garland went in for a routine medical procedure in 2022, his office informed the public a week in advance and outlined how long he was expected to be out and when he would return to work.

## **A year after pro-Bolsonaro riots and dozens of arrests, Brazil is still recovering**

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's Congress has everything ready to open an exhibit Monday featuring pieces including a tapestry crafted by renowned artist Burle Marx and a replica of the country's constitution dated 1988.

The display is notable not because of the rarity of the objects, but because they are the living memory of one of the grimmest episodes in Brazil's recent history: As unprecedented riots in support of former President Jair Bolsonaro took place on Jan. 8, 2023, in government buildings in the capital Brasilia, the tapestry was damaged and the replica constitution was taken.

Many saw the rioting as part of a failed attempt by Bolsonaro to remain in power following his election loss. A year and hundreds of arrests later, Brazil is still recovering.

"Brazil's society still doesn't know how to handle what happened, there's no consensus," said Creomar de Souza, founder of political risk consultancy Dharma Politics. "Brazil's society is now in extreme opposites. And parts of those opposites are in a place that they cannot reconcile with the other."

Mimicking the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection by defenders of outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump at the Capitol in Washington, thousands of Bolsonaro's supporters stormed the presidential palace, Congress and the Supreme Court buildings, in one of the biggest challenges to Latin America's most populous democracy.

A year later, around 400 people out of about 1,500 remain jailed facing charges for the riots and Bolsonaro has been under investigation by the Supreme Court over his role in the mayhem. But the country is still reeling from an episode that some say they are proud of.

Members of the three branches of power in Brazil say democracy and its guardrails have been restored after the trashing of the government buildings. But arrests have led supporters of the former president to say their freedom of speech is being violated and claim they are politically persecuted.

Some of them have also voiced unfounded claims that the riots were actually led by the current administration and its supporters. Bolsonaro made the same claim in an interview on Saturday.

Rio de Janeiro-based businessman Pablo Diniz, 44, rejects calling all protesters in Brasilia that day rioters. He even believes the discussion of Jan. 8 is not about democracy.

"There was a bit of everything there. There were people claiming for their rights. There were infiltrated people," he said. "There were some good old ladies there, people who are patriots. I am a patriot. ... I went to the streets (on Jan. 8) too, peacefully. I was there to fight for democracy for all."

Bolsonaro was barred by a court last year from running for office again until 2030, in a case not related to the riots but to his unfounded claims that the electronic voting system in the past presidential election was rigged. Despite that, his far-right base remains numerous on the streets and feels capable of challenging President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Pollster Quaest said 89% of Brazilians see the events of Jan. 8 negatively. Some 47% believe Bolsonaro was somehow involved in the riots. The poll heard 2,012 people between Dec. 14-18. A margin of error is 2.2 percentage points.

On Monday, Lula and other officials will gather in Congress for the peculiar exhibit called "Unshakeable Democracy" in a symbolic ceremony aimed at reassuring Brazilians of the strength of their democratic system of government.

Lula told Brazilian media outlets Friday that Monday's event could help to show how Brazilians should work to be able to live "the entire 21st century without any coup d'état."

Following the events on Jan. 8, Brazil's Senate paid about \$40,000 to recover the tapestry made in 1973,

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which was stained by urine and torn in pieces. Supreme Court justices initially feared the replica of the constitution had been stolen after a Bolsonaro supporter was filmed allegedly carrying it outside of the building. But days after the insurrection they found the real piece hidden in one of the building's museums.

Many politicians associated with Bolsonaro are choosing not to show up at the "Unshakeable Democracy" event.

One of Bolsonaro's staunchest supporters, lawmaker Carla Zambelli, said she and many in her base will ignore the gathering, which she called "a ridiculous waste of energy and public funds." Sao Paulo Gov. Tarcisio de Freitas, deemed by many supporters of the former president as a potential political heir, traveled to Europe on vacation and will not attend either.

De Souza, the political risk consultant, says the establishment's reaction to the riots was swift because the friction between Bolsonaro and other authorities, especially Supreme Court justices, was already in place before the 2022 presidential elections. But he said that doesn't mean the country's democracy has now returned to normalcy and can just move forward.

"There are trials for a first layer (of rioters)," he said. "That is an attempt to sell the idea of normalization from then onward."

But the riots by Bolsonaro supporters in Brasilia made many moderates steer away from the far-right leader.

Cristina Melk, 68, a resident in the upscale Lagoa neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, said she couldn't vote for Lula in the 2022 elections despite disliking then-president Bolsonaro as well. The insurrection made her promise to her children that she would vote for anyone but allies of the far-right leader in the future.

"I never liked Lula's style and the populist way he governs, but nothing can be worse than what we saw that day," said Melk during her morning walk around the Rodrigo de Freitas Lake.

## Winter storms dump snow on both US coasts as icy roads make for hazardous travel

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A major winter storm bringing heavy snow and freezing rain to some communities spread across New England on Sunday, sending residents scurrying for their shovels and snowblowers to clear sidewalks and driveways.

Winter storm warnings and watches were in effect throughout the Northeast, and icy roads made for hazardous travel as far south as North Carolina.

The Northeast snow came as a Sierra Nevada storm packing heavy snow shut down a stretch of interstate Saturday and briefly knocked out power to tens of thousands in Reno, Nevada.

More than 11,000 electric customers in California were without power Sunday afternoon.

Some communities in Massachusetts had recorded more than a foot (30 centimeters) of snow by Sunday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service. Nearly 13,000 electric customers in the state were without power Sunday afternoon.

Hundreds of flights at Logan International Airport were delayed or canceled Sunday according to tracking website FlightAware.

Snow totals were lower for coastal communities, with Boston reporting just a few inches (centimeters). Snow was expected to continue throughout the day.

In Cambridge, where snowfall was lighter, residents quickly ventured out.

"I think it's funny because everyone's been freaking out about it," said Alison Conley, 26, a consultant. "We've been betting as to how much snow we're actually going to have and it's looking like not that much is going to stick."

Conley, who was out walking her dog Sunny, said the possibility that climate change is contributing to relatively warmer winter days in the region — the temperature in Boston is expected to be in the 50s on Wednesday, melting much of the snow — is a concern.

"I think it's super alarming," she said. "It is very weird, but, I don't know, from a selfish side it's like kind

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of nice to not have snow.”

The storm reached into Maine with snow totals of up to 12 inches (30 centimeters) in some places — with locally higher amounts over southern New Hampshire and southwestern Maine. Wind gusts up to 35 mph (56 kph) could add to blowing and drifting snow. Moderate to heavy snow was expected to continue in Vermont, with total snow accumulations of 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters)

Major winter storm conditions were expected into Sunday evening, including snow in parts of New England and rain and freezing rain around the central Appalachian mountains.

New York City mainly saw rain, but counties to the north and west recorded double-digit snow totals by Sunday morning. Millbrook in Dutchess County, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of New York, recorded a foot of snow. Port Jervis in Orange County reported 13 inches (33 centimeters).

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Saturday that she expected two-thirds of her state to get 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow or more, “fortunately missing some of our more populated areas downstate, the Long Island and New York City.”

In the West, a winter storm warning was in effect through Saturday night in the Sierra Nevada from south of Yosemite National Park to north of Reno, where the weather service said as much as 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow could fall in the mountains around Lake Tahoe with winds gusting up to 100 mph (160 kph).

The California Highway Patrol said numerous spinouts and collisions forced an hourslong closure of Interstate 80 from west of Truckee, California to the state line west of Reno.

In Arizona transportation officials said several highways in the state’s northern reaches -- including Interstate 40 near Williams and State Route 64 near Grand Canyon National Park -- were closed Sunday afternoon due to weather-related crashes and slide-offs from snowfall.

The National Weather Service said Flagstaff was expected to get 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 centimeters) of snow by Sunday night with Window Rock was forecast to receive 3 to 5 inches (7 to 12 centimeters).

In Nevada, the weather service said the wind chill dropped to 32 degrees at Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas around 7:30 a.m. Sunday. Winds were gusting to 37 mph (60 kph). In northern and western New Mexico, wind chills of 10 to 25 degrees below zero (minus 23 to minus 30 Celsius) were forecast for early Tuesday.

The East Coast system was expected to track along the Northeast coast throughout the weekend.

A foot (30 centimeters) of snow was reported in parts of Monroe County, Pennsylvania, and 11 inches (27 centimeters) in New Jersey’s Sussex County.

While warnings were being canceled and highway reduced-speed limits and other restrictions were lifted Sunday, motorists were being cautioned about the hazards of spotty freezing rain and black ice in southeast Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey.

In Massachusetts and portions of Rhode Island, the National Weather Service declared a winter storm warning from 4 p.m. Saturday through 1 a.m. Monday, with snow accumulations of between 6 and 12 inches and winds gusting to 35 mph (55 kph).

Ice arrived early Saturday in some western North Carolina and southern Virginia areas, ranging from a fine coating to around a quarter-inch (6 millimeters).

Forecasters also warned of another Northeast storm Tuesday into Wednesday that is expected to drop heavy rain on already saturated ground. They warned of possible flooding and coastal flooding and a threat of damaging winds that could topple trees and power lines.

## **Young Palestinian girl killed when Israeli police fire at suspected attackers in West Bank unrest**

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police on Sunday opened fire at a pair of suspected attackers who rammed their car into a West Bank checkpoint, fatally shooting a young Palestinian girl in an adjacent vehicle, ac-

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according to police and medical officials.

The two suspects were also shot, while a young police officer was lightly hurt. The Sunday evening incident came hours after nine people were killed in other unrest in the occupied territory, which has experienced a surge of violence since Israel's war against Hamas erupted on Oct. 7.

Israeli police said the ramming took place at a checkpoint near the Palestinian village of Biddu, just northwest of Jerusalem.

Security camera footage showed a white car plowing into a pair of Israeli police at the checkpoint. Police then chase after the vehicle, opening fire.

Police said a man and woman inside the car were shot, but a girl in a van in front of them was shot as well. The girl, who was reported to be 3 or 4 years old, was pronounced dead by Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service.

Police said a preliminary investigation found that "during the rapid response of the officers toward the terrorists' vehicle, the vehicle with the child may have been affected." They promised a "thorough investigation."

The conditions of the suspected attackers was not immediately known, but the rescue service said a female officer in the paramilitary border police was lightly wounded.

Earlier on Sunday, a man driving a car with Israeli license plates was fatally shot at a busy intersection in the West Bank, hours after a violent confrontation elsewhere left seven Palestinians and a border policewoman dead.

The victim in the drive-by shooting was later identified as a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem. The assailants presumably mistook him for an Israeli because of the license plates. Palestinian militants have carried out scores of shooting attacks against Israelis in the West Bank over the years, and the military described Sunday's shooting as such an incident.

The Israeli army said security forces were searching the area for the shooter. Israeli media reported that security forces found an abandoned car that was likely used to carry out the attack, and the suspect fled on foot.

Hours earlier, a deadly confrontation erupted when Israeli security forces were on patrol to search for roadside bombs in Jenin, a town and adjacent urban refugee camp in the northern West Bank.

A roadside bomb exploded near a vehicle of the paramilitary border police, killing a policewoman and wounding three others, police said.

An Israeli military helicopter targeted Palestinians in the area who were throwing explosives at Israeli vehicles and extracted the Israeli forces, the Israeli army said. Seven Palestinians were killed in the airstrike, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Mujahhid Nazal, a doctor at nearby clinic, said he heard a "strong explosion" and rushed to the scene. "It was a really dire situation, seven young men were lying on the ground," he said.

At a funeral for six of those killed in Jenin, four of the men were wrapped in the green flags of Hamas, the Islamic militant group that has been locked in a war with Israel in Gaza for the past three months. The two others were covered by the Palestinian flag and the yellow banner of the Fatah movement, a Hamas rival.

The latest events followed a dramatic surge in deadly military raids and increase in restrictions on Palestinian residents across the West Bank during the Israel-Hamas war.

Violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the territory has also reached record highs, according to the United Nations.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says Israeli forces have killed 330 Palestinians in the West Bank since Hamas' cross-border attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7, in which 1,200 people were killed and roughly 250 were taken hostage.

Most of the Palestinians were killed during shootouts in the West Bank that the Israeli military says began during operations to arrest Palestinian gunmen.

## **Blinken meets Jordanian and Qatari leaders on new Mideast push to keep Gaza war from spreading**

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — On another urgent diplomatic mission to the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Sunday with Arab partners to press for their help in tamping down resurgent fears that Israel's three-month war against Hamas in Gaza could spread.

In discussions with Qatar's emir and Jordan's king, Blinken spoke of the need for Israel to adjust its military operations to reduce civilian casualties and significantly boost the amount of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza, while stressing the importance of preparing detailed plans for the post-conflict future of the Palestinian territory, which has been decimated by Israeli bombardments.

The mission — that will also take him to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank and Egypt before he returns to Washington — is Blinken's fourth to the region since the war began.

After a day of talks with Turkish and Greek leaders in Istanbul and Crete, Blinken met with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi in Amman before traveling to Doha for talks with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani to seek buy-in for U.S. efforts to tamp down resurgent fears that the war could engulf the region, ramp up aid to Gaza and prepare for an eventual end of hostilities.

"This is a conflict that could easily metastasize, causing even more insecurity and even more suffering," Blinken told reporters during a joint news conference with Sheikh Mohammed. "So from day one, among other priorities, we have been intensely focused on working to prevent the conflict from spreading."

Blinken said it has been a major focus of his discussion with all of the leaders he has met with in recent days. "We share a commitment to ensure that the conflict does not expand," he said.

He said they also have discussed what each country can do once the conflict is over "to provide the assurances and the incentives required to build a more secure and more stable, more peaceful future for the region."

"And my takeaway from the discussion so far, including here with our friends in Qatar, is that our partners are willing to have these difficult conversations and to make hard decisions. All of us feel a stake in forging the way forward."

Jordan and other Arab states have been highly critical of Israel's actions and have eschewed public support for long-term planning, arguing that the fighting must end before such discussions can begin. They have been demanding a cease-fire since mid-October as civilian casualties began to skyrocket.

After his talks with Blinken, Sheikh Mohammed called for an immediate cease-fire, saying the constant images of death and destruction in Gaza are de-sensitizing people to the horrors of what is happening.

"This is a big test for our humanity," he said. "We are looking for a sustainable future, however the focus is now on stopping the fighting."

King Abdullah "warned of the catastrophic repercussions" of the war in Gaza while calling on the U.S. to press for an immediate cease-fire, a statement from the Royal Court said.

Israel has refused to agree to a cease-fire and the U.S. has instead called for specified temporary "humanitarian pauses" to allow aid to get in and people to get to safety.

In Amman, Blinken also toured the World Food Program's regional coordination warehouse, where trucks are being packed with aid to be delivered to Gaza through both the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.

He commended the work of the WFP and other U.N. agencies as well as the government of Jordan to get assistance into Gaza.

"The efforts right here to collect and distribute food to people in need are absolutely essential," Blinken said. "The United States has worked from day one to open access routes into Gaza."

"We continue to work on that every single day, not only to open them but to multiply them, to maximize them and to try to get more assistance, more effectively," he said. "We're determined to do everything we possibly can to ameliorate the situation for the men, women and children in Gaza."

The U.S. has been pressing Israel for weeks to let greater amounts of food, water, fuel, medicine and

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other supplies into Gaza, and the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution on Dec. 22 calling for an immediate increase in deliveries. Three weeks ago, Israel opened Kerem Shalom, adding a second entry point for aid into Gaza after Rafah.

Still, the rate of trucks entering has not risen significantly. This week, an average of around 120 trucks a day entered through Rafah and Kerem Shalom, according to U.N. figures, far below the 500 trucks of goods going in daily before the war and far below what aid groups say is needed.

Almost the entire population of 2.3 million depends on the trucks coming across the border for their survival. One in four Palestinians in Gaza is starving, and the rest face crisis levels of hunger, according to the U.N.

More than 85% of people in Gaza have been driven from their homes by Israeli bombardment and ground offensives. Most live in U.N. shelters crowded beyond their capacity, in tent camps that have been sprung up, or on the streets.

In Greece on Saturday, Blinken said his trip would be dominated by "not necessarily easy conversations" with allies and partners about what they are willing to do "to build durable peace and security."

Blinken's visit comes as developments in Lebanon, northern Israel, the Red Sea and Iraq have put intense strains on what had been a modestly successful U.S. push to prevent a regional conflagration since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, and as international criticism of Israel's military operation mounts.

"These are not necessarily easy conversations," he said in Greece. "There are different perspectives, different needs, different requirements, but it is vital that we engage in this diplomacy now both for the sake of Gaza itself and more broadly the sake of the future for Israelis and Palestinians and for the region as a whole."

He said his priorities are protecting civilians — "far too many Palestinians have been killed" — getting more humanitarian aid into Gaza, ensuring Hamas cannot strike again, and developing a framework for Palestinian-led governance in the territory and "a Palestinian state with security assurances or Israel."

Hours before Blinken's meetings on Saturday, Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militia fired dozens of rockets at northern Israel and said the barrage was an initial response to the targeted killing, presumably by Israel, of a top leader from the allied Hamas group in Lebanon's capital this past week. Israel responded in what became one of the heaviest days of cross-border fighting in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, stepped-up attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have disrupted international trade and led to increased efforts by the U.S. and its allies to patrol the vital commercial waterway and respond to threats. The coalition of countries issued what amounted to a final warning to the Houthis on Wednesday to cease their attacks on vessels or face potential targeted military action. Since Dec. 19, the militants have carried out at least two dozen attacks in response to the Israel-Hamas war.

## 'Wonka' is No. 1 at the box office again as 2024 gets off to a slower start

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Timothée Chalamet and "Wonka" topped the box office charts for the third time in its four weekends in theaters. Warner Bros.' family-oriented musical added \$14.4 million in ticket sales according to studio estimates Sunday, bringing its total domestic grosses to \$164.7 million.

"'Wonka' is following in the tradition of a film like 'The Greatest Showman,'" said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. That Hugh Jackman musical opened under \$9 million in December 2017 and went on to gross \$435 million globally.

"'Wonka' is a perfect crowd pleaser released at the perfect time and it's going to ride that wave into January," Dergarabedian said. "It's an opportune time for it to be in the marketplace."

After finishing 2023 on a high note, 2024 is getting off to a slower start than last year, down around 16%, with the Universal/Blumhouse horror "Night Swim" as the only major new offering in theaters. The movie stars Wyatt Russell and Kerry Condon as a couple with a sinister, supernatural swimming pool.

"Night Swim" drew in an estimated \$12 million in its first weekend in 3,250 theaters in North America

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against a reported \$15 million production budget. Including international showings in 36 markets, "Night Swim" is heading towards a \$17.7 million global debut.

"Not only did it perform really well at the box office, but it's going to make us look at every swimming pool with a little more trepidation," said Jim Orr, Universal's head of domestic distribution.

Horror movies are largely critic-proof, but with fairly negative reviews and a C CinemaScore rating, it's unlikely to repeat the viral success of last year's demon doll movie "M3GAN."

"We don't have 'Avatar: The Way of Water,' which totally dominated the box office a year ago, or 'M3GAN,' which made that a bigger weekend," said Dergarabedian. "But it's a bit early to call it in terms of how the year is going to turn out."

Warner Bros. and Universal placed third and fourth on the charts as well. Warner Bros.' DC superhero movie "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" earned \$10.6 million in its third weekend, bumping its domestic tally just over the \$100 million mark. Universal's animated "Migration" added \$10.3 million, bringing its running domestic total to \$77.8 million.

Sony's Glen Powell and Sydney Sweeney romantic comedy "Anyone But You" landed in fifth place with \$9.5 million, up 9% from last weekend. The movie has grossed \$43.7 million to date.

Cineplexes are full of awards contenders, including "The Color Purple," "The Iron Claw" and "Poor Things," and the Golden Globes broadcast Sunday night might help spread awareness for those and other films.

"The Golden Globes are like a three-hour infomercial for the industry," Dergarabedian said. "There's no downside to having a very high profile telecast that puts a spotlight on the movies."

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

1. "Wonka," \$14.4 million.
2. "Night Swim," \$12 million.
3. "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," \$10.6 million.
4. "Migration," \$10.3 million.
5. "Anyone But You," \$9.5 million.
6. "The Boys in the Boat," \$6 million.
7. "The Color Purple," \$4.8 million.
8. "The Iron Claw," \$4.5 million.
9. "Ferrari," \$2.5 million.
10. "Poor Things," \$2 million.

## The US sees a drop in illegal border crossings after Mexico increases enforcement

By VALERIE GONZALEZ AND ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — Daniel Bermudez's family had fled Venezuela and was headed to the U.S. to seek asylum when the freight train they were riding through Mexico was stopped by immigration officials.

His wife tried to explain that her family had permission to go to the U.S. Instead, they flew her to Mexico's southern border as part of a surge of enforcement actions that U.S. officials say have contributed to a sharp drop in illegal border crossings.

In addition to forcing migrants from trains, Mexico also resumed flying and busing them to the southern part of the country and started flying some home to Venezuela.

Even if temporary, the decrease in illegal crossings is welcome news for the White House. President Joe Biden's administration is locked in talks with Senate negotiators over restricting asylum and \$110 billion in aid for Ukraine and Israel hangs in the balance.

Bermudez said his wife became separated from her family when she talked to authorities as he gathered his stepchild and their belongings. He wanted to run, but his wife said they shouldn't because they had followed procedure by making an appointment with U.S. immigration authorities.

"I told her, 'Don't trust them. Let's go into the brush,'" Bermudez said, adding that other migrants had



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fled. He recalled her telling him, "Why are they sending us back if we have an appointment?"

Last week, Bermudez, his stepchild and two other relatives were waiting for her at a shelter in the Mexican border town of Piedras Negras as she took a bus back in hopes of still making the date.

Mexico's immigration agency sent at least 22 flights from its border region with the U.S. to southern cities during the last 10 days of December, according to Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks flight data. Most were from Piedras Negras, which is across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas.

Mexico also ran two removal flights to Venezuela with 329 migrants. The stretch was punctuated by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Mexico City on Dec. 28 to confront unprecedented crossings to the United States.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said a financial shortfall that had led the immigration agency to suspend deportations and other operations was resolved. He did not offer details.

Arrests for illegal crossings into the U.S. from Mexico fell to about 2,500 on Monday, down from more than 10,000 on several days in December, according to U.S. authorities. In the Border Patrol's busiest area, arrests totaled 13,800 during the seven-day period ending Friday, down 29% from 19,400 two weeks earlier, according to Tucson, Arizona, sector chief John Modlin.

The drop led U.S. Customs and Border Protection to reopen the port of entry in Lukeville, Arizona, on Thursday after a monthlong closure on the most direct route from Phoenix to its nearest beaches. The U.S. also restored operations at Eagle Pass and three other locations.

Merchants in Eagle Pass, a city of about 30,000 people, saw sales take "a major hit" while a bridge was closed to vehicle traffic so border agents could be reassigned to help process migrants, Maverick County Judge Ramsey English Cantu said.

"We survive pretty much from everything that comes from the Mexican side," he said.

Last month, CBP resumed freight crossings in Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, after a five-day shutdown that U.S. officials said was a response to as many as 1,000 migrants riding atop a single train through Mexico before trying to walk across the border.

In Piedras Negras on Thursday, Casa del Migrante housed about 200 migrants, down from as high as 1,500 recently.

Among them was Manuel Rodriguez, 40, who said his family will miss their appointment to seek asylum that was made through the U.S. government's CBP One app. He said the appointment was registered with his in-laws, who were deported to Venezuela after authorities boarded the bus they were riding.

"It was all under her name and she lost everything," Rodriguez said.

Proposals being discussed by the White House and Senate negotiators include a new expulsion authority that would deny rights to seek asylum if illegal border crossings reach a certain threshold. Any such authority would almost certainly depend on Mexico's willingness to take back non-Mexicans who enter the U.S. illegally, something it does now on a limited scale.

Mexico's support was critical to defunct Trump-era policies that forced 70,000 asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court and to deny rights to seek asylum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., cautioned against overstating Mexico's role in the recent drop in traffic. Panama reported that less than 25,000 migrants walked through the Darién jungle in December, about half of October's level and a sign that fewer people are leaving South America for the U.S. Migration usually drops in December amid holidays and cold weather.

"The U.S. is able to lean on Mexico for a short-term enforcement effect on migration at the border, but the long-term effects are not always clear," Selee said.

## Federal officials order grounding of some Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners after plane suffers a blowout

By CLAIRE RUSH, DAVID KOENIG and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

Federal officials on Saturday ordered the immediate grounding of some Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners until they are inspected after an Alaska Airlines plane suffered a blowout that left a gaping hole in the side of the fuselage.

The required inspections take around four to eight hours per aircraft and affect about 171 airplanes worldwide.

Alaska Airlines said in a statement that of the 65 737 Max 9 aircraft in its fleet, crews had inspected the paneled-over exits as part of recent maintenance work on 18 planes, and those were cleared to return to service Saturday. Inspections for the remaining aircraft were expected to be completed in the coming days, the company said.

An Alaska Airlines jetliner blew out a portion of its fuselage shortly after takeoff 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) above Oregon late Friday, forcing the pilots to make an emergency landing as its 171 passengers and six crew members donned oxygen masks.

No one was seriously hurt as the depressurized plane returned safely to Portland International Airport about 20 minutes after departure.

Authorities are still looking for the door from the paneled-over exit and have a good idea of where it landed, near Oregon Route 217 and Barnes Road in the Cedar Hills area west of Portland, National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said at a news conference late Saturday.

"If you find that, please, please contact local law enforcement," she said.

It was extremely lucky that the airplane had not yet reached cruising altitude, when passengers and flight attendants might be walking around the cabin, Homendy said.

"No one was seated in 26A and B where that door plug is, the aircraft was around 16,000 feet and only 10 minutes out from the airport when the door blew," she said.

The headrests were gone on seats 26A and 25A and 26A was missing part of its seatback. There were also clothing items strewn about the area, Homendy said.

There has not been a major crash involving a U.S. passenger carrier within the country since 2009 when a Colgan Air flight crashed near Buffalo, New York, killing all 49 people onboard and one person on the ground. In 2013, an Asiana Airlines flight arriving from South Korea crashed at San Francisco International Airport, killing three of the 307 people onboard.

Passenger Evan Smith said a boy and his mother were sitting in the row where the panel blew out, and the child's shirt was sucked off him and out of the plane.

"You heard a big loud bang to the left rear. A whooshing sound and all the oxygen masks deployed instantly and everyone got those on," Smith told KATU-TV.

Homendy could not confirm reports that anyone had a shirt sucked off by the depressurization or provide details yet about what happened to those sitting closest to the blown fuselage.

Homendy and investigators from the NTSB arrived in Portland on Saturday to begin an investigation that is likely to last months.

Alaska Airlines CEO Ben Minicucci said the inspection of the company's 737-9 aircraft could take days to complete. They make up a fifth of the company's 314 planes.

"We are working with Boeing and regulators to understand what occurred ... and will share updates as more information is available," Minicucci said. "My heart goes out to those who were on this flight – I am so sorry for what you experienced."

Alaska canceled more than 100 flights, or 15% of its Saturday schedule by midday, according to FlightAware. United said the plane inspections would result in about 60 cancellations.

The Port of Portland, which operates the airport, told KPTV that the fire department treated minor injuries at the scene. One person was taken for more treatment but wasn't seriously hurt.

Flight 1282 took off from Portland at 5:07 p.m. Friday for a two-hour flight to Ontario, California. About six minutes later, the chunk of the fuselage blew out as the plane was at about 16,000 feet (4.8 kilometers).

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One of the pilots declared an emergency and asked for clearance to descend to 10,000 feet (3 kilometers), the altitude where the air would have enough oxygen to breathe safely.

"We need to turn back to Portland," the pilot told controllers in a calm voice that she maintained throughout the landing.

Videos posted by passengers online showed a gaping hole where the paneled-over exit had been and passengers wearing masks. They applauded when the plane landed safely about 13 minutes after the blowout. Firefighters then came down the aisle, asking passengers to remain in their seats as they treated the injured.

The aircraft involved rolled off the assembly line and received its certification two months ago, according to online FAA records. It had been on 145 flights since entering commercial service Nov. 11, said Flight-Radar24, another tracking service. The flight from Portland was the aircraft's third of the day.

Aviation experts were stunned that a piece would fly off a new aircraft. Anthony Brickhouse, a professor of aerospace safety at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, said he has seen panels of fuselage come off planes before, but couldn't recall one where passengers "are looking at the lights of the city."

He said the incident is a reminder for passengers to stay buckled in.

"If there had been a passenger in that window seat who just happened to have their seat belt off, we'd be looking at a totally different news story."

The Max is the newest version of Boeing's venerable 737, a twin-engine, single-aisle plane frequently used on U.S. domestic flights. The plane went into service in May 2017.

The president of the union representing flight attendants at 19 airlines, including Alaska Airlines, commended the crew for keeping passengers safe.

"Flight Attendants are trained for emergencies and we work every flight for aviation safety first and foremost," Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, said in a statement Saturday.

Two Max 8 jets crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people and leading to a near two-year worldwide grounding of all Max 8 and Max 9 planes. They returned to service only after Boeing made changes to an automated flight control system implicated in the crashes.

Last year the FAA told pilots to limit use of an anti-ice system on the Max in dry conditions because of concern that inlets around the engines could overheat and break away, possibly striking the plane.

Max deliveries have been interrupted at times to fix manufacturing flaws. The company told airlines in December to inspect the planes for a possible loose bolt in the rudder-control system.

## How to deal with same-sex unions? It's a question fracturing major Christian denominations

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Catholics around the world are sharply divided by the Vatican's recent declaration giving priests more leeway to bless same-sex couples. Supporters of LGBTQ inclusion welcome the move; some conservative bishops assail the new policy as a betrayal of the church's condemnation of sexual relations between gay or lesbian partners.

Strikingly, the flare-up of debate in Catholic ranks coincides with developments in two other international Christian denominations — the global Anglican Communion and the United Methodist Church — that are fracturing over differences in LGBTQ-related policies.

Taken together, it's a dramatic illustration of how — in a religion that stresses God's love for humanity — divisions over marriage, sexuality, and inclusion of gays and lesbians are proving insurmountable for the foreseeable future in many sectors of Christianity.

Ryan Burge, a political science professor at Eastern Illinois University and pastor of an American Baptist church, says it's become increasingly difficult for Christian denominations to fully accommodate clergy and congregations with opposing views on same-sex relationships, particularly as such marriages have become legal in much of Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

"A lot of denominations are in the position where you have to make a decision — you can't be wishy-

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wash any more," said Burge, a specialist in religious demographics. "That's the tension they're facing: how to keep older conservatives in the fold while attracting younger people."

For global denominations — notably Catholics, Anglicans and United Methodists — Burge sees another source of tension: Some of their biggest growth in recent decades has been in socially conservative African countries where same-sex relationships are taboo.

"African bishops have this ammunition," Burge said. "They say to the West, 'We're the ones growing. You have the money, we have the numbers.'"

Kim Haines-Eitzen, a professor of religious studies at Cornell University, said Christianity — throughout its history — has been divided over differing theological views, such as whether women could be ordained as clergy.

"Christianity is incredibly diverse — globally, theologically, linguistically, culturally," she said. "There are bound to be these incredibly divisive issues, especially when bound up in scriptural interpretation. That's what keeps world religions alive — that kind of push and pull."

## ANGST AMONG ANGLICANS

Among Christian denominations, the Anglican Communion is second only to the Catholic Church in geographic spread. Divisions over marriage, sexuality and LGBTQ inclusion have roiled the communion for many years, and they widened Dec. 17, when Church of England priests offered officially sanctioned blessings of same-sex partnerships for the first time.

The Church of England's ban on church weddings for gay couples remains, but the decision to allow blessings has infuriated several conservative Anglican bishops from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

Caught in the middle is the archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby — the top bishop of the Church of England and ceremonial leader of the Anglican Communion.

Welby says he won't personally bless same-sex couples because it's his job to unify the world's 85 million Anglicans. That hasn't appeased some conservative bishops, who say they no longer recognize Welby as their leader.

The decision to allow blessings of same-sex couples followed five years of discussions about church positions on sexuality. Church leaders apologized for a failure to welcome LGBTQ people but also affirmed the doctrine that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

"What we have proposed as a way forward does not go nearly far enough for many, but too far for others," said Sarah Mullally, bishop of London.

## UNITED METHODIST SEPARATION

A slow-motion breakup is underway in the United Methodist Church. A few years ago, it was the third-largest denomination in the United States, but a quarter of U.S. congregations have recently received permission to leave over disputes involving LGBTQ-related policies.

Of the more than 7,650 departing churches, most are conservative-leaning congregations responding to what they see as a failure to enforce bans on same-sex marriage and the ordaining of openly LGBTQ people.

There's no firm estimate of how many members are leaving, as some who belong to departing congregations are joining other UMC churches. But UMC officials are preparing to cut denominational agencies' budgets in anticipation of lower revenues from church offerings.

United Methodist rules forbid same-sex marriage rites and the ordination of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals," but progressive Methodist churches in the U.S. have increasingly defied these rules.

Conservatives have mobilized like-minded congregations to exit; many are joining the new Global Methodist Church, which intends to enforce such rules.

More than half of United Methodist members are overseas, many in conservative African churches. When UMC delegates meet this spring, they're expected to debate proposals to liberalize ordination and marriage policies, and make it easier for overseas churches to leave.

## SPLITS IN OTHER PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS

Presaging the UMC schism, several other mainline Protestant denominations over the past two decades endured splits resulting from irreconcilable differences between supporters and opponents of LGBTQ in-

clusion. For example, after the Episcopal Church ordained an openly gay bishop in 2003, some dioceses and conservatives formed the Anglican Church in North America.

Similar liberal/conservative differences prompted hundreds of congregations to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) after they embraced LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

Some conservative denominations — such as the Southern Baptist Convention and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — have adhered firmly to policies that reject recognition of same-sex relationships and ordination of openly LGBTQ people. These policies have prompted departures, but no major schism.

Brent Leatherwood, president of the Southern Baptists' public policy commission, reiterated the SBC's position in a statement asserting that the Vatican — under Pope Francis — "has been on a trajectory that seems destined for the allowance of same-sex marriage."

"The reality is marriage has been defined by God ... It is a union between one man and one woman for life," Leatherwood said. "Southern Baptists remain anchored in this truth."

## ORTHODOX CHURCH DISAPPROVAL

The world's second-largest Christian communion, after the Catholic Church, is the Eastern Orthodox Church, with an estimated 220 million members, concentrated mostly in Eastern Europe and Western Asia. To a large extent, Orthodox Christians disapprove of same-sex marriage and relationships.

In Greece, where the government is pledging to legalize same-sex marriage, the Orthodox Church has expressed strong opposition.

Russia's Orthodox Church has supported tough anti-LGBTQ legislation enacted with the support of President Vladimir Putin.

## NON-CHRISTIAN FAITHS

Debate over LGBTQ inclusion hasn't been as divisive in the world's other major religions as in Christianity.

In the Muslim world, there's widespread disapproval of same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage; many Muslim nations criminalize homosexuality. However, some LGBTQ-inclusive mosques have surfaced in North America and other places.

Among Jews around the world, there are varying approaches to LGBTQ issues, but relatively little high-profile rancor. Orthodox Judaism disapproves of same-sex marriage and sexual relations, while they're widely accepted in the Reform and Conservative branches.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, there is no universal, official position on same-sex marriage. Many practitioners of the two faiths disapprove of such unions; some communities are more accepting.

## Is Georgia's election system constitutional? A federal judge will decide in trial set to begin

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Election integrity activists want a federal judge to order Georgia to stop using its current election system, saying it's vulnerable to attack and has operational issues that could cost voters their right to cast a vote and have it accurately counted.

During a trial set to start Tuesday, activists plan to argue that the Dominion Voting Systems touchscreen voting machines are so flawed they are unconstitutional. Election officials insist the system is secure and reliable and say it is up to the state to decide how it conducts elections.

Georgia has become a pivotal electoral battleground in recent years with national attention focused on its elections. The election system used statewide by nearly all in-person voters includes touchscreen voting machines that print ballots with a human-readable summary of voters' selections and a QR code that a scanner reads to count the votes.

The activists say the state should switch to hand-marked paper ballots tallied by scanners and also needs much more robust post-election audits than are currently in place. U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg, who's overseeing the long-running case, said in an October order that she cannot order the state to use hand-marked paper ballots. But activists say prohibiting the use of the touchscreen machines would ef-

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fectively force the use of hand-marked paper ballots because that's the emergency backup provided for in state law.

Wild conspiracy theories about Dominion voting machines proliferated in the wake of the 2020 election, spread by allies of former President Donald Trump who said they were used to steal the election from him. The election equipment company has fought back aggressively with litigation, notably reaching a \$787 million settlement with Fox News in April.

The trial set to begin Tuesday stems from a lawsuit that long predates those claims. It was originally filed in 2017 by several individual voters and the Coalition for Good Governance, which advocates for election integrity, and targeted the outdated, paperless voting system used at the time.

Totenberg in August 2019 prohibited the state from using the antiquated machines beyond that year. The state had agreed to purchase new voting machines from Dominion a few weeks earlier and scrambled to deploy them ahead of the 2020 election cycle. Before the machines were distributed statewide, the activists amended their lawsuit to take aim at the new system.

They argue the system has serious security vulnerabilities that could be exploited without detection and that the state has done little to address those problems. Additionally, voters cannot be sure their votes are accurately recorded because they cannot read the QR code, they say. And the voting machines' large, upright screens make it easy to see a voter's selections, violating the right to ballot secrecy, they say.

Lawyers for Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger wrote in a recent court filing that he "vigorously disputes" the activists' claims and "strongly believes" their case is "legally and factually meritless."

Experts engaged by the activists have said they've seen no evidence that any vulnerabilities have been exploited to change the outcome of an election, but they say the concerns need to be addressed immediately to protect future elections.

One of them, University of Michigan computer scientist J. Alex Halderman, examined a machine from Georgia and wrote a lengthy report detailing vulnerabilities that he said bad actors could use to attack the system. The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, in June 2022 released an advisory based on Halderman's findings that urged jurisdictions that use the machines to quickly mitigate the vulnerabilities.

During a hearing in May, a lawyer for the state told the judge physical security elements recommended by CISA were "largely in place." But the secretary of state's office has said a software update from Dominion is too cumbersome to install before the 2024 elections.

The fact that the voting system software and data was uploaded to a server and shared with an unknown number of people after unauthorized people accessed election equipment in January 2021 makes it even easier to plan an attack on the system, Halderman has said. That breach at the elections office in rural Coffee County was uncovered and exposed by the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

A sprawling Fulton County racketeering indictment against Trump and 18 others included charges against four people related to Coffee County. Two of them, including Trump-allied lawyer Sidney Powell, have pleaded guilty after reaching deals with prosecutors.

In several rulings during the litigation, Totenberg has made clear that she has concerns about the voting system. But she wrote in October that the activists "carry a heavy burden to establish a constitutional violation" connected to the voting system or its implementation.

David Cross, a lawyer for some of the individual voters, said the judge has only seen a sliver of their evidence so far. He said he believes she'll find in their favor, but he doesn't expect to see any changes before Georgia's presidential primary in March. He said changes might be possible before the general election in November if Totenberg rules quickly.

"We're hopeful but we recognize it's an uphill fight for 2024, just on the timing," he said, acknowledging the likelihood that the state would appeal any ruling in the activists' favor.

Marilyn Marks, executive director of the Coalition for Good Governance, was similarly optimistic ahead of trial: "We have the facts and the science and the law on our side, and really the state has no defense."

A representative for Raffensperger didn't respond to multiple requests to interview someone in his office

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ahead of the trial.

The activists had planned to call the secretary of state to testify. They wanted to ask why he chose a voting system that uses QR codes that aren't readable by voters. They also believe his office has failed to investigate or to implement proper safeguards after the Coffee County breach and wanted to ask him about it under oath.

The judge ordered him to appear over the objections of his lawyers. But the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday ruled he doesn't have to testify, citing his status as a top official and saying the plaintiffs didn't show his testimony was necessary.

"This trial bears heavily on the public interest, and voters deserve to hear from Secretary Raffensperger in the trial. It's a travesty that they won't," Cross said. "And it's unfair to our clients who need answers to questions at trial that only he can provide."

## Today in History: January 8 Lyndon Johnson declares 'war on poverty'

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 8, the eighth day of 2024. There are 358 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 8, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, in his State of the Union address, declared an "unconditional war on poverty in America."

On this date:

In 1815, the last major engagement of the War of 1812 came to an end as U.S. forces defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans, not having received word of the signing of a peace treaty.

In 1867, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in overriding President Andrew Johnson's veto of the District of Columbia Suffrage Bill, giving Black men in the nation's capital the right to vote.

In 1912, the African National Congress was founded in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson outlined his Fourteen Points for lasting peace after World War I. Mississippi became the first state to ratify the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which established Prohibition.

In 1935, rock-and-roll legend Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi.

In 1982, American Telephone and Telegraph settled the Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit against it by agreeing to divest itself of the 22 Bell System companies.

In 1994, Tonya Harding won the ladies' U.S. Figure Skating Championship in Detroit, a day after Nancy Kerrigan dropped out because of the clubbing attack that had injured her right knee. (The U.S. Figure Skating Association later stripped Harding of the title.)

In 1998, Ramzi Yousef (RAHM'-zee YOO'-sef), the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, was sentenced in New York to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

In 2008, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton powered to victory in New Hampshire's 2008 Democratic primary in a startling upset, defeating Sen. Barack Obama and resurrecting her bid for the White House; Sen. John McCain defeated his Republican rivals to move back into contention for the GOP nomination.

In 2011, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., was shot and critically wounded when a gunman opened fire as the congresswoman met with constituents in Tucson; six people were killed, 12 others were injured. (Gunman Jared Lee Loughner (LAWF'-nur) was sentenced in Nov. 2012 to seven consecutive life sentences, plus 140 years.)

In 2016, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the world's most-wanted drug lord, was captured for a third time in a daring raid by Mexican marines, six months after walking through a tunnel to freedom from a maximum security prison.

In 2018, Alabama beat Georgia in overtime, 26-23, to claim the College Football Playoff national cham-

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pionship after freshman quarterback Tua Tagovailoa (tag-oh-vay-LOH'-ah) came off the bench to spark a comeback.

In 2020, Iran struck back at the United States for killing Iran's top military commander, firing missiles at two Iraqi military bases housing American troops; more than 100 U.S. service members were diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries after the attack. As Iran braced for a counterattack, the country's Revolutionary Guard shot down a Ukrainian jetliner after apparently mistaking it for a missile; all 176 people on board were killed, including 82 Iranians and more than 50 Canadians.

In 2022, NASA's new James Webb Space Telescope opened its huge mirror, the final step in the unfurling of the observatory, which had already traveled more than 660,000 miles since its Christmas Day launch.

In 2023, supporters of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro who refused to accept his election defeat stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and presidential palace in the capital, a week after the inauguration of his leftist rival, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Today's birthdays: Former CBS newsman Charles Osgood is 91. Singer Shirley Bassey is 87. Game show host Bob Eubanks is 86. Country-gospel singer Cristy Lane is 84. R&B singer Jerome Anthony Gourdine (Little Anthony and the Imperials) is 83. Singer Juanita Cowart Motley (The Marvelettes) is 80. Actor Kathleen Noone is 79. Rock musician Robby Krieger (The Doors) is 78. Movie director John McTiernan is 73. Actor Harriet Sansom Harris is 69. Actor Ron Cephas Jones is 67. Former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is 66. Singer-songwriter Ron Sexsmith is 60. Actor Michelle Forbes is 59. Actor Maria Pitillo (pih-TIHL'-loh) is 58. Actor/producer Ami Dolenz is 55. Reggae singer Sean Paul is 51. Actor Donnell Turner ("General Hospital") is 51. Country singer Tift Merritt is 49. Actor-rock singer Jenny Lewis is 48. Actor Amber Benson is 47. Actor Scott Whyte is 46. Singer-songwriter Erin McCarley is 45. Actor Sarah Polley is 45. Actor Gaby (GAB'-ee) Hoffman is 42. Rock musician Disashi Lumumba-Kasongo (dih-SAH'-shee LUHM'-uhm-boh kuh-SAHN'-goh) (Gym Class Heroes) is 41. Actor Cynthia Erivo is 37. Actor Freddie Stroma is 37.