

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Jan. 13

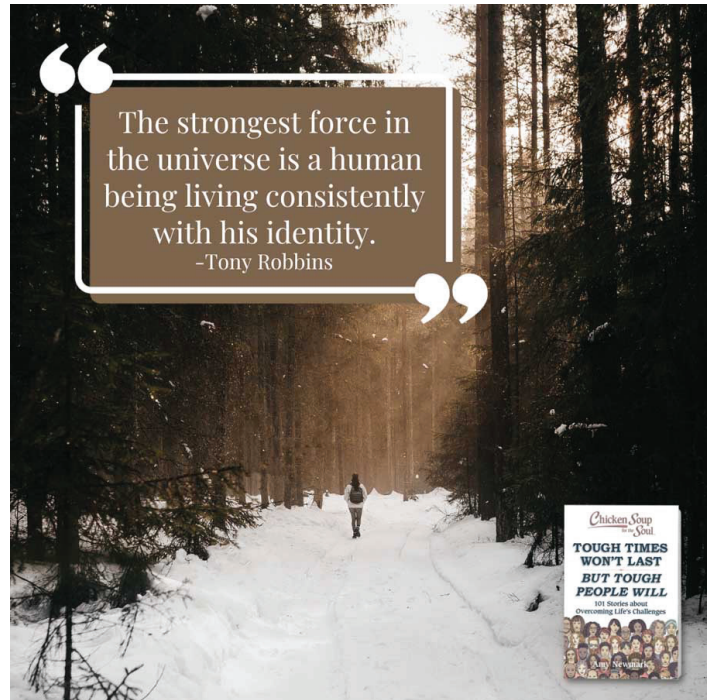
Cancelled: Girls Varsity and Boys JH/JV/Varsity Wrestling at Gettysburg

Postponed: Basketball Doubleheader hosts Dakota Valley

Huron youth wrestling tournament today is a GO regardless of weather.

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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



“The strongest force in the universe is a human being living consistently with his identity.”

-Tony Robbins

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 14

Groton CM&A: No Sunday School, Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Worship: (Conde at 8:30 a.m., Groton at 10:30 a.m.), Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's at 9 a.m. and at Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.

Monday, Jan. 15 Martin Luther King Day

City, County and State Offices Closed

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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1440

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Taiwanese voters head to the polls today to choose the island's next president and legislature, marking the world's first big election of the year. The winner of the elections could have major implications for Taiwan's fate and its strained relationship with China.

DOJ to pursue death penalty against Buffalo supermarket shooter.

The Justice Department said Friday it will seek the death penalty against the shooter who carried out a racially motivated mass shooting at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, in 2022. The shooter is currently serving life in state prison for killing 10 people and wounding three others in the attack at a supermarket in the city's predominantly Black East Side neighborhood.

Ancient cases of sex-development disorders identified.

Analysis of DNA from the remains of multiple individuals who lived as early as 2,500 years ago revealed chromosomal conditions including Turner (when females have only one X chromosome instead of two), Jacobs (males with an extra Y chromosome), and Klinefelter (males with an extra X chromosome) syndromes.

Patriots to promote Jerod Mayo to replace Bill Belichick as head coach.

The news comes a day after Belichick announced he was departing the New England Patriots after 24 seasons, which included winning six Super Bowls. Mayo, the Patriots' current linebackers coach, will be the team's first Black head coach. Mayo played eight NFL seasons and won a Super Bowl ring while playing with the Patriots in 2014.

Separately, University of Washington head coach Kalen DeBoer is said to be finalizing a deal to replace retiring coach Nick Saban at Alabama.

Citigroup plans to cut 20,000 jobs.

The investment banking company said it was slashing 10% of its workforce by 2026 to help reduce costs by at least \$2.5B over the long term. The move comes after the company posted its worst quarter in 15 years; its stock rose 1.3% on the news.

Western airstrikes in Yemen continue.

The US and Britain continued targeted strikes from the air and sea against Houthi rebels in Yemen, an effort meant to stem attacks from the militants on vessels traveling in the nearby Red Sea.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Fran B. in Mexico, Maine.

"Our community was hit with a devastating rain storm Dec. 18 a lot of our town and the surrounding towns of Rumford, Dixfield, and many other towns were flooded. The two apartments on the first floor of our building took in over 5 inches of water; our apartment was damaged the worst. Our entire neighborhood had over 5 feet of water in it. We had to be taken to safety by boat. We were taken to the Rumford high school where I saw other people who had also been flooded out of their homes and lost most, if not all, of their belongings."

"We didn't know how much we had lost until we were able to get back to the house to assess our losses; we lost all of our clothes and the majority of our furniture While I was at the high school, I saw a community pull together like I've never seen in my life! People started bringing in donations and they didn't stop for days. Toys, clothes, toiletries, you name it, it was there and school workers were there making food I started thanking people individually on their way in or out of the school and I tried to thank the school workers, too.

My heart was so full. I'm so proud of my community."

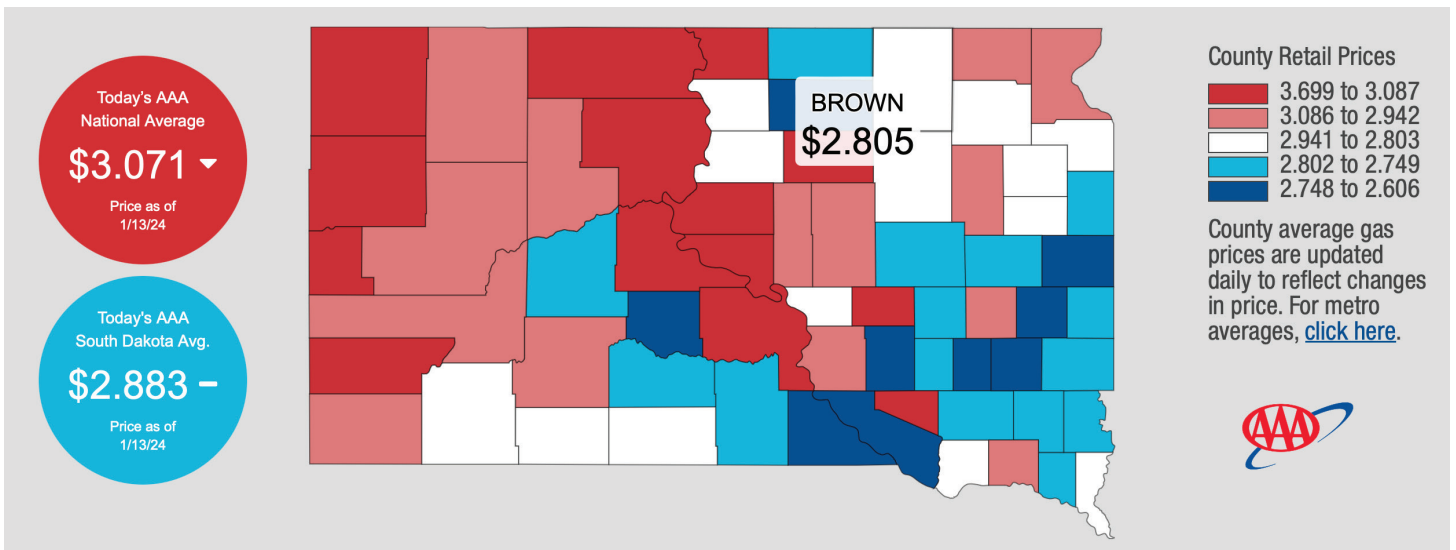
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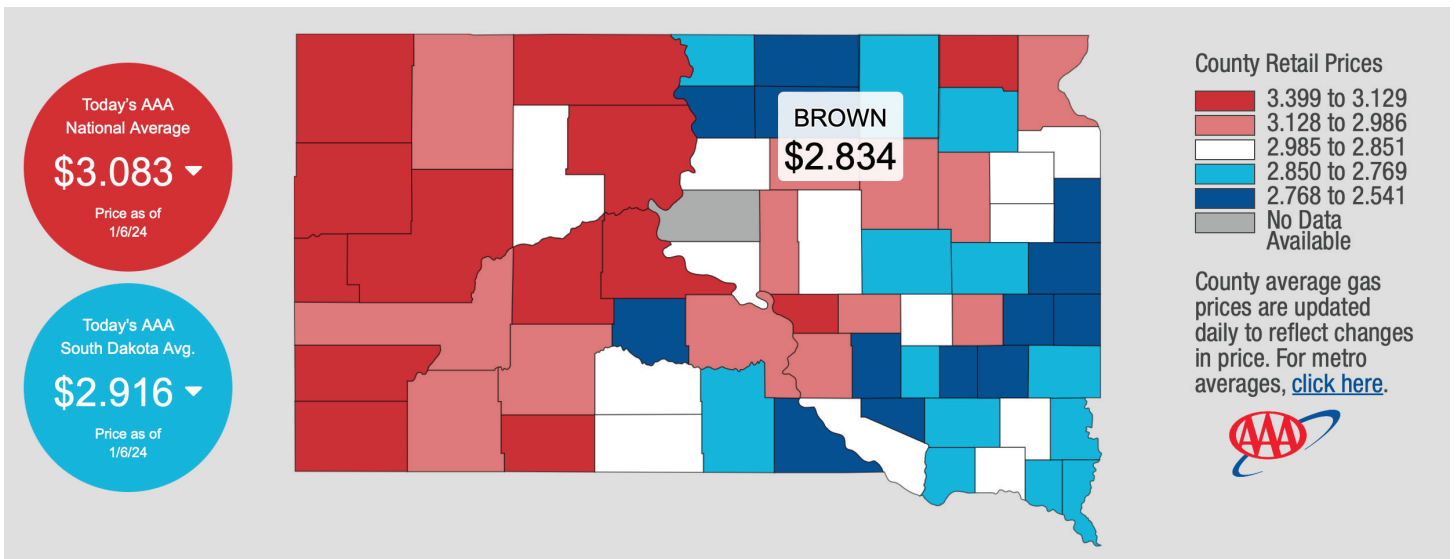
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.883	\$3.034	\$3.526	\$3.746
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.883	\$3.050	\$3.532	\$3.718
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.916	\$3.068	\$3.562	\$3.709
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.038	\$3.216	\$3.684	\$3.846
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.216	\$3.398	\$3.864	\$4.284

This Week



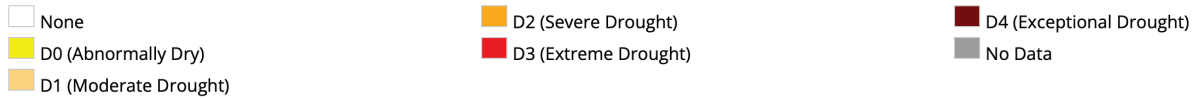
Two Weeks Ago



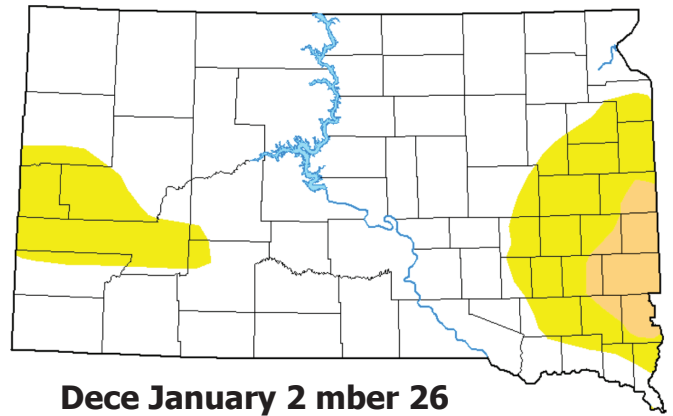
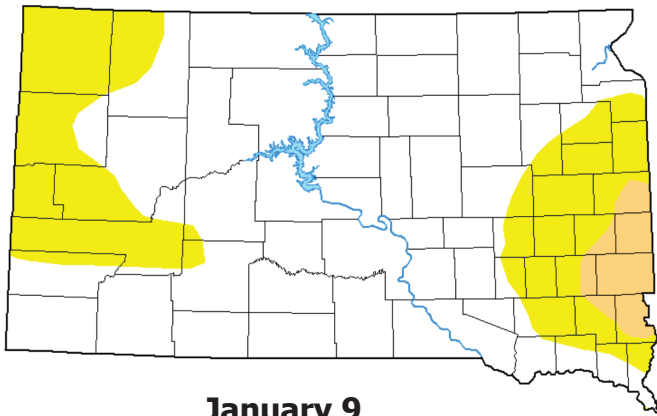
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



Storminess in recent weeks has resulted in widespread improvements across the Central Plains. Additional improvements were again warranted this week in the Central Plains, where a couple of storm systems brought wintry precipitation, with weekly snowfall totals of over 5 inches for many areas (locally more than 10 inches), further increasing short-term precipitation surpluses. Unfortunately, the storm track has predominantly been displaced southward across the southern half of the U.S. over the past couple of months, which has led to slow deterioration of drought conditions across portions of the western High Plains and along the Front Range of the Rockies. With another week of below normal precipitation, degradation was again warranted this week. Seasonal snowfall remains below average for many locations and daytime temperatures have been running above normal (and above freezing), exposing soils to evaporation, predominantly from high winds.

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NSU Women's Basketball

Fillipi Grabs Her 1000 Career Point in the Win Over Wildcats

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State women's basketball team takes down Wayne State, 62-53 Friday night. The win saw Rianna Fillipi reach 1000 career points in the contest along with leading the team with 18 points.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 62, WSC 53

Records: NSU 11-4 (7-2 NSIC), WSC 4-9 (1-9 NSIC)

Attendance: 3065

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State tallied 22 points in the first quarter, 14 in the second, 15 in the third, and 11 in the fourth. The Wolves grabbed 47 rebounds, 28 points in the paint, 14 bench points, and 12 second chance points. NSU shot 44.4 % from the floor, 30.0 % from beyond the 3-point line, and 53.3 % from the foul line. Rianna Fillipi notched her second double-double of the season with 18 points and ten rebounds along with six assists to lead the team.

In addition, Fillipi made 50.0 % of shots beyond the 3-point arc.

Madelyn Bragg was second on the team with 15 points and six rebounds while shooting 50.0 % from the floor.

Decontee Smith led the Wolves off the bench with 11 points and 5 rebounds.

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Rianna Fillipi: 18 points, 10 rebounds, 6 assists, 55.5 field-goal %

Madelyn Bragg: 15 points, 6 rebounds, 50.0 field-goal %

Decontee Smith: 11 points, 5 rebounds, 50.0 field-goal %

BEYOND THE BOX

Rianna Fillipi notched her 1000 career points in the win over Wayne State.

UP NEXT

Northern State is back in action on Saturday evening to take on Augustana. Tip-off time is set for 6 p.m. on January 13th from Wachs Arena. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

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NSU Men's Basketball

Northern Drops 1-Point Contest to Wayne State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team dropped a heart breaker on Friday evening to Wayne State. The Wolves out-scored the Wildcats 51-39 in the second half, however could not overcome poor shooting in the first 20 minutes of play.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 69, WSC 70

Records: NSU 6-9 (4-5 NSIC), 10-7 (3-7 NSIC)

Attendance: 3278

HOW IT HAPPENED

Wayne State led 31-18 at the half as Northern State shot just 7-of-32 from the floor and 2-of-17 from the 3-point line

The Wolves turned things around in the second half, shooting 68.2% from the floor and 64.3% from beyond the arc

NSU recorded 33 rebounds, 15 assists, 11 made 3-pointers, six blocks, and three steals

They scored 18 points in the paint, ten points off the bench, and eight points off turnovers

WSC tallied 32 points in the paint, 25 off the bench, 11 points off turnovers, and seven second chance and fast break points

Jacksen Moni and Josh Dilling sparked the offense with 21 and 18 points respectively, each shooting over 50.0% in the game

Moni nearly recorded a double-double with nine rebounds and led the team with seven assists and three blocks

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Jacksen Moni: 21 points, 50.0 field goal%, 9 rebounds, 7 assists, 3 blocks

Josh Dilling: 18 points, 58.3 field goal%, 6 rebounds, 3 assists

Augustin Reede: 9 points, 3 assists, 2 steals

Michael Nhial: 8 points, 7 rebounds

UP NEXT

The Wolves will match-up against Augustana at 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 13 to close out the weekend.

Democratic Legislators Recap First Week of 2024 Legislative Session

Your South Dakota Democratic Senators and Representatives just wrapped up their first week of the 2024 Legislative Session.

Rep. Erin Healy, Sen. Reynold Nesiba, and Rep. Kameron Nelson outlined the priorities for this session at the first weekly Democratic legislator news conference. This includes making access to healthcare easier, especially in rural areas. The Democratic caucus also said that it strongly opposes a Medicaid work requirement. "We don't understand why our Republican colleagues continue to make it harder for people to access healthcare," said Rep. Healy.

Democratic leaders also discussed the childcare crisis that is forcing families across South Dakota to make tough decisions. They also highlighted the bill Rep. Kady Wittman introduced to make sure more kids receive free meals at school. "It is a really critical step in order to access nutritious meals for K-12 students," said Rep. Healy. "We also know that we are one of 15 states that didn't take federal funds for the Summer EBT program. We know that when our kids are taken care of, they're going to live great lives here in South Dakota."

Rep. Nelson thanked Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe Vice President Cyndi Allen-Weddell for delivering the State of the Tribes. He said the South Dakota legislature must pass its own Indian Child Welfare Act following the decision from the US Supreme Court to uphold ICWA. "The key principles of that act are to emphasize protecting the rights of biological parents and extended families," said Rep. Nelson. "This would also recognize the importance of maintaining a child's connection with their community and culture."

Rep. Nelson said that standing for fairness and equality is a priority for Democratic lawmakers, especially when it comes to marginalized groups. This came a day before the Equality, Visibility & Advocacy Day at the South Dakota Capitol. However, Rep. Nelson's House Commemoration to celebrate the LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit communities was pulled by Republican Rep. Ben Krohmer.

Sen. Nesiba highlighted how federal money from the Biden-Harris Administration is helping South Dakota, especially from the American Rescue Plan. This includes \$600 million for water and waste water projects that communities across the state can apply for. "It's so great that we have these federal revenues that have come into the state over the last couple of years that have allowed us to do that," said Sen. Nesiba.

"Those dollars have a great potential of serving our rural South Dakotans as far as building out that infrastructure and make sure that our agriculture continues to be competitive across the entire country," said Rep. Nelson.

Sen. Nesiba said that while there is a lot to celebrate in South Dakota, there are still issues that need to be addressed by the legislature. He said while we have a balanced budget, the state has a deficit when it comes to pre-k education, childcare, and workforce. Sen. Nesiba says the legislature needs to be aware of the impact that politically divisive rhetoric and extremely conservative policies are having on young people and families and their decisions on whether to stay in the state.

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GFP Commission Holds January Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their January Meeting at the Matthews Training Center in Pierre January 11-12.

The Commission re-elected Stephanie Rissler, of Vermillion, as chairperson and Travis Bies, of Fairburn, as vice chair.

Wildlife Finalizations

The Commission adopted several waterfowl seasons with no change from 2023, finalizing the seasons for 2024. Those seasons are as follows:

Duck Season;
Early Fall Canada Goose Season;
Goose Season;
Special Canada Goose Season;
Spring Light Goose Season;
Sand Hill Crane Season;
Tundra Swan Season; and,
Youth Waterfowl Season.

Wildlife Proposals

Nonresident Waterfowl

The Commission proposed to add additional licenses to the Nonresident Waterfowl hunting seasons. The additions include:

Adding 210 licenses to the 10-day statewide, NRW-00B area;
Adding 50 licenses to the 3-day NRW-00V area; and,
Adding 55 licenses to the 3-day NRW-00z area.
These additions fall within the 5% yearly increases allowed in statute.

Bighorn Sheep

The Commission also proposed to add one bighorn sheep license to the Custer State Park Unit, and four licenses to the Hells Canyon Unit for the 2024 Bighorn hunting season. The proposal would also provide the flexibility to increase the maximum amount of licenses to 20.

Elk

The Commission proposed to increase the maximum licenses that could be available for all elk hunting seasons. The actual proposed licenses available for the 2024 Elk hunting seasons will be given at the March meeting, when the Commission will hear survey and harvest data collected from the 2023 season. This action simply gives the Commission the flexibility to react to the forthcoming data.

Public Comment Opportunity and Upcoming Meeting

To hear the discussion on any of the topics on the agenda, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these documents in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, public comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT on March 3.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Pierre March 7-8.



Johnson is first to represent Groton Area at MS All State Jazz Band

Sixth Grader Liam Johnson has been accepted into the 2024 MS All State Jazz Band on Alto Saxophone. Liam is the first student to represent Groton at this event. MS All State Jazz Band will be held in Mitchell on Feb 2nd-3rd.

(Photo from Groton Area Facebook Page)

Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #8 Results

Team Standings: Shihtzus – 4, Jackelopes – 4, Coyotes – 3, Chipmunks – 1, Cheetahs – 0, Foxes – 0

Men's High Games: Tony Waage – 208, John Sippel – 199, Brad Waage – 197

Women's High Games: Vicki Walter – 178, Nancy Radke – 172, Alexa Schuring – 171

Men's High Series: Tony Waage – 586, John Sippel – 551, Brad Waage – 508

Women's High Series: Darci Spanier – 441, Vicki Walter & Alexa Schuring – 435, Nancy Radke – 433

Fun Game: Most 6 Spares – 3 way tie! Shihtzus, Foxes, Jackelopes with 5 each!

Conde National League

Jan. 8, 2024 Team Standings: Tigers 8, Braves 8, Mets 8, Cubs 8, Pirates 4, Giants 0

Men's High Games: Russ Bethke 224, Butch Farmen 219, Aaron Severson 190

Men's High Series: Russ Bethke 554, Butch Farmen 525, Aaron Severson 516

Women's High Games: Cheryl Reyolts 151, Sam Bahr 147, Vanessa Bethke 139

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 390, Sam Bahr 387, Vickie Kramp 380

Governor Noem Gives Flexibility for Fuel Delivery

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, in response to the winter weather across South Dakota, Governor Kristi Noem signed Executive Order 2024-02, which declares a state of emergency in South Dakota and exempts deliveries of residential heating fuel from the United States Department of Transportation's Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

SDSU Extension 2024 private pesticide applicator training dates set

BROOKINGS, S.D. – South Dakota State University Extension's 2024 winter and spring private pesticide applicator certification training sessions are set.

The live trainings are from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. CST/12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. MT on Jan. 22, Feb. 7, March 13 and April 10, 2024. Participants can attend online via Zoom or in person at SDSU Extension regional centers and registered locations across the state.

Each training is divided into six sessions, with topics including laws and regulations, labels, weeds, insects, disease, climate and online recertification. To register, visit extension.sdstate.edu/events and search "private applicator".

There is no fee for a private applicator certification, which is valid for three years and expires on the last day of February.

If unable to attend a live session, private applicators can also get certified by passing a proctored exam at one of South Dakota's county testing offices, or by completing an online course. For the list of county offices or to register for the online course, visit extension.sdstate.edu/private-pesticide-applicator-training. The online course is open until Oct. 31, 2024.

Certification is required before an individual can legally purchase or use restricted-use pesticides. A producer who has the potential of producing more than \$1,000 of an agricultural commodity must be certified to use any pesticide.

"It's recertification season! For all of you that need to get your private applicator's license for the first time or get your existing license recertified, SDSU Extension is pleased to offer multiple routes that will meet your individual needs," said Stephen Robertson, SDSU Extension Pesticide Education Field Specialist. "I look forward to serving you all. Let's have a safe and productive season."

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources is the lead agency administering the pesticide certification program required by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. SDSU Extension partners with DANR to offer training programs. The DANR maintains a searchable database of private applicators.

For more information, contact Stephen Robertson, SDSU Extension Pesticide Education Field Specialist, at 605-688-5550 or Stephen.Robertson@sdstate.edu.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

House sends permanent tax cut to Senate, where leader says prospects are dim

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 12, 2024 3:50 PM

A bill to permanently set South Dakota's state sales tax rate at a reduced 4.2% passed through the House of Representatives on a 54-12 vote Friday at the Capitol, but a Senate leader said it could be doomed in his chamber.

Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, expects senators to reject the bill.

"They know it's not going to get out of the Senate, so it's a pretty easy vote for somebody over there," Schoenbeck said. "I don't think the Senate's attitude has changed from last year."

Gov. Kristi Noem has spoken in favor of making the tax cut permanent.

Prime sponsor Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, told lawmakers the bill would "live up to the intent" of what the House passed last year.

The House passed a state sales tax reduction from 4.5% to 4.2% last legislative session, before a sunset clause was added in the Senate to make the tax cut expire in 2027. Senators urged caution at the time with talk of a potential recession, preferring to wait to make any permanent decisions until after hundreds of millions of federal pandemic aid is fully spent.

"I don't like sunset clauses very much. I don't," Karr said on the House floor Friday. "I think it's disingenuous."

Karr focused on the positive economic growth South Dakota has experienced in the years since the pandemic started — including strong unemployment rates and personal income growth. He also pointed out that the state has had over \$180 million in surpluses in recent years.

The state expects \$115 million in surplus ongoing revenue this fiscal year, which Gov. Kristi Noem hopes to put toward a 4% increase in funding for education, health care providers and state employees.

Rep. Liz May, R-Kyle, said the sales tax rate was supposed to be cut to 4% based on the now-repealed Partridge Amendment. When legislators raised the state sales tax rate in 2016 by a half-percentage point in hopes of boosting teacher pay, they intended to reduce the tax rate as collections from online sellers increased.

"The only reason that bill passed, to start with, was because of the Partridge Amendment," said May, who was a representative at the time.

Rep. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, who was in the Senate in 2016, said the amendment was a "gimmick" designed to push lawmakers off the fence.

May said she hopes the vote in favor of a permanent tax cut will "send a message" to the Senate that politicians should follow through with promises.

But some legislators voted against the permanent cut. House Minority Leader Oren Lesmeister, D-Parade, worried about the impact if the cut becomes permanent and if South Dakotans vote in November to eliminate the state sales tax on anything sold for human consumption, commonly referred to as the grocery tax or food tax. Petitions to place that measure on the ballot are circulating.

Gov. Kristi Noem cautioned legislators last session that the proposed ballot measure will likely pass, which could leave lawmakers scrambling for revenue. A statewide South Dakota News Watch poll released in December showed that 60.6% of registered voters support eliminating the grocery tax.

Rep. Roger Chase, a Republican from Huron, voted against the bill Friday because he's unsure about economic growth and stability in the next few years, calling the tax cut "irresponsible." He recalled tight

budgets in the years before the pandemic and federal influx of funds.

"On our farm, corn is \$2 a bushel less today than when we voted on this sales tax reduction in March. Beans are significantly less," Chase said. "... We have no idea what the economy is going to be like in years to come in South Dakota."

Schoenbeck said the Senate will be committed to fiscal responsibility. After years of high inflation and increased federal funding, he pointed to some state revenue streams not hitting their targets — such as sales tax revenue — and expenses increasing as well.

"There's a whole lot of people voting for tax cuts with bills to spend money, which is an interesting magical act," Schoenbeck added.

Karr cited at least five times in the last six years the Legislature repealed sunset clauses on laws.

"We do it all the time," Karr said. "We do it, I guess, when politically we can and when there's a certain comfort level."

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.

Legislators endorse adding tribes to list of infrastructure grant-eligible entities

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 12, 2024 2:50 PM

The House State Affairs Committee signed off Friday on a bill that would open up a pool of housing infrastructure funding to tribal entities.

Rep. Tyler Tordsen, R-Sioux Falls, described House Bill 1041 as a "small but important technical fix" to the \$200 million housing infrastructure financing program created last year.

That program has already awarded nearly \$100 million to projects across the state to support the construction of things like streets, streetlights and water and sewer infrastructure for housing projects.

The issue addressed by HB 1041 revolves around the ultimate ownership of that state-supported infrastructure. In order to be eligible for a grant or loan through the program, a developer must pass along ownership of that infrastructure to a "political subdivision of the state." Tribal governments are sovereign entities, not political subdivisions.

In practice, that's meant developers could get money to build a street that later becomes the property of a city or county, but that they would not be able to get financial support for a street that would ultimately become the property of a reservation.

The Oglala Lakota County School District was able to take advantage of the program to build teacher housing, but only because, as a public school system, the district is a political subdivision of the state and took ownership of the streets and water lines.

Tordsen's bill would expand eligibility by adding "any federally recognized Indian tribe" to the list of eligible entities.

Tordsen, a member of the tribe known as the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, said he'll take "any chance I get to remind folks that tribal members are South Dakotans, too," and that "certainly there's some housing challenges in our rural communities and in tribal communities."

"We think that this is super important," Tordsen said.

The bill has an emergency clause, meaning it would take effect immediately if signed by Gov. Kristi Noem, instead of in July when most adopted legislation becomes law.

A lobbyist for three housing and economic development organizations testified in favor of HB 1041, and no one testified against it.

Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, echoed Tordsen, some of the lobbyists and a handful of other committee members when he called the exclusion of tribes an unfortunate oversight.

"There was never any intention to leave the Indian reservations out of the infrastructure funding," Chase said.

The bill passed 12-1, with Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, voting against it. Hansen voted against the infrastructure funding program bill in 2023.

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

Lawmakers advance plan to put prison legal defense costs on state ledger

Bon Homme County once worried it would spend half its annual budget to defend prison drug cases

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 12, 2024 1:50 PM

The state would pay the legal defense fees for inmates who commit crimes behind the prison walls under a measure endorsed by a group of legislators Friday morning at the Capitol in Pierre.

The House State Affairs Committee voted 13-0 to push House Bill 1039 to the budget committee for further consideration.

The bill was the brainchild of Rep. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, who was away for a family emergency and unable to testify in favor on Friday. Pierre House Majority Leader Will Mortenson took up the mantle, arguing that counties ought not bear the legal defense burden for prison crimes. The state operates prisons, which house inmates serving sentences. Counties operate jails, which mostly house defendants awaiting prosecution.

Like all South Dakota citizens, inmates who can't afford an attorney are constitutionally entitled to one when charged with a crime. Currently, counties are responsible for those legal bills, though Mortenson pointed out that most of the inmates who rack up the bills have little or no ties to the counties where their prisons are located. Further complicating matters, the state doesn't pay property taxes on its prison facilities, which means the state does not contribute to counties' primary source of funding.

The Attorney General's Office is responsible for prosecuting prison crimes. Mortenson told committee members that the burden of defending those inmates ought to land with the state, as well.

"These are state facilities, and this is a proper obligation of the state," Mortenson said.

Eric Erickson, who represents the South Dakota Association of County Officials, also testified in support of the measure. The money it takes to defend prison crimes varies wildly from year-to-year, he said, but can sometimes reach budget-breaking heights.

Erickson cited a recent situation involving a drug ring at Mike Durfee State Prison in Bon Homme County that saw possible legal fees of between \$2 million and \$3 million.

Bon Homme County's annual budget is about \$5 million.

"This is a situation that has been a long-standing problem for our counties," he said.

Reached after the meeting, Erickson said the figure for potential costs came from the association's membership, and that he didn't know what the final cost to defend the inmates had been.

A story from the Yankton Press & Dakotan that referenced the 2018 incident noted that the high initial cost estimates would likely be lower, since not all defendants would go to trial. It also noted that county commissioners had asked then-Department of Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk to cover the cost to defend the 20 inmates who qualified for county-paid attorneys. The DOC declined to pay. The Bon Homme County auditor did not immediately respond Friday to questions about the final cost to defend the inmates.

Costly multi-defendant cases like that may not be a regular occurrence, but the issue of public defense costs has simmered for years for county commissioners. The idea for HB 1039 came in part through discussions on county budget woes that took place over the summer and into the fall last year. The state Unified Judicial System is now backing the creation of a state-level public defender's office as a way to

help ease the burden of indigent defense for counties, as a result of those discussions and the work of an indigent defense task force.

South Dakota is the only state to put the entire financial burden of indigent defense on counties.

The planned placement of a new men's prison in Lincoln County makes the question of what counties pay to defend inmates more salient, Mortenson said.

"Of course, Lincoln County is not alone in having a prison sited there," Mortenson said.

Pennington County is in line for a new prison, as well. The state broke ground on a new women's prison there last year. That county is already home to a minimum-security men's unit.

Brittini Skipper of the Department of Corrections testified against the bill, arguing that it would be irresponsible to shift costs when the costs are unknown. The counties with state prison facilities – Hughes, Minnehaha, Pennington, Yankton and Bon Homme – don't have solid statistics for how much they pay to defend inmate defendants, she said.

The DOC does support creating a statewide public defender's office, Skipper said. But that office would pick up the legal fees for criminal appeals, not pay to defend people during the criminal cases that might spark appeals.

Lawmakers ultimately opted to send the bill to the House Appropriations Committee. Mortenson replied to Skipper's testimony by noting that the costs are both unknown and "unknowable." It's impossible for counties or the state to anticipate the number and severity of crimes that might be committed in prison during any given year, he said.

Rep. Gary Cammack, R-Union Center, moved to send the bill to appropriators for further study. Cammack said shifting those unknowable costs would simply put the state – an entity with far greater financial resources to absorb them – in the same position counties already find themselves in.

"That's exactly the problem the counties have been dealing with for a century," Cammack said.

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

With partial government shutdown a week away, Johnson says he'll stick to spending deal

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 12, 2024 11:41 AM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson committed Friday to following the topline spending agreement he struck with Democrats less than a week ago, following a day of speculation that he was preparing to walk away from the deal.

"Our top line agreement remains," Johnson said in a statement to reporters just off the House floor. "We are getting our next steps together. And we are working toward a robust appropriations process, so stay tuned for all of that."

Johnson didn't take questions about negotiations on the dozen annual spending bills or whether he'll support Congress using another stopgap spending bill to avoid a partial government shutdown on Jan. 19, when funding expires for some federal departments and agencies.

The Louisiana Republican did say in his statement that "in keeping up with my commitment to bring members into the legislative process, I've spoken and received feedback this week from many members all across the Republican Conference."

"That's a very important part of this," Johnson added. "When I became speaker, I committed to decentralizing the speaker's office and making this a member-driven process."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, and Johnson announced Sunday that they'd reached agreement on total spending levels for the fiscal year that began back on Oct. 1.

That agreement includes \$886.3 billion in defense spending and \$772.7 billion domestic spending for

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fiscal year 2024, though both chambers of Congress still have to work out agreement on the 12 annual appropriations bills.

Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy and the Biden administration brokered a separate but extremely similar agreement last summer that was approved within the debt limit law. But conservative Republicans later removed McCarthy from the speaker's office over that and over grievances.

Several especially conservative Republicans have been calling for Johnson to set aside, renegotiate, or somehow sweeten the current topline agreement all week.

Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green said after leaving the speaker's office Friday morning that while she doesn't like the topline spending levels, she's focused on how much conservative policy the GOP can insert in the annual spending bills.

"It's not about a topline spending number. It's about how our money is spent," Greene said. "The American people are sick and tired of paying for garbage and look at our country. Look at the result."

Greene also warned Johnson about funding for Ukraine, which is moving on a track separate from the annual government spending bills.

"We don't have to trade \$60 billion for Ukraine for our own country's border security," Greene said. "That is a failing, losing strategy and I will never support it. I'll fight it as much as possible. Even if I have to go so far to vacate the chair, there's others that agree with me."

In the House, any one lawmaker can force a vote to remove the speaker from office through the so-called motion to vacate. That's the same process that Florida GOP Rep. Matt Gaetz used last year to remove McCarthy from that leadership position.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Panel backs plan to triple amount paid to counties for keeping kids out of court

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 12, 2024 11:00 AM

The state would triple the amount paid to counties for keeping kids out of the juvenile justice system under a bill backed this week by the state Senate Judiciary Committee.

Senate Bill 47, introduced at the request of the state Department of Corrections, pushes the per-kid payment for successful "diversions" from \$250 to \$750.

Local prosecutors have the discretion to funnel kids caught engaging in low-level offenses into such programs, which allow them to avoid formal court action upon completion.

The payout system for counties emerged eight years ago. It was motivated, according to DOC Juvenile Services Director Kristi Bunkers, by "a very robust body of research" backing the notion that keeping kids out of juvenile court reduces their chances of involvement with the adult system.

About 84% of the kids who started such a program during last year completed it, Bunkers said.

After eight years and \$2.7 million in payments to counties, Bunkers told members of the Judiciary Committee on Thursday at the Capitol in Pierre, the state has pushed nearly twice as many kids through diversion as it had before the program launched.

"That's 12,727 young people who didn't have to enter the formal justice system in order to get their needs met in terms of alcohol and drug violations, tobacco and truancy," Bunkers said.

Last year, Bunkers said, the state paid 24 counties \$455,750 in incentives for 1,823 successful diversions. This year, Gov. Kristi Noem's budget has asked that roughly \$1 million be reallocated from other parts of the DOC's youth programs budget to cover diversion payouts.

Representatives for the Unified Judicial System and State's Attorney's Association joined the DOC in

testifying to support SB 47. Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel appeared via video link to speak in support, as well.

The committee voted 6-0 to advance the bill to the Senate floor.

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

State plans to require ACT for high school juniors by 2025

The college entrance exam would replace the current Smarter Balanced assessment

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 12, 2024 10:20 AM

A bill that would require high school juniors to take the ACT college entrance exam instead of a separate state assessment was tabled by the state House Education Committee on Friday at the Capitol in Pierre.

While a majority of testifiers supported the bill, including the Department of Education, the bill's prime sponsor Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, recommended tabling it. That's because Secretary of Education Joseph Graves said the department plans to switch to the ACT by the 2025-2026 school year anyway.

"I'm not a person who sees the need to put things into law unnecessarily" Venhuizen said. "... I just want to see this happen, and it sounds like it's going to."

One person testified against the bill, saying it would degrade parents' ability to make educational decisions for their children.

Education officials within state government have talked about making the switch to the ACT from the Smarter Balanced assessment for years, Venhuizen told legislators. That's because the switch would reduce the number of tests most high school juniors take, would save families money if they want to send their children to college — since the state would be footing the bill — and would put more weight behind the students' scores.

The ACT would be the best choice for a replacement test, Graves told lawmakers.

"Students don't find any value in (the Smarter Balanced test)," Graves said. "Because they have no use for it — for the most part — they tend not to take the test seriously. This is a common complaint registered by high school principals and teachers. Because the test results don't have any other use, then the value is low. We're taking a test we use for accountability and that's it."

About 58% of South Dakota students take the ACT before graduating, since most colleges and universities require scores in the admission process and for scholarship applications.

South Dakota students' average ACT score was down for the third consecutive year in 2023, but it remains higher than the national average. Testers earned an average composite score of 21.1 out of 36. Switching to the ACT for all 11th graders will likely lower the state's score.

Some other states, like Nebraska and Montana, require 11th graders to take the ACT. States where 100% of 2023 high school graduates had taken the test had average scores ranging from 17.2 to 19.

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.

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.

Biden announces plan to cancel some student loan balances under \$12,000

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 12, 2024 6:00 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden announced Friday that some federal student loan borrowers will have their loans canceled under the Department of Education's new repayment plan.

Starting next month, people who took out under \$12,000 in federal student loans and have been repaying those loans for 10 years will get their remaining student loan balance cancelled once they enroll in the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan, known as SAVE.

"This action will particularly help community college borrowers, low-income borrowers, and those struggling to repay their loans," Biden said in a statement.

"And, it's part of our ongoing efforts to act as quickly as possible to give more borrowers breathing room so they can get out from under the burden of student loan debt, move on with their lives and pursue their dreams."

This initiative builds on the Biden administration's effort to cancel federal student loan debt following last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down the White House's plan for a one-time cancellation of up to \$10,000 for federal borrowers. Student loan borrowers who had received Pell Grants — federal aid to help low-income students pay for higher education — could have qualified for an additional \$10,000 in forgiveness.

Hours after the Supreme Court struck down the plan, the White House announced its SAVE plan, along with a one-year off-ramp program that would not report borrowers to creditors if they failed to make loan payments once repayment started back up in October.

"And, in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision on our student debt relief plan, we are continuing to pursue an alternative path to deliver student debt relief to as many borrowers as possible as quickly as possible," Biden said. "I won't back down from using every tool at our disposal to get student loan borrowers the relief they need to reach their dreams."

So far, 6.9 million borrowers have enrolled in SAVE, and of those borrowers, 3.9 million have a \$0 monthly payment. There are 18,500 South Dakotans enrolled.

Under the new plan, SAVE calculates payments based on a borrower's income and family size and forgives balances after a set number of years. The Department of Education has estimated that most borrowers will save about \$1,000 per year under the new plan.

Borrowers who are in the former payment plan — known as the Revised Pay as You Earn plan — will automatically be enrolled in the SAVE program.

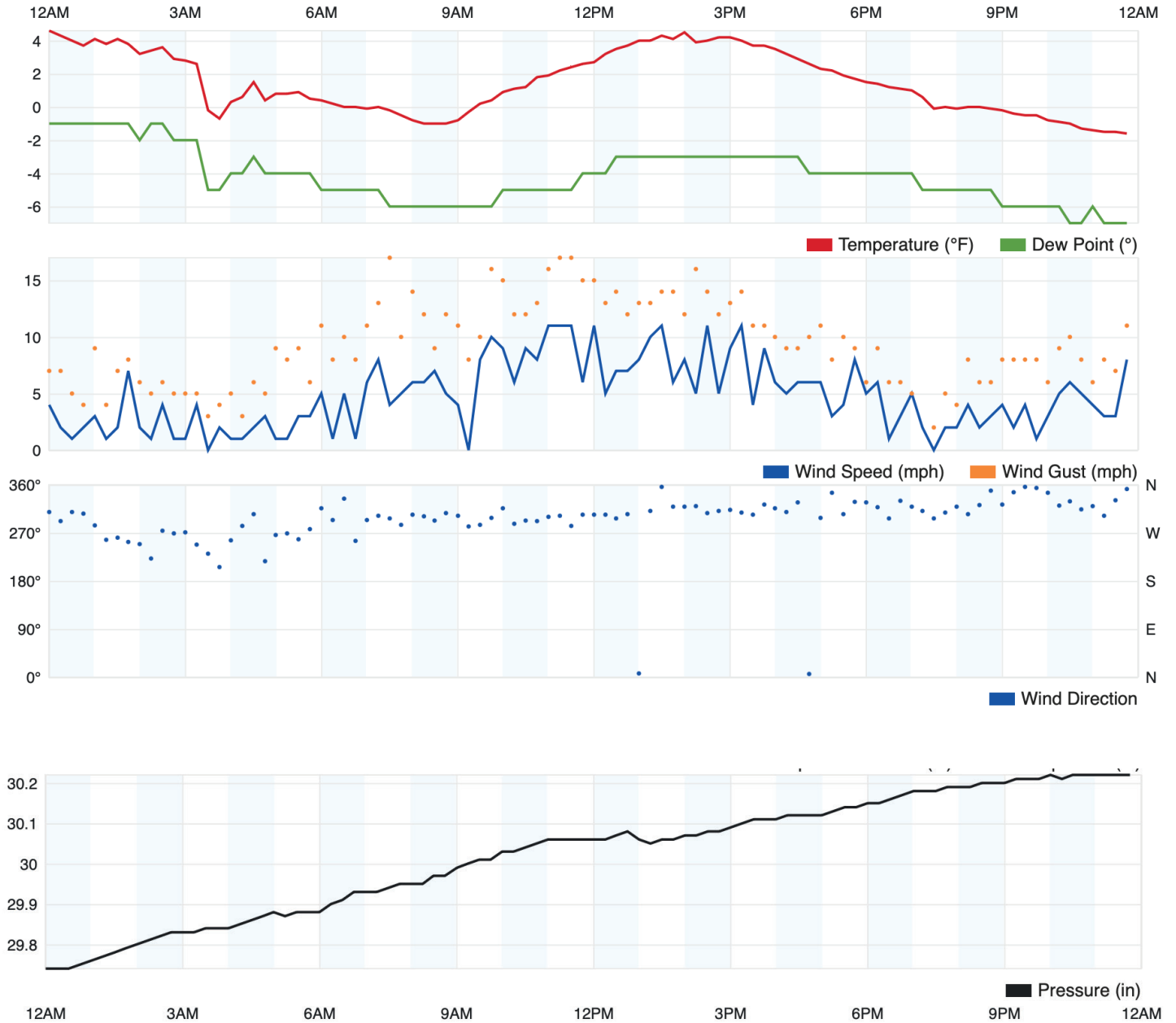
The states with the highest number of borrowers enrolled in the program include Texas, with 591,700, California with 597,300, Florida with 475,800, New York with 374,300 and Pennsylvania with 289,800.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sat Jan 13	Sun Jan 14	Mon Jan 15	Tue Jan 16	Wed Jan 17	Thu Jan 18	Fri Jan 19
-6°F	-7°F	-3°F	7°F	14°F	8°F	8°F
-18°F	-16°F	-9°F	0°F	0°F	-4°F	-2°F
NW	WNW	WNW	W	WSW	NW	WNW
28 MPH	12 MPH	23 MPH	16 MPH	15 MPH	16 MPH	15 MPH
50%				20%		



Dangerously Cold & Blowing Snow

January 13, 2024
5:25 AM

Key Messages

- Dangerously cold wind chills of **-35 to -55** degrees today through Monday.
- Light snow through today. Inch or less of snow possible.
- Blowing/drifting snow today. Visibility reduced to a half mile or less at times, especially along and south of US HWY 212.

NEW What Has Changed

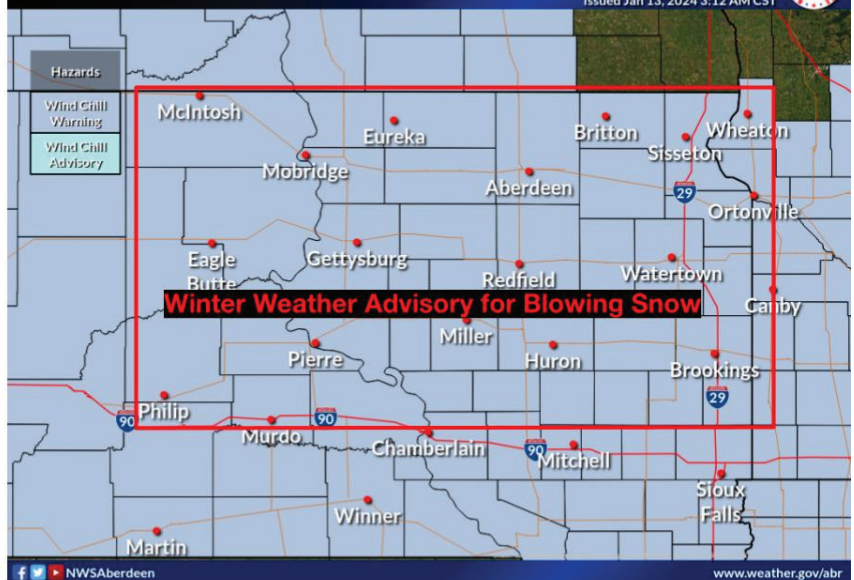
- Winter Weather Advisory has been extended to in coverage for blowing snow concerns.

Next Scheduled Update

- Saturday afternoon

Wind Chill Headlines

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen/Rapid City/Sioux Falls, SD
Issued Jan 13, 2024 3:12 AM CST



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Dangerously cold wind chills continue today along with blowing or drifting snow. Blowing snow will reduce visibilities to a half mile or less at times. West central MN is now included in a Winter Weather Advisory

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Dangerously Cold Wind Chills

January 13, 2024
5:32 AM



Hazards:

Wind chills values between -35 to -55 degrees



Timing & Duration:

The cold air will remain in place through Monday



Impacts:

Exposed skin may freeze in a matter of minutes. Bring your pets inside!

Minimum Wind Chill Forecast (°F)

	1/13 Sat			1/14 Sun			1/15 Mon			Minimum		
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am		12pm	6pm
Aberdeen	-42	-39	-43	-45	-45	-33	-34	-38	-38	-30	-34	-45
Britton	-41	-39	-43	-44	-43	-34	-34	-36	-39	-31	-35	-44
Brookings	-37	-40	-41	-42	-43	-34	-36	-38	-39	-35	-35	-43
Chamberlain	-43	-42	-43	-44	-41	-31	-32	-36	-37	-31	-32	-44
Clark	-45	-43	-47	-49	-48	-40	-39	-41	-42	-36	-38	-49
Eagle Butte	-59	-52	-52	-51	-50	-38	-40	-44	-44	-35	-36	-59
Ellendale	-47	-44	-46	-47	-47	-34	-36	-39	-40	-33	-35	-47
Eureka	-53	-49	-50	-49	-51	-42	-39	-43	-44	-38	-37	-53
Gettysburg	-58	-50	-51	-51	-51	-43	-38	-42	-43	-36	-36	-58
Huron	-41	-42	-42	-42	-42	-31	-34	-35	-37	-32	-31	-42
Kennebec	-49	-47	-50	-49	-48	-38	-35	-41	-41	-33	-34	-50
McIntosh	-63	-54	-54	-53	-52	-42	-42	-46	-47	-39	-37	-63
Milbank	-35	-34	-39	-41	-42	-32	-34	-34	-35	-31	-33	-42
Miller	-50	-46	-50	-49	-49	-39	-37	-40	-41	-34	-34	-50
Mobridge	-52	-46	-46	-46	-47	-34	-33	-38	-39	-32	-32	-52
Murdo	-54	-50	-50	-50	-49	-37	-34	-41	-41	-35	-35	-54
Pierre	-47	-44	-43	-42	-41	-34	-29	-34	-36	-29	-29	-47
Redfield	-44	-43	-46	-47	-48	-36	-35	-39	-39	-32	-34	-48
Sisseton	-38	-37	-41	-44	-43	-34	-34	-35	-37	-31	-35	-44
Watertown	-40	-42	-46	-47	-46	-36	-38	-40	-41	-34	-38	-47
Webster	-43	-43	-48	-48	-48	-39	-37	-40	-41	-35	-38	-48
Wheaton	-33	-33	-37	-40	-41	-35	-30	-31	-34	-31	-32	-41

Created: 3 am CST Sat 1/13/2024 | Values are minimums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Wind chills between -35 to -55 degrees F are expected to remain in place through Monday. These temperatures are dangerous! Exposed skin may freeze in a matter of minutes. Bring your pets inside!



Increasing Northwest Winds

January 13, 2024
5:35 AM

Wind Gusts

- Windy conditions are expected through the day today
- Wind gusts will peak at 45+ mph through Saturday and again on Monday
- These winds, combined with pre-existing snowpack and fresh fluffy snow, will result in blowing snow

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	1/13 Sat			1/14 Sun			1/15 Mon			Maximum													
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am		6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm								
Aberdeen	38	43	41	39	39	40	39	31	29	23	22	18	18	18	21	22	26	33	36	37	38	43	
Britton	36	38	39	38	38	38	37	30	26	22	18	20	20	18	18	17	21	25	31	35	35	35	39
Brookings	36	38	37	37	38	37	36	33	30	24	22	21	21	18	17	18	18	23	25	29	30	33	38
Chamberlain	40	41	40	40	40	37	37	33	26	21	20	21	20	14	17	21	25	30	36	38	38	37	41
Clark	38	39	38	39	39	39	38	36	30	25	22	21	21	21	18	21	22	25	30	32	36	37	39
Eagle Butte	46	46	45	44	45	44	40	35	26	24	22	22	22	21	24	31	37	38	41	45	48	51	51
Ellendale	43	46	44	44	43	43	40	38	32	26	24	21	21	21	22	25	28	32	38	40	41	43	46
Eureka	46	46	43	44	44	43	38	35	30	26	28	26	24	22	23	28	33	36	41	44	44	44	46
Gettysburg	46	48	44	44	46	43	41	35	29	26	24	24	23	21	22	24	30	35	40	44	44	45	48
Huron	39	41	40	40	40	40	38	33	29	24	23	21	18	18	18	21	22	25	30	33	35	35	41
Kennebec	45	47	46	46	44	43	40	33	28	22	22	22	16	20	23	31	35	39	43	43	43	47	47
McIntosh	51	49	48	47	49	44	40	36	30	26	26	26	26	26	29	36	39	43	47	51	51	51	51
Milbank	39	40	37	38	37	41	41	35	31	26	22	22	21	21	22	21	22	24	29	30	33	36	41
Miller	40	44	44	44	44	40	38	32	28	24	23	22	21	18	20	21	24	30	37	39	39	38	44
Mobridge	41	43	40	41	41	41	36	30	22	21	20	20	20	18	20	24	26	31	37	38	45	45	46
Murdo	46	47	46	46	43	39	38	30	24	20	21	21	20	14	17	23	31	35	38	41	41	40	47
Pierre	41	39	38	40	41	39	36	26	28	16	18	18	18	15	16	20	24	28	32	37	38	43	43
Redfield	39	43	43	43	43	43	38	33	30	25	22	20	18	18	17	20	23	28	33	36	37	37	43
Sisseton	41	40	40	39	40	44	43	39	35	28	24	23	23	23	24	24	25	29	32	36	43	39	44
Watertown	38	38	37	38	38	39	37	33	31	26	22	22	22	21	21	21	23	26	30	33	37	37	39
Webster	43	44	44	44	45	44	41	38	32	26	24	22	23	23	22	22	25	30	36	39	40	40	45
Wheaton	32	35	35	35	36	35	33	33	30	26	22	22	22	20	18	20	21	24	26	29	30	31	36

Created: 3 am CST Sat 1/13/2024 | Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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WIND CHILL WARNING WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY

Begins: 6:00 AM Sat, Jan 13, 2024

Expires: 12:00 PM Mon, Jan 15, 2024

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL MIDNIGHT CST TONIGHT...

...WIND CHILL WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL NOON CST MONDAY...

* WHAT...For the Winter Weather Advisory, blowing snow. Winds gusting as high as 40 mph. For the Wind Chill Warning, dangerously cold wind chills expected. Wind chills as low as 45 below zero.

* WHERE...Brown and Spink Counties.

* WHEN...For the Winter Weather Advisory, until midnight CST tonight. For the Wind Chill Warning, from 6 AM this morning to noon CST Monday.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning commute. The dangerously cold wind chills could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes.

Use caution while traveling outside. Wear appropriate clothing, a hat, and gloves.

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

Avoid outside activities if possible. When outside, make sure you wear appropriate clothing, a hat, and gloves.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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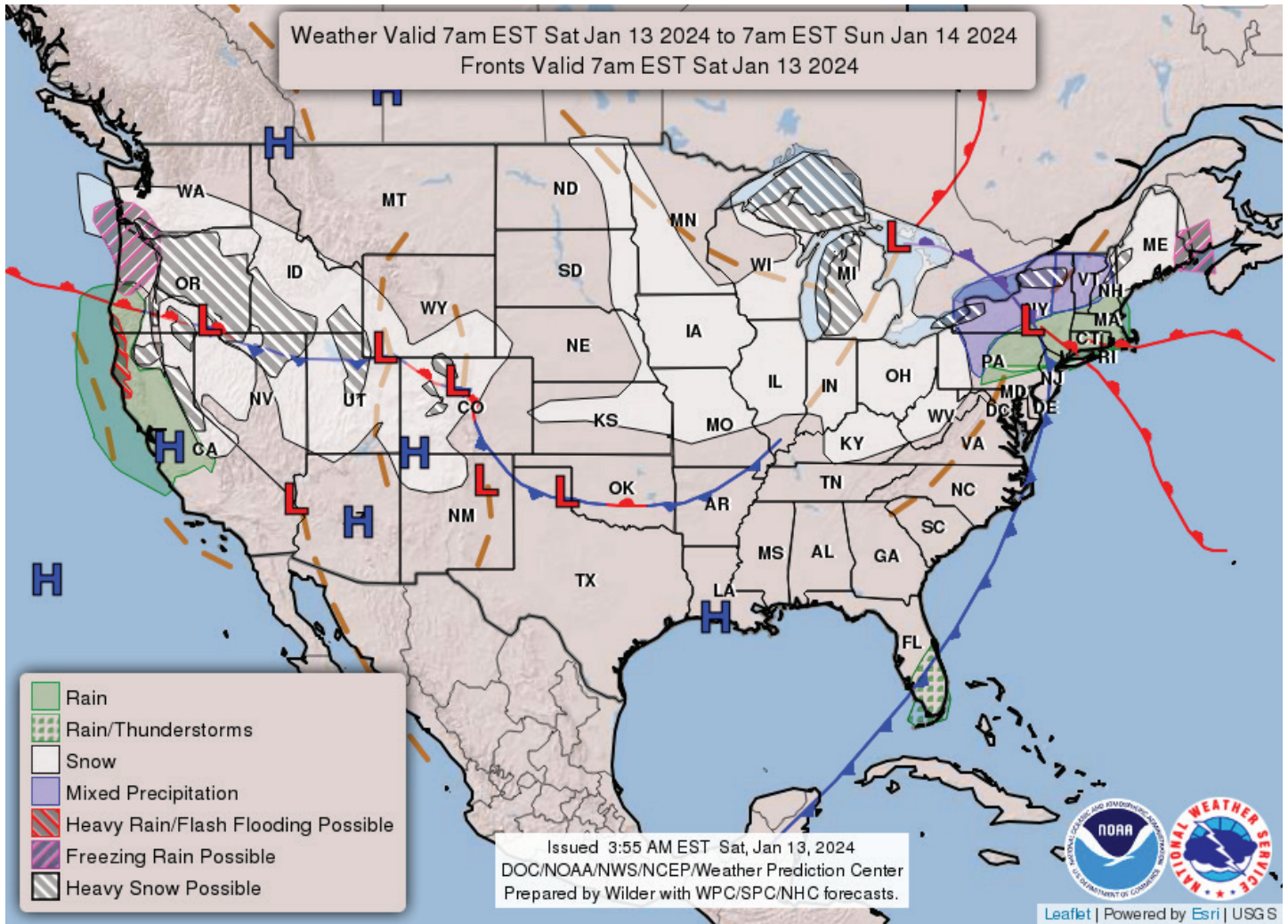
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 0 °F at 5:39 PM
Low Temp: -5 °F at 8:28 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 9:41 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 6 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 56 in 1987
Record Low: -40 in 1912
Average High: 23
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.26
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.26
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:14:09 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:07:19 am



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Today in Weather History

January 13, 1913: The temperature at Rapid City, South Dakota, rose sixty-four degrees in just fourteen hours.

January 13, 1916: An extreme cold affected central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota on January 13th, 1916. Record low temperatures were set at Kennebec, Timber Lake, Wheaton, and Watertown. Timber Lake recorded a low temperature of 37 degrees below zero. Wheaton fell to 38 degrees below zero. Kennebec recorded a low of 39 degrees below zero, with 40 degrees below zero recorded at Watertown on this day in 1916. Aberdeen and Mobridge recorded 38 degrees below zero and 36 degrees below zero, respectively.

January 13, 2009: After a clipper system dropped from 1 to 4 inches of snow on the 13th, Arctic air and blustery north winds pushed into the area. The coldest air and the lowest wind chills of the season spread across much of central and northeast South Dakota. Wind chills fell to 35 to 50 degrees below zero late in the evening of the 13th and remained through the 14th and into the mid-morning hours of the 15th. Across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, wind chills were as low as 60 degrees below zero by the morning of the 15th. Many vehicles did not start because of the extreme cold, and several schools had delayed starts. The Arctic high-pressure area settled in on the morning of the 15th, bringing the region's coldest temperatures in many years. The combination of a fresh and deep snowpack, clear skies, and light winds allowed temperatures to fall to record levels at many locations on the 15th. Daytime highs remained well below zero across the area. This was one of the coldest days that most areas experienced since the early 1970s. The records were broken by 1 to as much as 7 degrees. Some of the record lows included -30 degrees at Kennebec; -31 degrees at Sisseton; -32 degrees at Milbank; -33 degrees at Mobridge; -35 degrees at Andover and near Summit; -38 degrees at Eureka; -39 degrees 8 miles north of Columbia and Castlewood; -42 degrees at Aberdeen; and -47 degrees at Pollock. Some near-record low temperatures included -24 degrees at Pierre, -29 degrees at Redfield and Victor; -32 degrees at Roscoe; and -34 degrees at Watertown. In Aberdeen, the low temperature of -42 degrees is the third coldest temperature ever recorded.

1862: Known as the Great Flood of 1862, a series of storms from December 1861 to January 1862 produced the largest flood in the recorded history of Oregon, Nevada, and California. Estimated property damage in California alone was \$10 million in 1862 dollars. More than 200,000 head of cattle lost their lives. The State of California went bankrupt, and the economy evolved from ranching to farm-based. The same areas are expected to be flooded again if another ARkStorm (USGS name) impacts California, which could cause over \$750 billion (2011 USD), making it more disastrous than California's long-overdue major earthquake. California is currently overdue for a Megastorm, and such an event would have severe impacts on the entire U.S. economy. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

1886 - A great blizzard struck the state of Kansas without warning. The storm claimed 50 to 100 lives, and eighty percent of the cattle in the state. (David Ludlum)

1888 - The mercury plunged to 65 degrees below zero at Fort Keough, located near Miles City MT. The reading stood as a record for the continental U.S. for sixty-six years. (David Ludlum)

1912 - The temperature at Oakland, MD, plunged to 40 degrees below zero to establish a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1950: January 1950 was one of the worst winter months on record for Seattle, Washington, and surrounding areas. By the end of the month, Seattle measured 57.2 inches of snow, the most snowfall in any month since records began in 1894. The normal January snowfall is 1.4 inches. On this day, a crippling blizzard produced 40 to 50 mph winds and an astounding 20 inches.

1987 - Dry and mild weather prevailed across the country. Nineteen cities in the Upper Midwest reported record high temperatures for the date, including Grand Island NE with a reading of 67 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

LIMITED BY CHOICE

James Corbett was a one-time bank teller who became a world champion heavyweight boxer. One day while strolling through the woods, he came upon a man fishing for trout. Intrigued, he paused to watch him.

Eventually, the fisherman pulled out a huge trout, examined it carefully, and threw it back into the stream. After a short time, he caught another large trout, measured it, and then threw it back into the stream as he had with the first one. Eventually, he caught a trout half the size of the first two and kept it. Intrigued, Corbett asked, "Why did you throw the two large trout back into the stream and keep the small one?"

"Small frying pan," said the fisherman casting his line back into the stream.

Our vision keeps us in bondage. If we have small goals about what we want to achieve for God, then we will be satisfied with small gains. If we engage in little battles for God, we will be content with small victories. If we attempt nothing for God, that will be our reward.

If, on the other hand, we look to God for ideas that are worthy of Him, He will give them to us. And, not only will He give us ideas that are worthy of Him, but with them His inspiration and confirmation, His power and strength, His wisdom and insight to accomplish them. Then, we can do all things through Him if we do all things for Him. "By His mighty power," Paul said, "He can accomplish more than we can ask or hope." With God, all things are possible!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is evident that You want us to do great things for You. Give us an unlimited view of what we can do for You, and empower us to do great things for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Ephesians 3:20



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: 01.12.24

19 34 35 45 67 7

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$208,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.10.24

7 19 27 38 51 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,300,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.12.24

4 6 14 33 39 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.10.24

2 28 30 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.10.24

2 7 27 34 51 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.10.24

25 40 43 48 50 11

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$77,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Deuel 51, Clark-Willow Lake 41
Florence-Henry 32, Warner 30
Langford 47, Tiospa Zina 30
Rapid City Stevens 55, Campbell County, Wyo. 45
Red Cloud 53, Custer 22
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 50, Wolsey-Wessington 35
Thunder Basin, Wyo. 46, Sturgis Brown 33
Waubay/Summit 53, Tri-State, N.D. 49
Webster 50, Wilmot 32
281 Conference Tournament=
Iroquois-Lake Preston 38, Hitchcock-Tulare 36
James Valley Christian 53, Highmore-Harrold 32
Wessington Springs 51, Sunshine Bible Academy 14
West River Tournament=
Edgemont 51, Oelrichs 26
Faith 46, Newell 34
New Underwood 34, Moorcroft, Wyo. 29
Upton, Wyo. 50, Hot Springs 39
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Aberdeen Christian vs. Potter County, ppd.
Brandon Valley vs. Spearfish, ppd.
Sioux Falls Washington vs. Sioux Falls Jefferson, ppd.

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Clark-Willow Lake 53, Deuel 45
Custer 57, Red Cloud 54
Rapid City Stevens 72, Campbell County, Wyo. 60
Waubay/Summit 66, Tri-State, N.D. 48
Webster 81, Wilmot 24
Jones County Invitational=
Lyman 58, Bennett County 41
Philip 63, Jones County 54, 2OT
St. Francis Indian 59, Todd County 56
Stanley County 84, Colome 60
White River 64, Kadoka Area 40
West River Tournament=
Edgemont 60, Oelrichs 23
Faith 77, New Underwood 56
Hot Springs 62, Upton, Wyo. 45
Moorcroft, Wyo. 49, Newell 45
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Aberdeen Christian vs. Potter County, ppd.
Brandon Valley vs. Spearfish, ppd.

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Ethan vs. Canistota, ppd.

Sioux Falls Washington vs. Sioux Falls Jefferson, ppd.

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

Winter storm to bring snow, winds, ice and life-threatening chill to US, forecasters warn

By JIM SALTER and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Brutally cold weather could prove a deadly challenge Saturday amid a continuing wave of Arctic storms that has hammered much of the country with blinding snow, freezing rain and whipping winds.

Governors from New York to Louisiana declared states of emergency ahead of predicted snow and bone-chilling temperatures. In St. Louis, the National Weather Service bureau warned of rare and "life-threatening" cold.

The fierce weather blitzed campaign schedules in Iowa, the leadoff GOP caucus state. With a blizzard warning covering most of the state, Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump all shuffled their schedules ahead of Monday's presidential vote.

Near-record cold in Kansas City will make for a frigid NFL playoff game Saturday night, when the Chiefs host Miami. Fans will be allowed to bring in blankets and first-aid stations were set up at Arrowhead Stadium. On Sunday, fans in Buffalo will contend with up to a foot (30 centimeters) of snow and fierce winds as the Bills host Pittsburgh.

The National Weather Service on Friday warned that a powerful storm would rock the Midwest to the Great Lakes through Saturday with heavy snow, strong winds and blizzards. Dangerously frigid weather would follow across the Rockies and the Plains, while heavy rain across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic would threaten river and coastal flooding.

Some areas of the Northeast had flooding concerns. Emergency responders helped evacuate some residents from their homes in Paterson, New Jersey, early Friday as the Passaic River started overflowing its banks. The new storm, combined with one earlier in the week, created flooding worries in Maine and New Hampshire, too.

It was minus 11 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 24 Celsius) in Bismarck, North Dakota on Friday morning, and forecasters warned the weekend could see temperatures reach 20 below F (minus 29 C) by early Sunday.

Black ice from freezing rain caused wrecks and brought Kansas City, Missouri, to a standstill.

At the Double Cross Cattle Company, a ranch south of Roberts, Montana, Tyson Ropp used an axe on Friday morning to chop through inches of ice covering a trough so that his bulls could get to their water. "It's just Montana," he added with a shrug.

But the weather won't spare any part of the country this weekend, forecasters said.

In the county that includes Portland, Oregon, which is more used to wintery rain than ice and snow, officials declared a weather emergency and opened severe weather shelters for the homeless. The county and non-profit groups this week distributed thousands of jackets, gloves, ponchos and other items.

In California, a warning of high avalanche danger was issued for parts of the Sierra Nevada, including the Lake Tahoe area, where an avalanche at a ski resort killed one man on Wednesday. The same was true in Idaho, where a man was presumed dead in an avalanche Thursday.

"EVERY state in the US has an active NWS watch, warning, or advisory," the National Weather Service announced Friday as it posted a color-coded map that showed portions of states under threat from storms, winds, floods, blizzards and avalanches.

Chicago was expecting several inches of snow through the weekend, with wind gusts to 50 miles per hour (80 kilometres per hour) and wind chills as low as minus 15 degrees F (minus 26 C) that could cause frostbite to exposed skin in just 15 minutes, the weather service warned.

Authorities said a suburban Chicago man had died of exposure, apparently becoming the first cold-related death of the season. The man, whose identity wasn't released, was found Thursday in the suburb of Schiller Park, the Cook County medical examiner's office said.

Advocates worried for the growing population of migrants sent up to Chicago from the U.S.-Mexico border — more than 26,000 have arrived since last year. By Friday, dozens were staying in eight parked "warming buses" to avoid sleeping outside while they await space in city-run shelters.

Angelo Travieso, a Venezuelan bused up from Texas, wore a light jacket and sandals with socks after sleeping on one of the buses.

"I slept sitting because there is almost no space left," he said. "The buses are also small and you practically have to stay inside because of the heating, because it is deadly cold outside."

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker released a letter Friday pleading with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to stop sending migrants to Chicago during the dangerous weather.

"At least pause these transports to save lives," the letter said.

In a reply, Abbott refused to stop what he called "voluntary" trips "until President Biden steps up and does his job to secure the border."

The South wasn't immune to winter's wrath. Severe storms with winds reaching 70 mph (113 kph) stretched across Mississippi on Friday.

The governors of Arkansas and Louisiana declared states of emergency Friday in anticipation of stormy and frigid weather, with temperatures plunging to subfreezing in New Orleans by next week.

Abbott, meanwhile, urged Texans to get ready for a chill with ice on the way Monday.

Snow, ice, wind and bitter cold pummels the northern US in dangerous winter storm

By JIM SALTER and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A dangerous winter storm swept the northern U.S. on Friday, with blinding snow in some places, freezing rain in others, and bitter cold temperatures and whipping winds across several states.

The massive storm continues a week of strong winter weather for much of the U.S. that has led to deadly avalanches and treacherous ice-covered roads. On Friday, a man was believed dead in an avalanche in the Idaho backcountry. A Wisconsin man died while snow-blowing his driveway.

Political leaders in Illinois implored Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to stop sending migrants to Chicago, which is on the verge of dangerous weather. Abbott refused.

Authorities announced Friday that a suburban Chicago man died of cold exposure, apparently becoming the first cold-related death of the season. The man, whose identity wasn't released, was found Thursday in the suburb of Schiller Park, the Cook County medical examiner's office said.

An autopsy performed Friday found that the man's death was weather-related, and the medical examiner's office ruled it an accident.

Heavy snow and strong winds made driving virtually impossible in parts of Iowa, so much so that Republican presidential hopefuls called off campaign events. "Black ice" from freezing rain caused wrecks and brought Kansas City, Missouri, to a standstill. Flight cancellations were common, including more than 1,000 at Chicago's airports.

In Idaho, two men were rescued after being caught in the avalanche Thursday afternoon near the Montana border, but a third man was missing and presumed dead. The U.S. Air Force assisted in the search and rescue. Authorities weren't sure what the men were doing in the area that had been under an avalanche danger warning for several days.

The Idaho avalanche came a day after the first U.S. avalanche death of the season was reported in California on Wednesday.

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's office said Friday afternoon that it was investigating the death of a 69-year-old man who became unresponsive while snow-blowing his driveway in Franklin, a Milwaukee

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suburb. No further information was released.

Republican candidates campaigning ahead of Monday's Iowa caucuses were contending with a blizzard warning covering most of the state. Nikki Haley's campaign canceled three Friday events and said it would be hosting "telephone town halls." Ron DeSantis' campaign postponed events in Marshalltown and Clear Lake.

The Iowa State Patrol posted photos of an icy wreck. "Please, don't put yourself or others in danger," the agency wrote. "The road conditions are extremely dangerous!"

Blizzard warnings were issued in some places, including southwestern Minnesota and the Green Bay area of Wisconsin. Forecasts for the Milwaukee area predicted heavy snow stretching into Saturday morning with wind gusts up to 40 mph (64 kph).

The cold was the bigger concern in the Dakotas. It was 11 degrees below zero F (minus 24 C) in Bismarck, North Dakota, on Friday morning, and forecasters warned the weekend will get even worse. It could reach 20 below F (minus 29 C) by early Sunday.

Chicago is expecting several inches of snow through the weekend, with wind chills well below zero. Advocates worried for the growing population of migrants sent up from the U.S.-Mexico border — more than 26,000 have arrived since last year. By Friday, dozens were staying in eight parked "warming buses" to avoid sleeping outside while they await space in city-run shelters.

Angelo Travieso, a Venezuelan bused up from Texas, wore a light jacket and sandals with socks after sleeping on one of the buses.

"I slept sitting because there is almost no space left," he said. "The buses are also small and you practically have to stay inside because of the heating, because it is deadly cold outside."

Mayor Brandon Johnson said the city will suspend plans to enforce a 60-day cap on shelter stays for asylum seekers through at least Jan. 22 because of the cold snap.

Meanwhile, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker released a letter pleading with Abbott.

"As we grapple with the existing challenges of your ongoing manufactured crisis, the next few days are a threat to the families and children you are sending here," Pritzker wrote. "I am pleading with you to at least pause these transports to save lives."

In a reply, Abbott refused to stop what he called "voluntary" trips "until President Biden steps up and does his job to secure the border."

Temperatures were below zero Fahrenheit across Montana on Friday morning with wind chills as low as minus 57 F (minus 49 C) in places along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and in the central part of the state.

At the Double Cross Cattle Company, a ranch near Roberts, Montana, Tyson Ropp used an axe to chop through inches of ice covering a stock tank so that his bulls could drink water. He used a feed truck to spread extra hay for his cows, a process he planned to repeat later Friday.

Temperatures were expected to drop overnight to minus 28 F (minus 33 C), so Ropp said he'd spread straw on the ground, somewhere out of the wind, for the cattle to rest and stay dry.

"It's going to get pretty chilly tonight," he said, "We've got a couple hidey holes they can get into and bed down and hunker down together and stay warm."

Ropp shrugged off the cold.

"It's just Montana," he said.

Near-record cold in Kansas City will make for a frigid NFL playoff game Saturday night, when the Chiefs host Miami. The game-time temperature could be below zero. Fans will be allowed to bring in blankets for their laps and cardboard to put under their feet to stay warm. The University of Kansas Health System set up a clinic and several first aid stations at Arrowhead Stadium.

"We could really get busy," emergency medicine physician Dr. Dennis Allin said at a briefing on Friday.

Another playoff game will face winter's wrath on Sunday. Fans in Buffalo will contend with up to a foot of snow and fierce winds as the Bills host Pittsburgh.

Other areas of the Northeast had flooding concerns. Emergency responders helped evacuate some

residents from their homes in Paterson, New Jersey, early Friday as the Passaic River started overflowing its banks. The new storm, combined with one earlier in the week, created flooding worries in Maine and New Hampshire, too.

The South wasn't immune. Severe storms with winds reaching 70 mph (113 kph) stretched across Mississippi.

Arctic air is expected to arrive in the South by this weekend. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency urged residents to prepare for ice, frigid temperatures and possible prolonged power outages. Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry declared a state of emergency Friday in anticipation of temperatures plunging over the weekend, with a chance of sleet and snow early next week.

Abbott on Friday encouraged Texans to get ready, too. Temperatures will reach only into the 30s Sunday through Tuesday, with ice in the forecast for Monday. But Abbott said the cold and ice "will not be anything close to what we experienced during winter storm Uri." That storm in February 2021 caused over 3 million Texans to lose power.

Volunteers and city leaders in several places were worried about the homeless.

Portland, Oregon, is more accustomed to winter rain, but snow was in the forecast. Tyrone McDougald wore a long-eared, leopard-style hat on Thursday as he sorted through racks of warm clothes at a homeless service center. He was already wearing multiple layers, but with no roof of his own, he grabbed two more coats to help him face a bitter cold snap arriving in the Northwest.

"I'm hoping that I can get in a shelter," he said. "That would relieve a lot of the burden."

Rush reported from Portland, Oregon. Associated Press reporters Katie Foody, Sophia Tareen and Melissa Perez Winder in Chicago; John O'Connor in Springfield, Illinois; Mathew Brown in Roberts, Montana; Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon; Rick Callahan and Ken Kusmer in Indianapolis; Patrick Whittle in Portland, Maine; Amy Beth Hanson in Helena, Montana; Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; Acacia Coronado in Austin, Texas; Heather Hollingsworth in Mission, Kansas; Michael Goldberg in Jackson, Mississippi; and Kevin McGill in New Orleans contributed to this report.

Kalen DeBoer hired to replace Nick Saban at Alabama, leaving national runner-up Washington

By JOHN ZENOR AP Sports Writer

Alabama wasted little time in finding Nick Saban's successor, hiring Kalen DeBoer away from national runner-up Washington.

The powerhouse program tapped DeBoer on Friday to replace Saban, just two days after the 72-year-old coach announced his retirement.

The 49-year-old DeBoer is a former NAIA coach who led Washington to the national championship game in his second season. Now, he takes over a program where Saban made that kind of success an annual expectation.

"I have always had an incredible respect for Alabama football and its commitment to excellence," DeBoer said in a statement released by the university Friday night. "The tradition-rich history of this program is unmatched across the landscape of college athletics, and I look forward to continuing that moving forward.

"Following coach Saban is an honor. He has been the standard for college football, and his success is unprecedented. I would not have left Washington for just any school. The chance to lead the football program at the University of Alabama is the opportunity of a lifetime."

Alabama did not disclose details of DeBoer's contract pending formal approval of its board of trustees.

Saban announced his retirement Wednesday after leading the Crimson Tide to six national championships in 17 seasons. He leaves massive shoes to fill and outsized expectations at the program Paul "Bear" Bryant helped build and Saban took to even greater heights.

Saban also won a national title at LSU and his seven championships are a major college record. The

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Crimson Tide have been in national title contention just about every season since winning their first in 17 years back in 2009, Saban's third season.

The task of maintaining that standard falls to a coach with just two years of experience leading a Power Five program.

"Coach DeBoer has proven he is a winner and has done an incredible job as a head coach at each of his stops," Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne said. "One of the things I told our team the other day is we are going to get someone who is not only a great coach with the Xs and Os, but also someone who cares about his players and someone I'd want my sons to play for, just like I would have wanted them to play for Coach Saban.

"We got that in coach DeBoer."

The fast-rising DeBoer led the Huskies to a 14-1 record this season. Washington won the Pac-12 championship, beat Texas in the College Football Playoff semifinals and lost to No. 1 Michigan 34-13 in the national title game. DeBoer was named The Associated Press coach of the year.

DeBoer led the Huskies to a 25-3 record in two seasons after taking over a program that was 4-8 in 2021. He is the first Washington coach to win 11 games in consecutive seasons and won Pac-12 coach of the year honors twice.

DeBoer also has won national titles, albeit a few levels down in college football.

DeBoer led his alma mater, Sioux Falls, to a 67-3 record from 2005-09 and won three NAIA championships at the small, Baptist-affiliated school in South Dakota's largest city. He later had immediate success at Fresno State, going 12-6 from 2020-21, with nine wins in his second season.

That's a career mark of 104-12 at all levels, or 89.7%.

DeBoer became the first Washington coach to win 11 or more games in consecutive seasons after going 11-2 in 2022, twice earning Pac-12 coach of the year honors. The Huskies also went 10-1 against ranked teams, and DeBoer is 18-3 in playoff games as a head coach.

Alabama's short-term expectations won't change with a team led by quarterback Jalen Milroe and a roster fortified by a string of highly rated recruiting classes.

DeBoer coached Heisman Trophy runner-up Michael Penix Jr. last season and brings an offensive track record to replace Saban, a former NFL defensive coordinator. He was Fresno State's offensive coordinator in the 2017 and 2018 seasons and held the same job at Indiana for a year before replacing Bulldogs coach Jeff Tedford.

An All-America receiver at Sioux Falls, DeBoer helped the Cougars win their first national championship in 1996. He then stayed on as receivers coach, returning in 2000 as offensive coordinator after a stint as a high school coach in Sioux Falls.

At Washington, DeBoer signed an extension after going 11-2 in 2022, raising his salary to \$4.2 million with incremental increases to \$4.8 million in the last year of the contract in 2028. It also included an increased buyout of \$12 million if DeBoer left for a new job.

DeBoer hired high-powered agent Jimmy Sexton, who also represents Saban, last year. Saban received an eight-year deal in 2022 worth at least \$93.6 million, including some \$11.1 million this year.

"Kalen DeBoer has been an outstanding leader of our football program and what he accomplished in two seasons on Montlake will forever be a part of our storied history," Huskies athletic director Troy Dannen said. "We are sad to see him leave and we did all that we could to keep Kalen at UW. But ultimately, he made a decision that was in the best interests of his family and furthered his professional goals."

South Dakota House passes permanent sales tax cut bill

By JACK DURA Associated Press

A temporary sales tax cut enacted last year would be made permanent under a bill passed Friday by the South Dakota House of Representatives, in line with a call by Gov. Kristi Noem.

The Republican-controlled House approved the bill brought by Republican state Rep. Chris Karr in a 54-12 vote. It now goes to the Senate.

Karr touted the state's healthy economy and said the state shouldn't be collecting more money than it needs to operate.

"Those dollars should go back. They should go back to the people," he told the House.

Republican state Rep. Roger Chase opposed the bill, saying he doesn't want to tie the hands of future lawmakers who will be the ones to make budgetary decisions and set tax rates.

Sales taxes are the biggest contributor to South Dakota's state revenues.

Noem urged the Legislature last month to make the four-year sales tax cut permanent. She campaigned for reelection in 2022 on a promise to repeal the state's grocery tax, but the Legislature opted for the sales tax cut of 0.3%, or \$104 million annually.

A proposed 2024 ballot measure would repeal the state's grocery tax.

Teenager gets life sentence, possibility of parole after North Dakota murder conviction

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A teenager in North Dakota was sentenced on Thursday to life in prison with the possibility of parole after a jury convicted him last year for the September 2022 shooting death of a man at a motel in Bismarck.

State District Court Judge James Hill said he couldn't discount the jury's verdict against Jesse Taylor Jr., who was 16 at the time of the fatal shooting of Maurice Thunder Shield, 28, of McLaughlin, South Dakota. The judge also took issue with Taylor's attorney having characterized him as a child, according to The Bismarck Tribune.

"You were a child who used a 9 mm firearm to put five bullets into another human being," the judge told Taylor. "The court heard the testimony in this case and quite frankly, it was overwhelming. You took the life of an innocent person in a senseless act of extreme brutal violence. Self-defense has been argued to me here, but it was nonexistent. There was no credible testimony that you were threatened, and that is what the jury found beyond a reasonable doubt."

Taylor declined to speak at his sentencing. He will be eligible to have his sentence reduced after serving 20 years because he was a juvenile when the crime occurred. He will also be eligible to be considered for parole after serving about 55 years.

Taylor's attorney said at trial that the teen acted in self-defense after a verbal altercation with Thunder Shield. The prosecutor said that argument had no legal basis, that Taylor could have escaped from Thunder Shield, and he intended to kill him by firing the handgun five times in several seconds, the newspaper previously reported.

Taylor also was convicted of aggravated assault for allegedly wounding a motel worker in the shooting, and sentenced to five years in prison for that offense, to be served concurrently.

More than 30 Palestinians were reported killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip

By NAJIB JOBAIN, DAVID RISING and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 30 Palestinians, including young children, were killed in two Israeli airstrikes overnight into Saturday in the Gaza Strip, officials said, as concerns continued to grow over a lack of fuel and supplies for overburdened hospitals.

Video provided by Gaza's Civil Defense department showed rescue workers searching through the twisted rubble of a home in Gaza City by flashlight early Saturday morning after it was hit by an Israeli attack.

Footage showed them carrying a young girl wrapped in blankets with injuries to her face, and at least two other children who appeared dead. A boy, covered in dust, winced as he was loaded into an ambulance.

The attack on the home in the Daraj neighborhood killed at least 20 people in total, according to Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Bassal.

Another strike near the southern city of Rafah on the Egyptian border killed at least 13 people, including

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two children. The bodies of those killed, primarily from a displaced family from central Gaza, were taken to the city's Abu Youssef al-Najjar hospital where they were seen by an Associated Press reporter.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Saturday that 135 Palestinians were killed in the last 24 hours, bringing the overall toll of the war to 23,843. The count does not differentiate between combatants and civilians, but the ministry has said about two-thirds of the dead are women and children. The ministry said the total number of war-wounded surpassed 60,000.

Israel has argued Hamas is responsible for the high civilian casualties, saying its fighters make use of civilian buildings and launch attacks from densely populated urban areas.

With the war in Gaza entering its 100th day on Sunday, the World Health Organization has said only 15 of the territories' 36 hospitals still partially functional, according to OCHA, the United Nations' humanitarian affairs agency.

The main hospital in central Gaza, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the city of Deir al-Balah, went dark Friday morning after running out of fuel.

Staff were able to keep ventilators and incubators operating with solar-charged batteries during the day, and received a small emergency shipment of fuel from another hospital late Friday.

Fuel was expected to run out again on Saturday unless the WHO is able to deliver a promised shipment, hospital officials said. Aid deliveries were being disrupted by a renewed drop in telecommunications connectivity in much of Gaza, which began late Friday.

In its Oct. 7 attack that sparked the war, Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians. About 250 more were taken hostage, and while some have been released or confirmed dead, more than half are believed to still be in captivity.

Since the start of Israel's ground operation in late October, 186 Israeli soldiers were killed and another 1,099 injured in Gaza, according to the military. More than 85% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million has been displaced as a result of Israel's air and ground offensive, and vast swaths of the territory have been leveled.

Recent developments, including U.S. and British military strikes on Houthi-controlled sites in Yemen, have stoked growing fears of the war broadening into a regional conflict.

The strikes came in response to a Houthi campaign of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, which they said was in response to Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Amid already severe shortages of food, clean water and fuel in Gaza, OCHA said in its daily report that Israel's severe constraints on humanitarian missions and outright denials had increased since the start of the year.

The agency said only 21% of planned deliveries of food, medicine, water and other supplies have been successfully reaching northern Gaza.

"These denials paralyze the ability of humanitarian partners to respond meaningfully, consistently and at-scale to widespread humanitarian needs," the agency said.

American and other international efforts pushing Israel to do more to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians have met with little success.

At the same time, Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the territory's main hospital that had been shut down since November, had begun partially functioning again, the WHO said Friday.

Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus said his organization has delivered 9,300 liters (2,460 gallons) of fuel to Shifa, allowing a 60-person medical team to begin treating more than 1,000 patients.

The lack of adequate humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza forms part of South Africa's case that opened this week at the International Court of Justice in The Hague accusing Israel of genocide.

In its complaint, South Africa argues Israel has failed to ensure that the medical needs of Palestinians are met, and accuses Israel of "directly attacking Palestinian hospitals, ambulances and other healthcare facilities in Gaza."

When the case opened on Thursday, South Africa called for broad provisional measures to be implemented, including asking the court to immediately order Israel to halt its offensive and to provide access to "adequate fuel, shelter, clothes, hygiene and sanitization" as well as medical supplies and assistance.

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Israel's legal team accused Hamas of using hospitals and other civilian facilities to launch attacks and shelter their fighters. Israel has argued that it is doing everything possible to protect civilians and that it has been working with hospitals to provide assistance. Israel called for a dismissal of South Africa's case. It was not immediately clear when a decision would be reached.

Taiwan voters choose their next president in a poll weighing China's threat and island's stability

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN and SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Polls closed Saturday in Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary election that will chart the trajectory of the self-ruled democracy's relations with China over the next four years.

At stake is the peace and stability of the island, 160 kilometers (100 miles) off the coast of China, that Beijing claims as its own and to be retaken by force if necessary. Domestic issues such as the sluggish economy and expensive housing also featured prominently in the campaign.

China has called the poll a choice between war and peace. Beijing strongly opposes the front-runner in the presidential race, current Vice President Lai Ching-te, of the governing Democratic Progressive Party, or DPP.

Lai and incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen reject China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan, a former Japanese colony that split from the mainland amid civil war in 1949. They have, however, offered to speak with Beijing, which has repeatedly refused to hold talks and called them separatists.

Beijing is believed to favor the candidate from the more China-friendly Nationalist party, also known as Kuomintang, or KMT. Its candidate, Hou Yu-ih, has also promised to restart talks with China while bolstering national defense. He promised not to move toward unifying the two sides of the Taiwan Strait if elected.

A third candidate in the race, Ko Wen-je of the smaller Taiwan People's Party, or TPP, has drawn the support particularly of young people wanting an alternative to the KMT and DPP, Taiwan's traditional opposing parties, which have largely taken turns governing since the 1990s. Ko has also stated he wants to speak with Beijing, and that his bottom line would be that Taiwan needs to remain democratic and free.

The United States, which is bound by its laws to provide Taiwan with the weapons needed to defend itself, has pledged support for whichever government emerges, reinforced by the Biden administration's plans to send an unofficial delegation made up of former senior officials to the island shortly after the election.

Beside the China tensions, domestic issues such as the dearth of affordable housing and stagnating wages have dominated the campaign.

For Tony Chen, a 74-year-old retiree who voted in Taipei in the hour before the polls closed, the election boiled down to a choice between communism and democracy.

"I hope democracy wins," he said. He added that more Taiwanese were open to China's model of governance decades ago, when the Chinese economy was growing by double digits annually, but are repulsed by the crackdown on civil liberties that has occurred under current Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Stacy Chen, 43, said she has always voted for DPP because "Taiwan is an independent country." She said she wanted her son to grow up in a country that is separate from China.

For Ben Wang, 44, the vote was more about altering the dynamic between Taiwan's main opposing parties, the DPP and the KMT. A potential attack by China could not be pre-empted by anything Taiwan would do, he said.

Candidates' teams and supporters were gathering at the three parties' headquarters, in Taipei and its suburb, New Taipei. The colorful watch parties featured flags, loud music and large stages. Votes are expected Saturday evening.

Lai cast his vote earlier Saturday in his hometown of Tainan. He remarked on the sunny weather, suggesting it was a good day for Taiwanese people to go out and vote.

"I encourage everyone around the country to vote with enthusiasm and show the vitality of Taiwan's democracy," he said.

Hou cast his ballot in New Taipei City, a municipality bordering Taipei where he serves as mayor, a position from which he took leave to run for president.

"What we need during the election campaign process is chaos," Hou told reporters. "But after the vote, we must be united and face the future of Taiwan together."

Meanwhile, Ko, in his well-known dry manner, said he aimed to try his best every day "and plan for the next stage when we get there."

Taiwan's election is seen as having "real and lasting influence on the geopolitical landscape," said Gabrielle Reid, associate director with the global intelligence consultancy S-RM.

"The outcome of the vote will ultimately determine the nature of ties with China relative to the West and will have strong bearing on the state of play in the South China Sea," she said.

Beside the China tensions, domestic issues dominated the campaign, particularly an economy that was estimated to have grown just 1.4% last year. That partly reflects inevitable cycles in demand for computer chips and other exports from the high-tech, heavily trade-dependent manufacturing base, and a slowing of the Chinese economy.

But longer-term challenges such as unaffordable housing and wage stagnation topped voters' concerns.

The candidate with the most votes wins, with no runoff. The legislative races are for both districts and at-large seats.

Turkey launches airstrikes against Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria after 9 soldiers were killed

By ANDREW WILKS Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey carried out airstrikes targeting Kurdish militants in neighboring Iraq and Syria on Saturday, the Turkish Defense Ministry said. This comes a day after an attack on a Turkish military base in Iraq killed nine Turkish soldiers.

Turkey often launches strikes against targets in Syria and Iraq it believes to be affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a banned Kurdish separatist group that has waged insurgency against Turkey since the 1980s.

The defense ministry said aircraft struck targets in Metina, Hakurk, Gara and Qandil in north Iraq, but didn't specify areas in Syria. It said fighter jets destroyed caves, bunkers, shelters and oil facilities "to eliminate terrorist attacks against our people and security forces ... and to ensure our border security." The statement added "many" militants were "neutralized" in the strikes.

On Friday night, attackers attempted to infiltrate a military base in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, killing five soldiers. Four others died later of critical injuries. The Turkish Defense Ministry said 15 militants were also killed.

There was no immediate comment from the PKK, the government in Baghdad or the Kurdish region's administration.

Turkey launched Operation Claw-Lock in northern Iraq in April 2022, during which it established several bases in Duhok Governorate. Baghdad has repeatedly protested the presence of Turkish troops and called for their withdrawal.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan expressed his condolences for the deaths of the Turkish soldiers on social media platform X, formerly Twitter.

"We will fight to the end against the PKK terrorist organization within and outside our borders," he wrote.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was to hold a security meeting in Istanbul later Saturday, Fahrettin Altun, the president's communications director, wrote on X.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced police had detained 113 people suspected of ties to the PKK following raids across 32 Turkish provinces.

He added that four people were arrested after police identified 60 social media accounts that "praised the separatist terrorist organization for provocative purposes" or had spread misleading information.

Three weeks ago, PKK-affiliated militants tried to break into a Turkish base in northern Iraq, according to

Turkish officials, leaving six soldiers dead. The following day, six more Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes.

Turkey retaliated by launching strikes against sites that officials said were associated with the PKK in Iraq and Syria. Defense Minister Yasar Guler said at the time that dozens of Kurdish militants were killed in airstrikes and land assaults.

It wasn't immediately clear if Friday night's attack and the one three weeks earlier targeted the same base. The Rudaw news website, based in Erbil in northern Iraq, reported that the base attacked on Friday was located on Mount Zap in Amedi district, which lies 17 kilometers (10 miles) from the Turkish border.

Meanwhile, Turkey's state-run news agency Anadolu said a senior PKK militant was "neutralized" in Iraq. Faik Aydin was targeted in an operation run by the Turkish intelligence agency, or MIT, some 160 kilometers (100 miles) inside the Turkey-Iraq frontier, Anadolu reported.

The PKK, which maintains bases in northern Iraq, is considered a terror organization by Turkey's Western allies, including the United States. Tens of thousands of people have died since the start of the conflict in 1984.

Turkey and the U.S., however, disagree on the status of the Syrian Kurdish groups, which have been allied with Washington in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria.

Republicans push back on Biden plan to axe federal funds for anti-abortion counseling centers

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a new twist to the fight over abortion access, congressional Republicans are trying to block a Biden administration spending rule that they say will cut off millions of dollars to anti-abortion counseling centers.

The rule would prohibit states from sending federal funds earmarked for needy Americans to so-called "crisis pregnancy centers," which counsel against abortions. At stake are millions of dollars in federal funds that currently flow to the organizations through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, a block grant program created in 1996 to give cash assistance to poor children and prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

"Programs that only or primarily provide pregnancy counseling to women only after they become pregnant likely do not meet the ... standard," the Health and Human Services agency said in its rule proposal released late last year.

More than 7,000 comments have been submitted on the proposed rule, which includes a series of restrictions on how states would be able to spend TANF monies.

The proposal limiting funds for anti-abortion counseling centers is the Biden administration's latest attempt to introduce federal policies that expand abortion access. Conservative states, meanwhile, have severely restricted the care since the U.S. Supreme Court stripped women of their federal right to an abortion in 2022.

Congressional Republicans this week introduced legislation that would block the Health and Human Services Agency from restricting the funds from the centers. The bill has no chance of becoming law this year.

"Pregnancy centers are an important and vital alternative for expectant mothers," Republican Rep. Darin LaHood of Illinois said Thursday during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing to mark up the legislation.

The anti-abortion counseling centers have become an increasingly popular way for conservatives to sermonize against abortions, with an Associated Press investigation last year finding that states have been sending more and more money to the programs over the last decade. More than a dozen states have given the centers roughly \$500 million in taxpayer dollars since 2010. Last year, Pennsylvania's Democratic governor cut funding for all centers from the state budget.

The centers' mission is controversial not only because workers often advise pregnant patients against seeking an abortion, but, critics say, the organizations can provide some misleading information about

abortion and contraception, like suggesting that abortion can cause breast cancer. Most centers are religiously affiliated and not licensed healthcare facilities. They typically offer pregnancy tests and some offer limited medical services such as ultrasounds.

The Human Coalition, an anti-abortion organization that has locations in Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Texas, estimates it would lose millions of dollars in funds, said Chelsey Youman, the group's national director of public policy. Plans to expand to Louisiana and Indiana could be put on hold if the rule goes through, she added.

Youman argues that her organization helps connect women to social services, like Medicaid, while persuading them to continue with their pregnancy.

"The work we do is truly compassionate and loving care for women who are facing sometimes the most difficult moment of their life," Youman said.

HHS is suggesting several tweaks that would change how states can use the \$16.5 billion in block grants intended for the nation's neediest families. The proposal comes on the heels of a high-profile corruption scandal in Mississippi, where \$77 million in TANF funds were squandered over several years.

The restrictions would limit how much of the money ends up benefitting middle- and high-income earners, with the agency saying that the percentage of impoverished families who get cash assistance has dropped from nearly 70% in 1996 to just over 21% in 2020. The plan would restrict how states use the money for college scholarships and child care, for example.

Mass shooting at Buffalo supermarket now Justice Department's first death penalty case under Garland

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just a few months after he took office, Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a moratorium to halt federal executions — a stark contrast after his predecessor carried out 13 in six months. Under Garland's watch and a president who vowed to abolish the death penalty, the Justice Department took on no new death penalty cases.

That changed Friday as federal prosecutors said they would seek capital punishment for a white supremacist who killed 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket. The decision doesn't change the halt on federal executions, but Garland's first approval of a new capital prosecution opens a new chapter in the long and complicated history of the death penalty in the U.S.

Those complexities have been on full display in recent years. President Joe Biden campaigned in part on a promise to abolish it but has taken few concrete steps to do so. The Justice Department has pulled back significantly on the use of capital punishment under Garland's leadership, but also has shown a continued willingness to use it in certain cases.

White House spokesman Andrew Bates didn't take issue with the decision in the Buffalo case Friday, saying the president has discussed his views on the issue and would leave individual cases to the appropriate authorities. The Justice Department, in keeping with its practice on ongoing cases, did not explain its decision.

"It's a little hard to identify a consistent approach," said Eric Berger, a law professor at the University of Nebraska. "This Justice Department is far more reluctant to use the death penalty, certainly than the Trump administration was, and far more cognizant of the problems, but it's not willing to throw away the death penalty altogether."

Under Garland, the Justice Department has reversed more than two dozen decisions to seek the death penalty, including for alleged gang members accused in the deaths of two teens in New York. Garland has authorized the continuation of only two death penalty cases he inherited, including another mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue motivated by hate.

Robert Bowers was sentenced to death in August for carrying out the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history when he shot and killed 11 worshipers in 2018. The other case was against Sayfullo Saipov, a 35-year-old Islamic extremist convicted of maniacally racing a truck along a popular New York City bike

path, killing eight people and maiming others. A split among jurors meant he was not sentenced to the death penalty.

In Buffalo, 20-year-old Payton Gendron pleaded guilty to driving across the state to target a largely Black neighborhood and carrying out the attack with a semi-automatic weapon marked with racial slurs and phrases including "The Great Replacement," a reference to a conspiracy theory that there's a plot to diminish the influence of white people.

"It's a mass shooting, and mass shootings have only increased over the years and gotten worse. It was also racially motivated, and that seems to be a huge factor here," said Deborah Denno, a Fordham University law professor who studies the death penalty. "Garland is sort of indicating what he thinks is important, what would drive him to ask for the death penalty."

In changes made under Garland, the Justice Department's manual instructs prosecutors to give more weight to cases involving the most harm to the country.

Still, the department chose not to pursue the death penalty in another racist mass shooting targeting Hispanic people that left 23 people dead in an El Paso Wal-Mart. In that case, 24-year-old shooter Patrick Crusius was diagnosed with a severe mental health condition, which may have played a role.

There's been no public evidence of mental illness so far in the Gendron case. But courts are increasingly questioning severe punishments for young defendants amid new research on brain development, said Robin Maher, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center. Gendron has also pleaded guilty and expressed "sincere remorse," and been sentenced to multiple life sentences without the possibility of parole, she said.

"This federal trial will take a long time and they will cost taxpayers millions of dollars in pursuit of the very same result that exists today, which is that Mr. Gendron will die in prison," Bedard said.

Legal Defense Fund President Janai Nelson condemned the decision, saying that the history of the death penalty has been rife with racial discrimination. "Justice for the many Black people that were killed in this horrendous attack does not begin with pursuit of the death penalty," she said. "In times rife with extreme violence, we cannot resort to capital punishment as a solution."

Death penalty opponents have long argued Biden has done little to fulfill his campaign promise and want him to commute sentences of those on federal death row. During his presidency, the Justice Department has fought vigorously in courts to maintain the sentences of death row inmates, an Associated Press review of dozens of legal filings found. And while the moratorium on federal executions Garland announced in 2021 means no federal inmates will be put to death while it's in place, there have been no public signs that a review of execution policies that he ordered at the same time is nearing completion.

In Buffalo, the victims' loved ones have had different feelings on whether they thought prosecutors should pursue the death penalty. The death penalty decision-making process calls for a lengthy review involving the U.S. Attorney overseeing the case and a review committee.

"Garland is extremely exacting and meticulous and nonpartisan and careful," Berger said. "Whether or not you agree with his ultimate decision, he's going to play the process exactly by the book."

War in Gaza, election factor into some of the many events planned for MLK holiday

By TERRY TANG and NOREEN NASIR Associated Press

As communities nationwide prepare this weekend to celebrate the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday with events ranging from parades to prayer services, some will take a cue from the slain civil rights icon's history of protest to demonstrate against the war in Gaza and draw attention to a looming U.S. presidential election.

The Monday holiday also marks 100 days since Oct. 7, when Hamas launched an attack in southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people and resulted in about 240 taken hostage. Since then, more than 100 Israelis remain kidnapped and more than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's bombardment of

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Gaza, as global health organizations have warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis there.

Perhaps the most massive organized event of the weekend in the U.S. will be held in the nation's capital on Saturday — the March on Washington for Gaza, co-hosted by the American Muslim Task Force on Palestine, comprising of some of the largest Muslim organizations in the U.S., along with antiwar and racial justice groups. The march is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. EST.

March organizers are calling on President Joe Biden to demand a permanent cease-fire and an end to the violence against civilians in Gaza and the West Bank. They are also calling for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners and for an end to "American unconditional financial support for the Israeli military," according to Edward Ahmed Mitchell, AMTP media coordinator and deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

A similar march held in November, the National March on Washington: Free Palestine, drew tens of thousands of participants from around the country. Some estimates suggested at least 100,000 attended.

The title of Saturday's march evokes the famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, at which King delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech atop the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. That history, as well as King's vocal opposition to the U.S. role in the Vietnam War toward the end of his life, is a guiding factor for the organizers.

Mitchell, who called King's legacy "multifaceted," said King spoke up even if it meant getting vilified.

"He was considered un-American and called a traitor. Even the political establishment shunned him," Mitchell said.

In 1967, exactly one year before he was assassinated, King delivered his famous "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" speech at Riverside Church in New York City. After quietly opposing the Vietnam War for years, he took the public step to condemn it, connecting racial and economic inequality in the U.S. with increased military spending abroad.

"I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor, and attack it as such," King said in his speech.

King's daughter, Bernice King, has said her father was against antisemitism and also would have opposed the bombing of Gaza. The taking of lives through retaliatory violence is not the strategy he would want to see today.

"There is an opportunity for us to have a real breakthrough and get to some genuine conversations and actions that can allow people to co-exist in an area of the world," Bernice King said in a recent interview from The King Center in Atlanta, where she is CEO.

She believes protests are critical in difficult times. King just hopes that people in general use nonviolent words and actions if they invoke her father's name.

"My father had a certain manner, tone and tenor in his protest. You know, your language, your speech has to be in line, not just the physical acts," she said. "But if your language is violent, that is not necessarily in sync with Dr. King."

The center also will hold a holiday commemorative service Monday at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, where the late civil rights icon served as pastor.

Observed federally since 1986, the holiday occurs on the third Monday of January, which this year happens to be the Rev. King's actual birthday. Born in 1929, the minister would have been 95. This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act and King's Nobel Peace Prize.

Prominent Democrats will be commemorating the holiday in South Carolina, now the first state in the Democratic Party's reshuffled presidential primary schedule.

The NAACP is hosting Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black person to hold the office, at the State House in Columbia. Harris visited the city in November to officially file paperwork putting Biden on the presidential ballot. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black leader of a party in Congress, will speak at an interfaith prayer service. The day's events will center on a theme of "Ballots for Freedom, Ballots for Justice, Ballots for Change!"

For many, the holiday will be an opportunity to counter the recent backlash over efforts at companies

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and universities to implement diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The Rev. Al Sharpton, founder and president of the National Action Network, will announce Monday a national campaign to sustain DEI measures. This comes after he led a demonstration against last week's resignation of Claudine Gay, Harvard University's first Black president. Sharpton will also be hosting the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Breakfast. Members of King's family will be in attendance.

Giving back is also an intrinsic part of the MLK holiday. AmeriCorps will host its annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of National Service. The government agency is working with the King Center and several charities, faith-based organizations and businesses on community service projects. Various cities and organizations are holding their own volunteer events such as neighborhood clean-ups, food drives and packing care kits for the unhoused.

On the actual holiday, events will go beyond just Washington and Atlanta, King's birthplace. Some will touch on the war in Gaza.

Detroit will hold its 21st annual MLK Day Rally & March. The speakers' list includes Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American in Congress, who was censured for rhetoric over the Israel-Hamas war, and Shawn Fain, the United Auto Workers president who led negotiations during six weeks of strikes.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to attend events after the holiday is over. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation will hold its eighth annual National Day of Racial Healing on Tuesday. It has partnered with nonprofits, schools and communities to hold over 200 events nationwide. These include "sing-ins" of Civil Rights era songs and neighborhood dialogues.

The hope is "challenging the attitudes and assumptions that people hold about folks who are different from themselves," said Alandra Washington, the foundation's vice president for transformation and organizational effectiveness.

"Even a conversation can make a difference in the lives of others," she said.

The US struggles to sway Israel on its treatment of Palestinians. Why Netanyahu is unlikely to yield

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, MATTHEW LEE and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration keeps pressing Israel to reengage with Palestinians as partners once fighting in Gaza is over and support their eventual independence. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu keeps saying no.

Even on actions to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians, the two allies are far apart.

That cycle, frustrating to much of the world, seems unlikely to end, despite U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's fourth urgent diplomatic trip this week to the Middle East since the Israel-Hamas war started. Though the United States, as Israel's closest ally and largest weapons supplier, has stronger means to apply pressure on Israel, it shows no willingness to use them.

For both Netanyahu and Biden, popular opinion at home and deep personal conviction in the rightness of Israel's cause, and each man's battle for his own short-term political survival, are all combining to make it appear unlikely that Netanyahu will yield much on the U.S. demands regarding the Palestinians, or that Biden will get much tougher in trying to force them.

Support of Israel is a bedrock belief of many American voters. Biden's presidential reelection bid this year puts him up against Republicans vying to outdo one another in support for Israel. For his part, Netanyahu is fighting to stay in office in the face of corruption charges.

Some experts warn it's a formula that may lock the U.S. into deeper military and security engagement in the Middle East as hostilities worsen and Palestinian civilians continue to suffer.

"It's a self-defeating policy," said Brian Finucane, a former policy adviser in the State Department on counterterrorism and the use of military force.

"What may be expedient in terms of short-term domestic politics may not be in the long-term interests of the United States," said Finucane, who is now a senior adviser to the International Crisis Group research

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organization. "Particularly if it results in the United States involving itself in further unnecessary wars in the Middle East."

The administration says Biden's approach of remaining Israel's indispensable military ally and supporter is the best way to coax concessions from the often intractable Netanyahu, whose government ministers were trumpeting their rejection of some of the U.S. requests even as Blinken was still in the region.

Since Hamas attacked on Oct. 7, the U.S. has rushed arms and other aid to Israel, deployed forces to the region to confront escalated attacks by Hamas' Iran-backed allies, and quashed moves in the United Nations to condemn Israel's bombing of Palestinian civilians.

On Thursday U.S. time, the same day Blinken was wrapping up his diplomatic mission, U.S. warships and aircraft hit targets in Yemen, hoping to quell attacks that the country's Iran-allied Houthis have launched on commercial shipping in the Red Sea since Israel started its devastating offensive in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

American officials claim modest success for Blinken's latest diplomatic efforts. He secured limited, conditional support from Arab leaders and Turkey for planning for reconstruction and governance in Gaza after the war ends. But prospects are uncertain because Israel's far-right government is not on board with several key points.

The Biden administration has placed a particular premium on Israel reducing the number of civilian casualties in its military operations. The U.S. urging seemed to have some effect in recent days, as Israel began to withdraw some troops from northern Gaza and moved to a less-intensive campaign of airstrikes.

Israel has been not just uncooperative, but also openly hostile toward some smaller American requests, such as when Blinken pressed Israel to turn over the tax revenue it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, which Israel has refused to do.

"We will continue to fight with all of our might to destroy Hamas, and we will not transfer a shekel to the PA that will go to the families of Nazis in Gaza," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich wrote on X, in a message welcoming Blinken to Israel on Tuesday.

But the biggest U.S. disagreement with Israel has been with Netanyahu's refusal to consider the creation of a Palestinian state. Arab states say a commitment on that point is essential to convincing them to participate in and contribute to postwar planning for Gaza.

Israelis and Americans are far apart on the matter.

The Palestinians have been divided politically and geographically since Hamas, a militant group sworn to Israel's destruction, overran Gaza in 2007, leaving internationally backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas with self-rule over isolated enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The U.S. wants Abbas' Palestinian Authority to undergo administrative reforms before setting up a unified government in Gaza and the West Bank, as a precursor to statehood.

Blinken and his aides believe that Netanyahu — or his successor should Israel hold early elections — will eventually realize that Palestinian statehood is the key to Israel's long-term security and accept it because it will have the effect of isolating Iran and its proxies, which are the biggest threat to Israel and the region.

"From Israel's perspective, if you can have a future where they're integrated into the region, relations are normalized with other countries, where they have the necessary assurances, commitments, guarantees for their security — that's a very attractive pathway," Blinken said in Cairo, his last stop. "But it's also clear that that requires a pathway to a Palestinian state. We've heard that from every single country in the region."

Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., called Blinken's remarks "tone deaf." For Israelis, the U.S. push to revive negotiations for Palestinian statehood signals that American leaders haven't realized how Israeli public opinion has hardened on Palestinian issues over the years, and especially since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

The Israeli public felt "hurt, insulted, fearful and concerned that this is the way our allies are talking," Oren said.

Ultimately, he said, U.S. and Israeli interests don't always converge. "At the end of the day, there's a limit, because if (Biden) says stop, we're not going to stop," he said.

Israeli leaders know they'll need to make some concessions to the United States, Oren said. Some they have already made, like letting limited amounts of fuel into the Gaza Strip, something Netanyahu adamantly

refused to do in the early days of the war.

Biden has resisted calls from some in his Democratic Party to use U.S. leverage with Israel, chiefly U.S. military support, to try to force the issue.

The administration spoke out publicly against a move by some Democratic senators to tie U.S. military aid to Israel to ensuring that Israel take more concrete steps to reduce civilian casualties in Gaza. The administration says continuing to support Israel's defense is in the interests of U.S. national security. Since then, it's twice declared emergencies to authorize new arms sales to Israel without Congress' OK.

Another attempt to pressure the Biden administration and Israel is expected next week, when Sen. Bernie Sanders plans a floor vote on compelling the State Department to tell Congress whether Israel is complying with international humanitarian law.

The United States also has some real incentives to use in encouraging Israel to improve its treatment of Palestinians, including when it comes to steering Israel and Israeli popular opinion toward a long-term political resolution. Israel knows the U.S. is likely to be key in rallying any Arab financial and political support for postwar Gaza, and to Israel's deep desire to normalize relations with Arab nations, said Michael Koplow, chief policy officer for the Washington-based Israel Policy Forum.

But few expect big changes under Netanyahu. And some are skeptics on Biden.

"Blinken has turned into a political analyst who talks about things that may or may not happen," said Hani al-Masri, director-general of the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies.

The Biden administration "seems helpless in the face of Netanyahu's government," al-Masri said. "What is happening in the case of Israel makes it seem as if it is not serious in all the positive statements it makes about the Palestinian state and Palestinian rights."

Nigerian group provides hundreds of prosthetic limbs to amputee children thanks to crowdfunding

By DAN IKPOYI and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — The accident that broke 10-year-old Princess Igbinosa's right leg could have crushed her dreams of becoming a model in a country where not many can afford prosthetics to cope with life and fight social stigma.

"It was heartbreaking when they told us they had to amputate it (the leg)," her mother, Esther Igbinosa, said of Princess's experience in 2020. "During the first few months of her amputation ... I just wake up and start crying. I was like, how is she going to cope with life with an amputated leg?"

But Princess can now walk and her dreams are alive again, thanks to an artificial leg that matches the tone of her skin. The prosthesis came from the IREDE Foundation, a Nigerian group that provides children like her with free artificial limbs that normally cost \$2,000 to \$3,000.

"My dream is to become a model," Princess said. "When the accident happened, I thought I couldn't become a model. But now that I have two legs, I can become whatever I want — model, doctor, whatever."

Founded in 2012 in Nigeria's economic hub of Lagos, IREDE has provided more than 500 artificial limbs at no cost in addition to psychosocial support to children like Princess, said its executive director, Crystal Chigbu. She said the group gets up to 70% of its funding from crowdsourcing.

Chigbu said her inspiration to start the foundation came from her daughter's experience with being born with limb deformity.

The child amputees the foundation has helped can "do things that they would never have imagined that they would do," said Chigbu.

While there is no verifiable data on how many Nigerians are living with amputated limbs, IREDE is one of several groups providing such services amid a great need.

It is a huge source of relief in Nigeria where people with disabilities struggle with stigma and limb replacements make them more accepted in their communities, said Dr. Olasode Isreal-Akinmokun, an orthopedic surgeon.

"We have limbs that function almost as perfectly as the limbs that have been lost," he said.

In addition to providing artificial limbs to children, Chigbu said, IREDE is also educating people about limb loss to deter stigma and it encourages support groups among parents of affected children.

"We come from a culture of people just saying (that) when you have a disability it is either taboo or people just look down on you. We are ensuring that whether it is in the school or even when they find themselves in the workplace as they grow, that people accept them and know that they have their abilities," she said.

US military strikes another Houthi-controlled site after warning ships to avoid parts of Red Sea

By TARA COPP, LOLITA C. BALDOR, JON GAMBRELL and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military early Saturday struck another Houthi-controlled site in Yemen that it had determined was putting commercial vessels in the Red Sea at risk, a day after the U.S. and Britain launched multiple airstrikes targeting Houthi rebels.

Associated Press journalists in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, heard one loud explosion.

U.S. Central Command said the "follow-on action" early Saturday local time against a Houthi radar site was conducted by the Navy destroyer USS Carney using Tomahawk land attack missiles.

The first day of strikes Friday hit 28 locations and struck more than 60 targets. President Joe Biden had warned Friday that the Houthis could face further strikes.

The latest strike came after the U.S. Navy on Friday warned American-flagged vessels to steer clear of areas around Yemen in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden for the next 72 hours after the initial airstrikes. The warning came as Yemen's Houthis vowed fierce retaliation, further raising the prospect of a wider conflict in a region already beset by Israel's war in Gaza.

U.S. military and White House officials said they expected the Houthis to try to strike back.

The U.S.-led bombardment — launched in response to a recent campaign of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships in the vital Red Sea — killed at least five people and wounded six, the Houthis said. The U.S. said the strikes, in two waves, took aim at targets in 28 different locations across Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

"We will make sure that we respond to the Houthis if they continue this outrageous behavior along with our allies," Biden told reporters during a stop in Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

Asked if he believes the Houthis are a terrorist group, Biden responded, "I think they are." The president in a later exchange with reporters during a stop in Allentown, Pennsylvania, said whether the Houthis are redesignated as such was "irrelevant."

Biden also pushed back against some lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans, who said he should have sought congressional authorization before carrying out the strikes.

"They're wrong, and I sent up this morning when the strikes occurred exactly what happened," Biden said.

The Pentagon said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the military action from the hospital where he is recovering from complications following prostate cancer surgery.

The White House said in November that it was considering redesignating the Houthis as a terrorist organization after they began their targeting of civilian vessels. The administration formally delisted the Houthis as a "foreign terrorist organization" and "specially designated global terrorists" in 2021, undoing a move by President Donald Trump

Lt. Gen. Douglas Sims, director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Friday's U.S. strikes were largely in low-populated areas, and the number of those killed would not be high. He said the strikes hit weapons, radar and targeting sites, including in remote mountain areas.

As the bombing lit the predawn sky over multiple sites held by the Iranian-backed rebels, it forced the world to again focus on Yemen's yearslong war, which began when the Houthis seized the country's capital.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea, saying they were avenging Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade and energy shipments.

The Houthis' military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, said in a recorded address that the U.S. strikes

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would “not go unanswered or unpunished.”

Though the Biden administration and its allies have tried to calm tensions in the Middle East for weeks and prevent any wider conflict, the strikes threatened to ignite one.

Saudi Arabia — which supports the government-in-exile that the Houthis are fighting — quickly sought to distance itself from the attacks as it seeks to maintain a delicate détente with Iran and a cease-fire it has in Yemen. The Saudi-led, U.S.-backed war in Yemen has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more.

It remained unclear how extensive the damage was from Friday’s strikes, though the Houthis said at least five sites, including airfields, had been attacked. The White House said the U.S. military was still assessing the extent the militants’ capabilities might have been degraded.

U.S. Air Forces Central Command said the strikes focused on the Houthi’s command and control nodes, munition depots, launching systems, production facilities and air defense radar systems. The strikes involved more than 150 precision-guided munitions including air-launched missiles by F/A-18 Super Hornets based on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Tomahawk missiles from the Navy destroyers USS Gravelly and USS Mason, the Navy cruiser USS Philippine Sea, and a U.S. submarine.

The United Kingdom said strikes hit a site in Bani allegedly used by the Houthis to launch drones and an airfield in Abbs used to launch cruise missiles and drones.

In a separate development, Iran released footage of its seizure of an oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman that once had been at the center of a dispute between Tehran and Washington.

In the footage, a helicopter hovers over the deck of the St. Nikolas. Iran’s navy seized the vessel Thursday. The vessel had been known earlier as the Suez Rajan. The U.S. seized 1 million barrels of sanctioned Iranian oil off the vessel last year.

In Yemen, Hussein al-Ezzi, a Houthi official in their Foreign Ministry, said, “America and Britain will undoubtedly have to prepare to pay a heavy price and bear all the dire consequences of this blatant aggression.”

The Red Sea route is a crucial waterway, and attacks there have caused severe disruptions to global trade. Benchmark Brent crude oil traded up some 4% Friday at over \$80 a barrel. Tesla, meanwhile, said it would temporarily halt most production at its German factory because of attacks in the Red Sea.

In Saada, the Houthis’ stronghold in northwest Yemen, hundreds gathered for a rally Friday, denouncing the U.S. and Israel. Another drew thousands in Sanaa, the capital.

Houthis now control territory that is home to some two-thirds of Yemen’s population of 34 million. War and misgovernment have made Yemen one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, and the World Food Program considers the vast majority of Yemen’s people as food-insecure.

Yemen has been targeted by U.S. military action over the last four American presidencies. A campaign of drone strikes began under President George W. Bush to target the local affiliate of al-Qaida, attacks that have continued under the Biden administration. Meanwhile, the U.S. has launched raids and other military operations amid the ongoing war in Yemen.

That war began when the Houthis swept into Sanaa in 2014. A Saudi-led coalition including the United Arab Emirates launched a war to back Yemen’s exiled government in 2015, quickly morphing the conflict into a regional confrontation as Iran backed the Houthis with weapons and other support.

The conflict, however, has slowed as the Houthis maintain their grip on the territory they hold. In March, Saudi Arabia reached a Chinese-mediated deal to restart relations with Iran in hopes of ultimately withdrawing from the war.

Iran condemned Friday’s attack in a statement from Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani. “Arbitrary attacks will have no result other than fueling insecurity and instability in the region,” he said.

At an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council late Friday, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the U.S., U.K. and allies of “blatant armed aggression” against Yemen and warned “if the escalation continues, the entire Middle East could encounter a catastrophe.”

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and U.K. Ambassador Barbara Woodward insisted the attacks were in self-defense. “So de-escalation needs to happen,” Thomas-Greenfield said. “It needs to happen from the Houthis who are putting all of our shipping lines in jeopardy.”

Hollywood's brightest stars turn out for the American Film Institute Awards

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — Laughs and hugs were shared between Hollywood's best — including Margot Robbie, Meryl Streep and Leonardo DiCaprio — during a celebratory ceremony where everyone ended up walking away a winner at the American Film Institute Awards on Friday.

The annual invite-only luncheon honored 10 films and 10 television shows with well-spoken words about each celebrated project followed by a brief clip of a scene.

"Welcome to the annual AFI group hug," institute President Bob Gazzale said as many in the audience chuckled. "For those who are new to this humble affair, the answer is 'No. ... No.' You are not going to lose. Losing doesn't happen here."

Most appeared in a jovial mood with smiles and lengthy conversations in the ballroom in Beverly Hills.

Robbie chatted for a while with "Oppenheimer" director Christopher Nolan, who eventually pivoted to shake hands with Robbie's "Barbie" castmate America Ferrera. "Maestro" stars Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan enjoyed their time together on the red carpet while "Beef" star Ali Wong caught up with Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix.

"American Fiction" stars Jeffrey Wright and Sterling K. Brown huddled up with "Jury Duty" star James Marsden and former BET CEO Debra L. Lee. Director Steven Spielberg took photos with "Barbie" director Greta Gerwig.

The AFI event is all about having fun, creating a laid-back vibe with no pressure.

"When we began this event, now over 20 years ago, the idea was simple: We tell you you're great and why," Gazzale said. "We share a moment of your film or television program. ... This community is not competition. It's never a competition. I know that doesn't sound ideal. But that's who we are."

Films honored include "American Fiction," "Barbie," "The Holdovers," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "Maestro," "May December," "Oppenheimer," "Past Lives," "Poor Things" and "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse."

Television shows recognized were "Abbott Elementary," "The Bear," "Beef," "Jury Duty," "The Last of Us," "The Morning Show," "Only Murders in the Building," "Poker Face," "Reservation Dogs" and "Succession."

Others in the star-studded room included Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, Jennifer Aniston, Robert Downey Jr., Emma Stone, Selena Gomez, Quinta Brunson, Lily Gladstone, Ayo Edebiri and Tracee Ellis Ross.

Ellen Burstyn closed the luncheon with a benediction to celebrate the honorees, whom she praised.

"I feel blessed to be part of this amazing tribe," the 91-year-old Oscar, Emmy and Tony award winner said. "Thank you all for celebrating the best without making it a competition, just a shared appreciation. We appreciate you all."

They're not aliens. That's the verdict from Peru officials who seized 2 doll-like figures

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Aliens they are not. That's what forensic experts in Peru said Friday about two doll-like figures and an alleged three-fingered hand that customs authorities in the South American country seized last year from a shipment heading to Mexico.

The forensic experts with Peru's prosecutor's office said the objects were made with paper, glue, metal and human and animal bones.

The findings quash some people's belief that the figures come from an "alien center or come from another planet, all of which is totally false," said forensic archaeologist Flavio Estrada, who led the analysis.

"The conclusion is simple: they are dolls assembled with bones of animals from this planet, with modern synthetic glues, therefore they were not assembled during pre-Hispanic times," Estrada told reporters. "They are not extraterrestrials; they are not aliens."

The prosecutor's office has not yet determined who owns the objects. Officials on Friday would only

say that a Mexican citizen was the intended recipient of the objects before they were seized by customs agents in October.

Mexican journalist José Jaime Maussan and some Mexican lawmakers became the subject of international ridicule in September when he went before the country's congress to present two boxes with supposed mummies found in Peru.

He along with others claimed they were "non-human beings that are not part of our terrestrial evolution."

In November, Maussan returned to Mexico's congress with a group of Peruvian doctors and spent more than three hours pressing the case for "non-human beings" that he said were found in Peru, where he made similar claims in 2017. A report by the Peruvian prosecutor's office that year found that alleged alien bodies were actually "recently manufactured dolls, which have been covered with a mixture of paper and synthetic glue to simulate the presence of skin."

"They are not the remains of ancestral aliens that they have tried to present," the 2017 report stated.

Experts on Friday showed reporters a couple of 2-foot-long dolls dressed in red, orange and green clothes. They said examinations showed the bones of birds, dogs and other animals were used to create the dolls.

Meanwhile, an alleged three-finger hand was subjected to X-ray examinations. Estrada said the "very poorly" built hand was created with human bones.

Fox News stops running MyPillow commercials in a payment dispute with election denier Mike Lindell

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — MyPillow chief executive and prominent election denier Mike Lindell said Friday that Fox News has stopped running his company's commercials, disputing the network's assertion that it is simply because he hasn't paid his bills.

Lindell went public by tweeting that Fox, which had been one of MyPillow's biggest advertising outlets, had canceled him. He said in his tweet that he didn't know why but that he suspected that the network was trying to silence him. Fox denied that.

Losing Fox was just the latest in a series of financial and legal setbacks for Minnesota-based MyPillow and Lindell, who continues to propagate former President Donald Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen from him, in part by rigged voting machine systems. Several big-box retailers, including Walmart, have discontinued his products, and lawyers who were defending him against defamation lawsuits by voting machine companies quit.

"As soon as their account is paid, we would be happy to accept their advertising," Fox spokeswoman Irena Briganti said.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Lindell acknowledged that MyPillow owes money to Fox. He put the figure at \$7.8 million, but he insisted that the sum is within his credit line with the network. He said MyPillow has long spent an average of \$1 million a week to run its ads on Fox. And he said the network had long allowed him 12 weeks of credit until it recently cut that to eight weeks.

Lindell said he believes Fox wants to silence him "because I want to secure our election platforms" — an assertion that Fox disputes. And he said he suspects the network is sore because his Lindell TV/Frank-Speech online channel recently hired former Fox Business host Lou Dobbs, whose debut show on Monday night featured an interview with Trump, who made further false claims that the 2020 election was rigged.

Fox last April agreed to pay Dominion Voting Systems nearly \$800 million to avert a trial in the voting machine company's lawsuit that would have exposed how the network promoted lies about the 2020 election on shows by Dobbs and other hosts. Fox canceled Dobbs' show three years ago.

Lindell acknowledged in an interview in October that he owed two law firms that were defending him against lawsuits by Dominion and Smartmatic millions of dollars that he couldn't pay, which is why they quit. He said MyPillow had been "decimated."

But Lindell insisted Friday that MyPillow is "doing great." He said it's still running ads on another conservative network, Newsmax, and on his own platforms. But he conceded that losing Fox will hurt the business

and said he would run his ads there again if Fox would take them.

"Obviously, it would be great if Fox said, 'Hey, come back,'" Lindell said.

State trooper plunges into icy Vermont pond to save 8-year-old girl

CAMBRIDGE, Vt. (AP) — A Vermont state trooper plunged into a frigid pond and pulled out an 8-year-old girl who had fallen through the ice while playing with siblings. The child survived and fully recovered after a brief hospital stay.

The girl and her younger sister fell through the thin ice on the pond on private property in the town of Cambridge on Dec. 17, state police said in a news release Friday. The 80-year-old homeowner was able to pull the younger girl to shore but couldn't reach the older girl, so called 911, officials said.

Trooper Michelle Archer was nearby and arrived less than five minutes later, police said. She pulled a rope and flotation device from her cruiser, ran to the pond and swam to the girl, according to body camera video released by state police. She swam back to shore with the girl, and a second trooper who arrived as she was bringing her out of the water carried the child to a waiting ambulance.

The girl was taken to the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington for treatment of injuries that at first were thought to be life-threatening, police said. She has made a complete recovery and returned home.

Vermont State Police leadership have commended Troopers Archer and Keith Cote and the homeowner "for their selfless, heroic conduct, and all three have been recommended to receive the agency's Lifesaving Award," state police said.

Iowa campaign events are falling as fast as the snow as the state readies for record-cold caucuses

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Campaign events have continued to fall as swiftly as the Iowa snow as wintry weather hampers the leadoff GOP caucus state, with Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump all shuffling their schedules ahead of Monday's presidential votes.

Prolonged freezing temperatures, combined with strong winds, foreshadow possibly life-threatening conditions on the night that Republican voters are set to gather to make their pick for their 2024 nominee.

Iowans are accustomed to the cold, though the latest winter wave, combined with temperatures that threaten to dip deeper into negative territory in the coming days, could mean unprecedented conditions for caucus night itself. Early into next week, forecasters said significant winds would make things feel as cold as 45 degrees below zero, a record-breaking forecast that could keep potential voters at home.

"This is kind of what it means to live in Iowa, in the middle of winter, but two snowstorms back-to-back feels like a little much," said Jillian McKee, of Des Moines, as she walked her Shiba Inu named Bear on Friday morning in the pouring snow. "Usually, I'm just used to one a week."

McKee said she still plans to show up on Monday night and is leaning toward caucusing for Haley.

Haley pulled down a trio of events that had been slated for Friday in central and eastern areas of the state, shifting them instead to tele-town halls at which, unlike her in-person events held earlier this week, Haley took questions from caucusgoers.

Volunteers for AFP Action, the political arm of the powerful Koch network that's supporting Haley, were out meeting with caucusgoers in the storm on Friday. Senior adviser Tyler Raygor noted that "knocking doors in snow takes more time," but that it also made it more likely that people were at home.

DeSantis postponed four events on Friday that had been planned for cities further from Des Moines, citing unsafe weather conditions. He did campaign earlier Friday north of the capital city with Gov. Kim Reynolds, saying he was impressed with those who turned out.

Less than an hour before DeSantis' event with Reynolds, Iowa's state patrol posted a warning about the weather on social media. "Please, don't put yourself or others in danger," it said, adding that road condi-

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tions were "extremely dangerous!"

The National Weather Service's Des Moines office, meanwhile, posted white-out conditions of jack-knifed tractor-trailers littering interstates as much of the state was under a blizzard warning.

Trump — who has not stumped in Iowa in the closing week, instead choosing to make court appearances in Washington and New York — on Friday shifted a handful of rally events planned for over the weekend in central and western Iowa to tele-rallies, with his campaign posting the adjusted schedule "out of an abundance of caution amid severe weather advisories."

Trump was still slated to appear at an in-person rally on Sunday in Indianola, south of Des Moines. Earlier Friday, his campaign appeared determined to hold all of the weekend's rallies as scheduled.

"Wear a coat," Trump senior adviser Chris LaCivita quipped when asked about concerns about the weather over the next few days. He also noted that the campaign has "contingencies" in place, including drivers to get people to caucus sites.

"It's old school, you know — poll workers and people who pick up people and drive 'em to the polls, so we have all of that stuff planned," he said.

On turnout, LaCivita said he felt confident the "enthusiasm" that Trump's large events have generated would translate into caucusgoers' commitment to sticking out the cold weather.

"You guys have seen the lines that people have stood just to go to a rally," he said. "I'm not worried about lines at a caucus site."

Another presidential candidate, biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, canceled an event Tuesday morning, saying it was "effectively impossible to safely get from Des Moines to Coralville" — hours after criticizing Haley for calling off her Monday event in Sioux City.

On Friday, Ramaswamy appeared poised to keep to his campaign schedule, posting on X that "George Washington braved the weather to cross the Delaware" and that he would stay on the trail "for as long as we can (asterisk)physically(asterisk) make it."

Never Back Down, the super PAC orchestrating much of DeSantis' on-the-ground efforts, said its staff had been in close touch with tens of thousands of committed Iowa supporters, whom it expected to turn out regardless of Monday night's conditions.

The scheduling of the caucuses has thrown the time-tested process more to nature's whims than others in the past. Last summer, the Iowa Republican Party's state central committee voted unanimously for the third Monday in January. The 15th, which falls on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, is earlier by several weeks than the past three caucuses, though not as early as 2008 when they were held just three days into the new year.

With the storm bearing down and the almost other-worldly cold predicted to set in thereafter, Iowa Republicans said Friday said there were no plans to change the timing of this year's caucuses.

Iowa GOP spokesperson Kush Desai said the party has held caucuses "through all sorts of weather events before." Desai said state Republicans were keeping an eye on things but "not entertaining anything drastic yet" in terms of postponing any votes.

"There's no doubt on our end about our commitment to keeping Iowa first in the nation and maintaining Iowa's critical voice, not just for Iowa but for the heartland, in the presidential nominating process," Desai said. "Even through the winter."

National Weather Service data shows there has never been a colder Iowa caucus night than what's forecast for Jan. 15. The previous coldest was in 2004, when the high temperature for that year's Jan. 19 caucuses was 16 degrees.

McKee, who was walking her dog outside Friday, had words of apology to the visiting journalists and politicians who traveled to Iowa, only to get soaked with the torrential snow and bone-chilling temperatures.

"This is definitely making it a little more complicated for everybody, especially all the out-of-towner people," McKee said as wind and snow whipped around her. "I'm sorry that you're coming into the Iowa caucuses in a big ol' Iowa snowstorm, but it seems right on brand."

Israel defends itself at the UN's top court against allegations of genocide in Gaza

By MIKE CORDER and RAF CASERT Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Accused of committing genocide against Palestinians, Israel insisted at the United Nations' highest court Friday that its war in Gaza was a legitimate defense of its people and that it was Hamas militants who were guilty of genocide.

Israel described the allegations leveled by South Africa as hypocritical and said one of the biggest cases ever to come before an international court reflected a world turned upside down. Israeli leaders defend their air and ground offensive in Gaza as a legitimate response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, when militants stormed through Israeli communities, killing some 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage.

Israeli legal advisor Tal Becker told a packed auditorium at the ornate Palace of Peace in The Hague that the country is fighting a "war it did not start and did not want."

"In these circumstances, there can hardly be a charge more false and more malevolent than the allegation against Israel of genocide," he added, noting that the horrible suffering of civilians in war was not enough to level that charge.

On Friday afternoon, Germany said it wants to intervene in the proceedings on Israel's behalf, saying there was "no basis whatsoever" for an accusation of genocide against Israel.

"Hamas terrorists brutally attacked, tortured, killed and kidnapped innocent people in Israel," German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said in a statement. "Since then, Israel has been defending itself against the inhumane attack by Hamas."

Under the court's rules, if Germany files a declaration of intervention in the case, it will be able to make legal arguments on behalf of Israel.

Germany would be allowed to intervene at the merits phase of the case to address how the genocide convention, drawn up in 1948 following World War II, should be interpreted, according to international lawyer Balkees Jarrah, associate director of the international justice program at Human Rights Watch.

"That would come after the court issues its decision on South Africa's request for urgent measures to protect the Palestinian people in Gaza," Jarrah told The Associated Press from The Hague, where she attended the ICJ hearings.

Germany's support for Israel carries some symbolic significance given its Nazi history.

Hebestreit said Germany "sees itself as particularly committed to the Convention against Genocide." He added: "We firmly oppose political instrumentalization."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the announcement, saying the gesture "touches all of Israel's citizens."

South African lawyers asked the court Thursday to order an immediate halt to Israeli military operations in the besieged coastal territory that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians. A decision on that request will probably take weeks, and the full case is likely to last years — and it's unclear if Israel would follow any court orders.

On Friday, Israel focused on the brutality of the Oct. 7 attacks, presenting chilling video and audio to a hushed audience.

"They tortured children in front of parents and parents in front of children, burned people, including infants alive, and systematically raped and mutilated scores of women, men and children," Becker said.

South Africa's request for an immediate halt to the Gaza fighting, he said, amounts to an attempt to prevent Israel from defending itself against that assault.

Even when acting in self-defense, countries are required by international law to follow the rules of war, and judges must decide if Israel has.

As two days of hearings ended Friday, ICJ President Joan E. Donoghue said the court would rule on the request for urgent measures "as soon as possible."

Israel often boycotts international tribunals and U.N. investigations, saying they are unfair and biased. But this time, Israeli leaders took the rare step of sending a high-level legal team — a sign of how seri-

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ously they regard the case and likely their fear that any court order to halt operations would be a major blow to the country's international standing.

Still, Becker dismissed the accusations as crude and attention-seeking.

"We live at a time when words are cheap in an age of social media and identity politics. The temptation to reach for the most outrageous term to vilify and demonize has become, for many, irresistible," he said.

In a statement from New York, Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan called the case a "new moral low" and said that by taking it on, "the U.N. and its institutions have become weapons in service of terrorist organizations."

Becker said the charges Israel is facing should be leveled at Hamas, which seeks Israel's destruction and which the U.S. and Western allies consider a terrorist group.

"If there have been acts that may be characterized as genocidal, then they have been perpetrated against Israel," Becker said.

More than 23,000 people in Gaza have been killed during Israel's military campaign, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. That toll does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. Nearly 85% of Gaza's people have been driven from their homes, a quarter of the enclave's residents face starvation, and much of northern Gaza has been reduced to rubble.

South Africa says this amounts to genocide and is part of decades of Israeli oppression of Palestinians.

"The scale of destruction in Gaza, the targeting of family homes and civilians, the war being a war on children, all make clear that genocidal intent is both understood and has been put into practice. The articulated intent is the destruction of Palestinian life," said lawyer Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, adding that several leading politicians had made dehumanizing comments about people in Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority's foreign ministry welcomed the case, saying in a written statement that South Africa "delivered unequivocal evidence that Israel is deliberately and systematically violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention."

Malcolm Shaw, an international law expert on Israel's legal team, rejected the accusation of genocidal intent and called the remarks Ngcukaitobi referenced "random quotes not in conformity with government policy."

Israel also says that it takes measures to protect civilians, such as issuing evacuation orders ahead of strikes. It blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll, saying the group uses residential areas to stage attacks and for other military purposes.

Israel's critics say that such measures have done little to prevent the high toll and that its bombings are so powerful that they often amount to indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks.

If the court issues an order to halt the fighting and Israel doesn't comply, it could face U.N. sanctions, although those may be blocked by a veto from the United States, Israel's staunch ally. In Washington, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby called the allegations "unfounded." The White House declined to comment on how it might respond if the ICJ determines Israel has committed genocide.

The extraordinary case goes to the core of one of the world's most intractable conflicts — and for the second day protesters rallied outside the court.

Pro-Israeli demonstrators set up a table near the court grounds for a Sabbath meal with empty seats, commemorating the hostages still being held by Hamas. "We want to symbolize the empty chairs, because we are missing them," said Nathan Bouscher from Center for Information and Documentation on Israel.

Nearby, over 100 pro-Palestinian protesters waved flags and shouted protests.

The case also strikes at the heart of both Israel's and South Africa's national identities.

Israel was founded as a Jewish state in the wake of the Nazis' slaughter of 6 million Jews during World War II. South Africa's governing party, meanwhile, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank to its own history under the apartheid regime of white minority rule, which restricted most Black people to "homelands."

The world court, which rules on disputes between nations, has never judged a country to be responsible for genocide. The closest it came was in 2007, when it ruled that Serbia "violated the obligation to prevent

genocide" in the July 1995 massacre by Bosnian Serb forces of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys in the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica.

Biden administration asks Supreme Court to tell Texas to stop blocking US border agents from patrols

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — The Justice Department on Friday asked the Supreme Court to order Texas to stop blocking Border Patrol agents from a portion of the U.S.-Mexico border where large numbers of migrants have crossed in recent months, setting up another showdown between Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and the Biden administration over immigration enforcement.

The request comes after Texas put up fencing to take control of a nearly 50-acre (20-hectare) public park along the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, which was a crossing point for thousands of migrants entering from Mexico last year. Although a similar power struggle played out in the same region more than a year ago, the area Texas closed off this week prevents federal agents from accessing a larger and more visible crossing spot.

Along one stretch, armed Texas National Guard members and their vehicles are preventing Border Patrol agents from accessing the river, the Justice Department said in court filing. The Texas National Guard also allegedly used a military Humvee to keep Border Patrol agents off an access road.

"Because Border Patrol can no longer access or view this stretch of the border, Texas has effectively prevented Border Patrol from monitoring the border," the Justice Department wrote in a filing.

Abbott told reporters that Texas has the authority to control access to any geographic location in the state.

"That authority is being asserted," Abbott said.

The closure of Shelby Park was an escalation of the governor's border enforcement efforts known as Operation Lone Star. The state and federal government are involved in multiple legal disputes over actions Texas has taken since 2023, including the use of buoys in the middle of the international river, the installation of razor wire, and an upcoming law that will allow police to arrest migrants.

Abbott defended closing off the park as he faced backlash from Democrats for telling conservative radio host Dana Loesch last week that Texas has done everything to curb illegal crossings short of shooting people. Loesch had asked Abbott how far Texas could go on the border before someone might arrest him.

"The only thing that we're not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border because of course the Biden administration would charge us with murder," he said as he discussed a New York City lawsuit against charter bus companies that he has used to transport migrants from Texas.

Mexico's foreign relations secretary denounced Abbott's comments, saying they could lead to violence and are dehumanizing to migrants.

On Friday, Abbott said he was making a distinction of what Texas can and cannot do on the border. "I was asked to point out where the line is drawn about what would be illegal and I pointed out something that is obviously illegal," he said.

Texas notified the Eagle Pass government on Wednesday that the Department of Public Safety would be closing public access to Shelby Park.

Concern grew when Border Patrol noted it, too, lost access to the park, which agents use to launch boats into the Rio Grande. The area also served as a staging area where federal officers would take migrants into custody and process them. The Border Patrol's access to the site for surveillance was similarly curtailed.

The Justice Department's emergency request to the Supreme Court says agents no longer have access to a 2.5-mile (4-kilometer) stretch of the border in the region. The filing was made as part of the U.S. government's lawsuit over the concertina wire the state installed along roughly 30 miles (48 kilometers) near Eagle Pass.

The union for Border Patrol agents, the National Border Patrol Council, praised the state's move.

"By taking control of an area where so many illegal aliens are simply surrendering, he's freeing up BP agents to patrol areas with high numbers of illegal aliens who attempt to escape arrest," the union said

in a message on X, formerly known as Twitter.

In 2022, a Texas pecan farm got caught in a similar dispute between Abbott and the Biden administration when the Texas Department of Public Safety moved in without the landowner's consent and revoked a lease between the landowner and Border Patrol.

The state's policies have been called into question not only by outside critics but internally when a trooper's account over denying water and urgent medical care made headlines in July.

Biden stops by Pennsylvania stores to talk up his record on small business creation

By SEUNG MIN KIM and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

EMMAUS, Pennsylvania (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday tried his hand at retail politics — stopping in a trio of Pennsylvania stores to stress the value of small businesses and talk up his economic record.

It was a distinct change from the set speeches that the Democratic president usually gives to highlight his policies about an economy with strong employment but levels of inflation that worry voters. Biden gladhanded and joshed at a running shoe store, bicycle shop and coffee house in Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

"My name is Joe Biden and I work for the governor and the senator," the president said as he stepped into the Nowhere Coffee Co. along with Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pennsylvania. Biden ordered what appeared to be a mango smoothie. Obviously, the people in the coffee house knew who he was, with one of them joking, "This is a normal day."

Sauntering along Main Street, Biden seemed to be in full campaign mode several months ahead of the November election, which could rematch him against his 2020 opponent, former President Donald Trump.

Biden won the surrounding Lehigh County with 53.2% of the vote in 2020, helping him to secure a victory in Pennsylvania and the White House. It's a state that he will likely need again this year to win reelection.

Biden's pitch Friday was that he's been better for small businesses than Trump, a billionaire, real estate magnate and reality television host who won the presidency in 2016 on the premise that he knows how to grow the economy.

At the Emmaus Run Inn, Biden stressed what he saw as a key difference. There have been 16 million applications to start new businesses during the first three years of his presidency, which he noted is the highest number on record.

Drawing on recent consumer sentiment data, Biden said during a later stop at a firefighter training center in nearby Allentown that people are starting to feel better about the economy as inflation has receded from its June 2022 high of 9.1% to 3.4%.

"If you notice, they're feeling much better about how the economy is doing," Biden said in response to a reporter's question. "What we haven't done is letting them know exactly who got it changed. ... Everybody's doing better and they believe it. They know it. And it's just beginning to sink in."

Shapiro, Pennsylvania's Democratic governor, said that Biden discussed with the shop owners the running habits of his wife, Jill, and the kinds of bikes that he enjoys riding.

"It was cool for him to be able to see the small businesses that power our economy and the folks behind that," Shapiro said.

The president also faced national security questions from the scrum of reporters that trailed him. He said the United States and its allies were not in a proxy war with Iran after a missile strike on Houthis who have attacked ships in the Red Sea. He later said he was "very concerned" about the risk of the attacks increasing oil prices.

But Biden went back to some of his favorite lines while in Pennsylvania. As he left the coffee shop, the president noted that his birthplace was just 90 minutes away.

"By the way, we're almost in heaven, we're almost in Scranton," he said.

Prosecutors to seek death penalty for white supremacist who killed 10 at Buffalo supermarket

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Federal prosecutors said Friday that they will seek the death penalty against a white supremacist who killed 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket.

Payton Gendron, 20, is already serving a sentence of life in prison with no chance of parole after he pleaded guilty to state charges of murder and hate-motivated domestic terrorism in the 2022 attack.

New York does not have capital punishment, but the Justice Department had the option of seeking the death penalty in a separate federal hate crimes case. Gendron had promised to plead guilty in that case if prosecutors agreed not to seek the death penalty.

The decision marks the first time that President Joe Biden's Justice Department has authorized a new pursuit of the death penalty.

Gendron drove more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) from his home in rural Conklin, New York, to a Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo's largely Black East Side neighborhood, where he shot eight supermarket customers, the store security guard and a church deacon who drove shoppers to and from the store with their groceries. Three people were wounded but survived.

In court papers announcing the decision to seek the death penalty, Trini Ross, the U.S. attorney for western New York, cited the substantial planning that went into the shooting, including the choice of location, which she said was meant to "maximize the number of Black victims."

Relatives of the victims — who ranged in age from 32 to 86 — have expressed mixed views on whether they thought federal prosecutors should pursue the death penalty. Mark Talley, whose 63-year-old mother, Geraldine Talley, was killed, said he "wasn't necessarily disappointed" by the decision, even if he would have preferred Gendron spend his life behind bars.

"It would have satisfied me more knowing he would have spent the rest of his life in prison being surrounded by the population of people he tried to kill," Talley said.

In a joint statement, attorneys for some of victims' relatives said the decision "provides a pathway to both relief and a measure of closure for the victims and their families."

An attorney for Gendron, Sonya Zoghlin, said she was "deeply disappointed" by the government's decision to seek the death penalty, noting that her client was 18 at the time of the shooting.

"Rather than a prolonged and traumatic capital prosecution, the efforts of the federal government would be better spent on combatting the forces that facilitated this terrible crime, including easy access to deadly weapons and the failure of social media companies to moderate the hateful rhetoric and images that circulate online," Zoghlin said in a statement.

Federal death penalty cases have become a rarity since the election of Biden, a Democrat who opposes capital punishment. Under the leadership of Attorney General Merrick Garland, the Justice Department has permitted the continuation of two capital prosecutions and withdrawn from pursuing death in more than two dozen cases.

Garland instituted a moratorium on federal executions in 2021 pending a review of procedures. Although the moratorium does not prevent prosecutors from seeking death sentences, the Justice Department has done so sparingly.

It successfully sought the death penalty for an antisemitic gunman who murdered 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue, though that attack was authorized as a death penalty case before Garland took office. It also went ahead last year with an effort to get the death sentence against an Islamic extremist who killed eight people on a New York City bike path, though a lack of a unanimous jury meant that prosecution resulted in a life sentence.

The Justice Department has declined to pursue the death penalty in other mass killings, including against the gunman who killed 23 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas.

Gendron carried out his attack on May 14, 2022, using a semi-automatic marked with racial slurs and phrases including "The Great Replacement," a reference to a conspiracy theory that there's a plot to di-

minish the influence of white people.

Prosecutors met Friday with several family members of victims before the decision to seek the death penalty was made public.

Pamela Pritchett, whose 77-year-old mother, Pearl Young, was killed in the attack, said the mood was somber.

"I will be scarred. Everybody, every family, the community of the East Side, we're all gonna be scarred," she said. "For me, my goal is to look at the scar and know that I am healed."

Gendron did not appear at a status conference held Friday afternoon.

US intensifies oversight of Boeing, will begin production audits after latest mishap for planemaker

By TOM KRISHER and DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writers

The Federal Aviation Administration says it will increase oversight of Boeing and audit production of the 737 Max 9 jetliner after a panel blew off an Alaska Airlines plane in midflight last week, the latest in a string of mishaps at the troubled aircraft maker.

The FAA said Friday that it would judge whether Boeing and its parts suppliers followed approved quality procedures.

Amid reports of continued manufacturing problems, the FAA also said it's reconsidering a longstanding practice of relying on employees at aircraft manufacturers to perform some safety analysis of planes. Members of Congress criticized the practice of deputizing Boeing employees as inspectors after two deadly crashes involving Boeing 737 Max 8 planes in 2018 and 2019.

"It is time to re-examine the delegation of authority and assess any associated safety risks," said new FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker. "The FAA is exploring the use of an independent third party to oversee Boeing's inspections and its quality system."

Whitaker suggested that the FAA might find "a technical, nonprofit organization" to help oversee Boeing's work. The agency also said it will increase monitoring of problems reported on Max 9 flights.

He told CNBC Friday that the FAA will also step up its oversight of Spirit AeroSystems, which supplies Boeing with fuselages for the 737 Max.

"We know there are problems with manufacturing, there have been problems in the past, but these are continuing," Whitaker said. "This is a brand-new aircraft, it has just come off the line and it had significant problems, and we believe there are other manufacturing problems."

In a statement, Arlington, Virginia-based Boeing said it will cooperate with the FAA. "We support all actions that strengthen quality and safety, and we are taking actions across our production system," the company said.

Spirit also said it's supporting the FAA actions. "Spirit's top priorities are quality, product integrity and compliance," a company statement said.

The FAA's intensifying focus on safety at Boeing comes just a day after the agency announced an investigation into whether the manufacturer failed to make sure a fuselage panel that blew off was safe and manufactured to meet the design that regulators approved.

The National Transportation Safety Board is focusing its investigation on plugs used to fill spots for extra doors when those exits are not required for safety reasons on Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners.

One of two door plugs on an Alaska Max 9 blew out shortly after the plane took off from Portland, Oregon, a week ago, leaving a hole in the plane. The cabin lost pressure and the plane was forced to descend rapidly and return to Portland for an emergency landing. No serious injuries were reported.

Whitaker said the FAA in the past used to do a lot more aircraft-manufacturing inspections, but legislation moved those to the private sector. Sometimes that works, but at times it doesn't. The third party, he said, is just an option. "It may not be the right option, but I think we need to have that debate."

Legislators criticized the designated inspector program after the Max crashes overseas, contending the inspectors were still paid by Boeing and beholden to the company, not the FAA.

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But in 2019, then-acting FAA administrator Dan Elwell said replacing the use of company workers for safety-certification work would require the agency to add 10,000 employees at a cost of \$1.8 billion a year. That all but ended consideration of FAA doing the work.

Criticism of the inspector program resumed Friday after the FAA's actions were announced. "It should not have taken a near catastrophe for the FAA to review its use of the (designated inspector) program, which effectively lets the fox guard the hen house," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut.

Former congressman Peter DeFazio, who chaired the House committee that investigated the Max crashes, said Friday that the FAA's actions are needed to rein in quality and safety problems at Boeing.

"This an extraordinary step by the administrator of the FAA, one that is long overdue," he said. "The possibility that Boeing will lose the (deputization of its employees) and be subject to independent third party oversight — and I would expect that will have to be paid for by Boeing — that would be a massive, unprecedented step to force the unwilling executives at Boeing to shape up the company."

DeFazio said that in the aftermath of the crashes, Congress changed the law so the inspectors would report to the FAA rather than Boeing supervisors, and that all future inspectors be approved by the agency. But given the Alaska Airlines case, it's clear that failed as well, he said.

"So I think we're looking at a whole new way of doing this with a totally independent entity — not people who work for Boeing — and handing Boeing the bill because of their malfeasance, would be warranted," he said.

After the panel blew off the plane, the FAA grounded all Max 9s equipped with the door plugs, forcing Alaska and United to cut flights. The aircraft remain grounded while the NTSB and the FAA continue their investigation.

Since then, the FAA was told of other problems on the Max 9. Alaska and United reported finding loose bolts on door plugs that they inspected in some of their other Max 9 jets.

NTSB investigators said this week they have not been able to find four bolts that are used to help secure the 63-pound door plug. They are not sure whether the bolts were there before the plane took off.

On Thursday, the FAA asked Boeing to respond within 10 business days and tell the agency "the root cause" of the problem with the door plug and steps the company is taking to prevent a recurrence.

The door plugs are installed by Spirit, but investigators have not said which company's employees last worked on the plug on the Alaska plane that suffered the blowout.

The day after the blowout, the FAA grounded all 65 Max 9s operated by Alaska and 79 used by United Airlines, until Boeing develops inspection guidelines and planes can be examined. Alaska canceled all flights by Max 9s through Saturday.

The incident on the Alaska plane is the latest in a string of mishaps for Boeing that began in 2018, with the first of two crashes of Max 8 planes in Indonesia and Ethiopia — and more than four months apart — that killed a total of 346 people.

Max 8 and Max 9 planes were grounded worldwide for nearly two years after the second crash. Since then, various manufacturing flaws have at times held up deliveries of Max jets and a larger Boeing plane, the 787. Last month, the company asked airlines to inspect their Max jets for a loose bolt in the rudder-control system.

Donald Trump ordered to pay The New York Times and its reporters nearly \$400,000 in legal fees

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump was ordered Friday to pay nearly \$400,000 in legal fees to The New York Times and three investigative reporters after he sued them unsuccessfully over a Pulitzer Prize-winning 2018 story about his family's wealth and tax practices.

The newspaper and reporters Susanne Craig, David Barstow and Russell Buettner were dismissed from the lawsuit in May. Trump's claim against his estranged niece, Mary Trump, that she breached a prior settlement agreement by giving tax records to the reporters is still pending.

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New York Judge Robert Reed said that given the “complexity of the issues” in the case and other factors, it was reasonable that Donald Trump be forced to pay lawyers for the Times and the reporters a total of \$392,638 in legal fees.

“Today’s decision shows that the state’s newly amended anti-SLAPP statute can be a powerful force for protecting press freedom,” Times spokesperson Danielle Rhoads Ha said, referring to a New York law that bars baseless lawsuits designed to silence critics. Such lawsuits are known as SLAPPs or strategic lawsuits against public participation.

“The court has sent a message to those who want to misuse the judicial system to try to silence journalists,” Rhoads Ha said.

In a separate ruling Friday, Reed denied a request by Mary Trump – now the sole defendant – that the case be put on hold while she appeals his June decision that allowed Donald Trump’s claim against her to proceed.

Mary Trump’s lawyers declined comment.

Donald Trump’s lawyer, Alina Habba, said they remain disappointed that the Times and its reporters were dropped from the case. She said they are pleased that the court has “once again affirmed the strength of our claims against Mary and is denying her attempt to avoid accountability.”

“We look forward to proceeding with our claims against her,” Habba said.

Donald Trump’s lawsuit, filed in 2021, accused the Times and its reporters of relentlessly seeking out Mary Trump as a source of information and convincing her to turn over confidential tax records. He claimed the reporters were aware her prior settlement agreement barred her from disclosing the documents, which she’d received in a dispute over family patriarch Fred Trump’s estate.

The Times’ reporting challenged Donald Trump’s claims of self-made wealth by documenting how his father, Fred Trump, had given him at least \$413 million over the decades, including through tax avoidance schemes. Mary Trump identified herself in a book published in 2020 as the source of the documents.

The Times’ story said that Donald Trump and his father avoided gift and inheritance taxes by methods including setting up a sham corporation and undervaluing assets to tax authorities. The Times says its report was based on more than 100,000 pages of financial documents, including confidential tax returns for the father and his companies.

Donald Trump, who sought \$100 million in damages, alleged Mary Trump, the Times and the reporters “were motivated by a personal vendetta” against him. He accused them of engaging “in an insidious plot to obtain confidential and highly sensitive records which they exploited for their own benefit.”

In dismissing the Times and its reporters from the lawsuit, Reed wrote that legal news gathering is “at the very core of protected First Amendment activity.”

Mary Trump, 58, is the daughter of Donald Trump’s brother, Fred Trump Jr., who died in 1981 at age 42. She is an outspoken critic of her uncle, whom she has regarded as “criminal, cruel and traitorous.”

In July, Mary Trump filed a counterclaim against Donald Trump under New York’s anti-SLAPP law, arguing that Donald Trump’s lawsuit was “purely retaliatory and lacking in merit” and intended to “chill her and others from criticizing him in the future.”

Austin ordered strikes from hospital where he continues to get prostate cancer care, Pentagon says

By TARA COPP, LOLITA C. BALDOR and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From his hospital room, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin first orchestrated and then watched in real time as the U.S. retaliatory attack on Yemen-based Houthi militants unfolded Thursday night.

Austin’s hospital-room leadership was the latest in a series of actions the defense chief has carried out from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where he has been recovering from complications due to treatments for prostate cancer. Austin only revealed he had prostate cancer on Tuesday — the same day that the Houthis launched their most aggressive onslaught to date of 18 drones and missiles at com-

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mercial and military vessels in the Red Sea. That attack that set the stage for Thursday's military operation.

Austin is now in his 12th day of hospitalization at Walter Reed and the Pentagon does not know what day he will be released.

On Friday, President Joe Biden said it was a lapse in judgment for Austin to keep his hospitalization and prostate cancer diagnosis a secret, but said he still has confidence in the Pentagon chief.

In the days since, Austin has turned his room into a secure communications suite. He's called top military leaders, talked to the president, considered options and later ordered the strikes, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said Friday.

Austin's hospital room setup is not unlike when he is on the road, where full security and communications teams accompany him with all of the secure, classified equipment needed to keep him connected. Austin's aides and support staff have been with him all week at Walter Reed as well.

So on Tuesday, as the Houthis launched 18 one-way attack drones and anti-ship missiles, Austin was watching the attacks and the U.S. and British response intercepting those drones by secure video in real time, as were Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. CQ Brown and U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Erik Kurilla. The three have remained in contact and been in regular calls with the National Security Council over the past few days.

The Houthis' Tuesday attack occurred after the U.S. and a host of international partners had already issued an ultimatum to cease the attacks or face severe consequences.

Shortly after that attack, Austin recommended to the White House that military action was necessary. On Thursday, President Joe Biden approved the response and Austin gave the order to strike.

That evening, Austin again monitored real-time operations from his hospital room, this time the strikes he'd ordered. Brown was also watching via secure communications from inside his official residence, where he'd been hosting a reception, a U.S. official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details that have not been publicly released.

Shortly after, Austin issued a statement on the operation, which involved F/A-18 fighter jets and E-2C Hawkeye radar planes launching from aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S. Air Force warplanes, a U.S. submarine and several other U.S. and British ships firing more than 150 missiles at 28 locations involving more than 60 targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

Following the strikes, Austin spoke with the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs chairman and the head of U.S. Central Command for an initial post-strike assessment. While the Pentagon has not released a damage assessment, multiple officials have said they believe that the Houthis' ability to conduct another round of ship attacks has been degraded.

Austin has been hospitalized since Jan. 1, when an ambulance took him to Walter Reed. The defense secretary was conscious at the time but in severe pain, and was admitted to the intensive care unit. A surgery he'd undergone Dec. 22 to address his prostate cancer had resulted in an infection including an abdominal fluid collection, and it had to be drained by placing a tube through his nose to drain his stomach. For days, few knew he was in hospital or in intensive care — the White House only learned on Jan. 4 that he was at Walter Reed.

Austin's delays in disclosing his prostate cancer and his hospitalization have roiled the administration, Pentagon and Congress. Pentagon officials have repeatedly said that Austin has been performing his duties for the last week, even as he remains hospitalized.

Speaking to reporters Friday as he toured local businesses outside Allentown, Pennsylvania, Biden said "yes" when asked if it was a lapse in judgment for Austin not to tell him about his condition. He replied, "I do," when asked if he still had confidence in Austin's leadership.

Some Americans will get their student loans canceled in February as Biden accelerates his new plan

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will start canceling student loans for some borrowers in February as part of a new repayment plan that's taking effect nearly six months ahead of schedule.

Loan forgiveness was originally set to begin in July under the new SAVE repayment plan, but it's being accelerated to provide faster relief to borrowers, President Joe Biden said Friday. It's part of an effort "to act as quickly as possible to give more borrowers breathing room" and move on from their student debt, the Democratic president said in a statement.

Borrowers will be eligible for cancellation if they are enrolled in the new SAVE plan, if they originally borrowed \$12,000 or less to attend college, and if they have made at least 10 years of payments. The Education Department said it didn't immediately know how many borrowers will be eligible for cancellation in February.

Biden announced the new repayment plan last year alongside a separate plan to cancel up to \$20,000 in loans for millions of Americans. The Supreme Court struck down his plan for widespread forgiveness, but the repayment plan has so far escaped that level of legal scrutiny. Unlike his proposal for mass cancellation — which had never been done before — the repayment plan is a twist on existing income-based plans created by Congress more than a decade ago.

Republicans in Congress tried unsuccessfully to block the new repayment plan through legislation and a resolution last year.

The accelerated forgiveness drew fire from Republicans, who called it an attempt to win voters ahead of the 2024 presidential election. North Carolina Republican Rep. Virginia Foxx, chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, said it will "dump even more kerosene on an already raging student debt fire."

The new repayment plan offers far more generous terms than several other income-driven repayment plans that it's meant to replace. Previous plans offered cancellation after 20 or 25 years of payments, while the new plan offers it in as little as 10. The new plan also lowers monthly payments for millions of borrowers.

Those who took out more than \$12,000 will be eligible for cancellation but on a longer timeline. For each \$1,000 borrowed beyond \$12,000, it adds an additional year of payments on top of 10 years.

The maximum repayment period is capped at 20 years for those with only undergraduate loans and 25 years for those with any graduate school loans.

The Biden administration says next month's relief will particularly help Americans who attended community colleges, which generally cost less than four-year universities. The plan aims to place community college students "on a faster track to debt forgiveness than ever before," Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said.

Counterintuitively, those with smaller student loan balances tend to struggle more. It's driven by millions of Americans who take out student loans but don't finish degrees, leaving them with the downside of debt without the upside of a higher income.

Republicans have railed against the new repayment plan, saying it helps wealthier Americans with college degrees at the expense of taxpayers who didn't attend college. Some say it's a backdoor attempt to make community college free, an idea that Biden campaigned on but that failed to win support in Congress.

Starting next month, the Education Department says it will automatically wipe away balances for eligible borrowers enrolled in the SAVE plan. The department will email borrowers who might be eligible but have not enrolled.

Some of the plan's provisions took hold last summer — it prevents interest from snowballing as long as borrowers make monthly payments, and it makes more Americans eligible to get their monthly bill lowered to \$0.

Other parts are scheduled to take effect in July, including a change to limit borrowers' payments to 5%

of their discretionary income, down from 10% in previous income-driven repayment plans.

The Biden administration is separately pursuing another plan for widespread cancellation. After the Supreme Court rejected Biden's first plan, he asked the Education Department to try again under a different legal authority. The department has been working on a new proposal that would provide relief to targeted groups of borrowers.

Biden says Austin still has his confidence, but not revealing hospitalization was lapse in judgment

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

EMMAUS, Pennsylvania (AP) — President Joe Biden said Friday that it was a lapse in judgment for Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin not to tell him about his hospitalization last week, but he still has confidence in his Pentagon chief.

Speaking to reporters as he toured local businesses outside Allentown, Pennsylvania, Biden said "yes" when asked if it was a lapse in judgment for Austin not to tell him about his condition. He replied, "I do," when asked if he still had confidence in Austin's leadership.

Austin, 70, remains hospitalized as he is being treated for complications from prostate cancer surgery. His failure to disclose his hospitalization has been sharply criticized by members of both political parties and has led to some calls for his resignation.

Austin was admitted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Dec. 22 and underwent surgery to treat the cancer, which was detected earlier in the month during a routine screening. He developed an infection a week later and was hospitalized Jan. 1 and admitted to intensive care. Biden and senior administration officials were not told about Austin's hospitalization until Jan. 4, and Austin kept the cancer diagnosis secret until Tuesday.

British prime minister visits Ukraine to give aid and reassurances of West's support against Russia

By SAMYA KULLAB and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak unveiled new military funding for Ukraine on Friday during a visit to Kyiv aimed at reassuring the country that the West is still providing support nearly 23 months after Russia's invasion.

The package, worth 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) over the next fiscal year, is the largest the U.K. has given to Ukraine since the war began, surpassing previous annual commitments by 200 million pounds (\$233 million), the British government said.

"I am here today with one message: The U.K. will ... not falter," Sunak said. "We will stand with Ukraine, in their darkest hours and in the better times to come."

The package will pay for long-range missiles, thousands of drones, air defense, artillery ammunition and maritime security, according to Sunak's office. It comes at a time when other financial aid from the U.S. and Europe is tied up by political wrangling,

"We are not walking away," Sunak said at a news conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Ukrainian officials welcomed the U.K. announcement, pointing to it as evidence that Western support for its fight against its bigger neighbor is not waning, as some have feared.

"This is a signal to the world: Ukraine is not alone," Zelenskyy said.

Sunak and Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement for the next 10 years. It will remain in effect until Ukraine acquires its hoped-for NATO membership, Zelenskyy said. Details of the agreement are to be released later, officials said.

Kyiv has been urging the West to send more of the kind of aid the U.K. is providing as the grinding war brings little change along the front line and both sides turn to long-range strikes.

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Sunak said he made Ukraine his first foreign trip of the year to send a "strong signal" of support, representing "the seriousness of the situation here and our determination to stand with Ukraine" amid competing claims for international attention.

Russian President Vladimir Putin "needs to recognize we're not going anywhere," he said.

"We are here for Ukraine to win," said Sunak, who noted that supporting Kyiv was a way to protect global security. "If Putin wins in Ukraine, he will not stop there."

Sunak's visit came hours after the British and U.S. militaries bombed Yemen, hitting more than a dozen sites used by the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Thursday's strikes were a reminder of another war, which has raged for years in the Arab world's poorest nation. The attack also risked triggering a wider regional conflict over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Those concerns have drawn attention away from Ukraine's struggle — a shift that Zelenskyy is trying to counter through diplomacy.

Sunak first visited Ukraine in November 2022, soon after he became prime minister, and Britain is one of Ukraine's most vocal backers. It is the second-biggest donor of military aid to Ukraine after the U.S., giving a total of 4.6 billion pounds (\$5.8 billion) in 2022 and 2023.

Ukraine and Russia are seeking to replenish their arsenals this year, military analysts say, in anticipation of possible major ground offensives in 2025.

Sunak said the U.K. aid is the biggest single package from any nation for drones, which have become a key battlefield weapon.

The roughly 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line has been largely static during winter, and both Ukraine and Russia need artillery shells, missiles and drones that enable longer-range strikes.

Ukraine says Moscow is receiving artillery shells and missiles from North Korea and drones from Iran. On Jan. 4, the White House cited U.S. intelligence officials as saying that Russia acquired ballistic missiles from North Korea and is seeking them from Iran.

Zelenskyy is pushing Kyiv's Western allies to provide more support on top of the billions of dollars in military aid the country has already received.

He visited Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia this week in search of new pledges. The Baltic countries are among Kyiv's staunchest supporters, and they promised more missiles, drones, howitzers and artillery shells.

Zelenskyy has warned that Ukraine particularly needs air defense systems. Recent Russian barrages — more than 500 drones and missiles were fired between Dec. 29 and Jan. 2, according to officials in Kyiv — are using up Ukraine's resources and leaving it vulnerable.

Sunak said that the U.K. recognizes that Ukrainian security "is our security," as Kyiv's forces stand up to Putin.

"Today we are going further — increasing our military aid, delivering thousands of cutting-edge drones, and signing a historic new security agreement to provide Ukraine with the assurances it needs for the long term," he said.

A plan by the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden to send \$60 billion in new funding to Kyiv is being held up in Congress. Europe's pledge in March to provide 1 million artillery shells within 12 months also has fallen short, with only about 300,000 delivered by the end of last year.

Patriots name Jerod Mayo as next head coach, Bill Belichick's successor

By KYLE HIGHTOWER and ROB MAADDI AP Sports Writers
FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Jerod Mayo spent his entire professional football career learning from Bill Belichick, first as a player and then as an assistant.

He'll now have the weighty task of succeeding the future Hall of Famer and leading a New England Patriots team as its first new voice in more than two decades.

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The Patriots named Mayo to succeed Belichick as the franchise's 15th head coach on Friday. Mayo is the first Black head coach in team history.

He will be formally introduced at a news conference on Wednesday, the team announced.

Mayo played eight NFL seasons and won a Super Bowl ring with the Patriots during the 2014 season. He has been an assistant under Belichick since 2019, serving primarily as the Patriots linebackers coach. He'll become the NFL's youngest head coach at age 37.

Mayo's hire comes a day after Belichick agreed to part ways with the Patriots after a 24-year run that included six Super Bowl wins.

Mayo immediately rose to the top of the list of viable Belichick successors after the Patriots took the unique step of announcing they were giving the assistant a long-term extension last offseason. Mayo, along with Belichick's son and fellow linebackers coach Steve Belichick, handled the play calling duties for the Patriots defense over the past two seasons.

Despite New England's 4-13 record this season, the team's defense has remained highly ranked in several categories despite losing top linebacker Matt Judon and rookie cornerback Christian Gonzalez early to season-ending injuries.

Though it's unclear what the terms of Mayo's deal prior to last season entailed, it came after he interviewed for multiple head coaching jobs in Philadelphia and Carolina each of the past two years.

In announcing the decision to part ways with Belichick on Thursday, Patriots owner Robert Kraft promised to move quickly on trying to fill the hole.

Kraft said that the mandate for the next coach would be a return to the postseason for a Patriots team that has missed the playoffs in three of the past four seasons and hasn't won a playoff game since the 2018 season.

"We're looking for someone who can help us get back to the playoffs and win," Kraft said. "Believe me, after my family, this is really one of the two most important assets in my life. I am very upset when we don't win games. It carries the whole week. So, I promise you I'll be focused to do the best I can do to make sure we're putting ourselves in the best long-term position to win for many years."

During his time in the coaching ranks, Mayo has quickly developed a reputation for being able to relate to players.

Former Patriots safety Devin McCourty played alongside Mayo for six seasons and then under him from 2019-22.

During an appearance on NBC Sports' Pro Football Talk on Friday, McCourty pointed out that one thing that will benefit Mayo is that he also had the opportunity to hone his skills in other places as well, notably the time he spent working in finance at Optum.

"When you hear him talk, he talks not just leadership in football by kind of CEO talk in life leading people," McCourty said.

Patriots linebacker Ja'Whaun Bentley said earlier this month that Mayo already garners lots of respect around the locker room.

"Players love him. I love to play for him. He gets the best out of his players," Bentley said. "At the same time, he understands as far as the culture and everything how to get everybody going."

But Mayo will likely get criticism from some about how much time he's spent inside the Patriot bubble. That's nothing he can't overcome, McCourty said.

"I understand the reservations of people who are like, 'Well, all he is, is a Patriot,'" McCourty said. "But when people get to be around him and talk to him, they'll see the differences in him and Bill and how the organization will be going forward."

One thing Mayo isn't expected to have is the same control over personnel matters like Belichick did for most of his tenure with the Patriots. Along with being coach, Belichick also served as New England's de facto general manager.

But Kraft pointed out on Thursday that Belichick didn't receive that power until after he won his third Super Bowl with the team following the 2004 season and that Belichick "earned it and it worked pretty well for most of the time."

That means a new general manager hire, or some other restructuring of the front office, is likely next on Kraft's plate.

"I think it's good to have checks and balances," Kraft said.

Speaker Johnson insists he's sticking to budget deal but announces no plan to stop partial shutdown

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson insisted Friday he is sticking with the bipartisan spending deal he struck with the other congressional leaders, but offered no clear path for overcoming hard-right opposition within his own party to prevent a partial government shutdown next week.

Johnson emerged from days of testy meetings behind closed doors at the Capitol to read a terse statement. Just months on the job, the new speaker is trying to set the record straight that he will not renege on the budget deal he made earlier this week. But in his first big test as the new leader, he has yet to show how he will quell the revolt from his right flank that ousted his predecessor.

"Our top-line agreement remains," Johnson, R-La., said, referring to the budget accord reached Jan. 7.

"We are getting our next steps together, and we are working toward a robust appropriations process," he said. "So stay tuned for all that."

It's the same intractable political dilemma that led a core group of right-flank Republicans to boot Rep. Kevin McCarthy from the speaker's office last year as they revolted against the deal he struck with the other congressional leaders and that President Joe Biden signed into law.

Lawmakers during the first work week of the new year are furious that, after spending much of 2023 watching hard-right Republicans fight the leaders, they are quickly careening toward another crisis with just a week to go before the Jan. 19 deadline to fund parts of the government or risk a shutdown yet again.

As some Republicans from the Freedom Caucus again raise the threat of a motion to oust the speaker over the deal, other Republicans are furious they are starting 2024 with the same problems of governing.

In the morning before Johnson made his statement, he met with about two dozen House Republicans, more of them centrist-leaning voices, urging him not to go back on his word and stick with the deal.

The centrists assured Johnson they have his back.

"I just can't imagine the House wants to relive the madness," said Rep. French Hill, R-Ark., who had helped McCarthy negotiate the initial agreement with Biden and the other leaders.

"We're here to bolster him up," said Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb.

"This concept of trying to break a deal that was negotiated, it's a foreign concept," said Republican Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart, R-Fla. "What you would be asking is for the speaker to basically break his word and lie. That's just something you can't ask him to do."

Since Congress resumed from the holiday break, Johnson has been holed up in his office at the Capitol receiving a steady stream of Republican lawmakers trying to force his hand.

Just two days into the workweek, the House hit a crisis Wednesday when hard-right Republicans forced the chamber to a standstill. They voted against a routine procedural rules package as a way to demand the speaker's attention.

On the House floor, Johnson has been seen several times surrounded by Freedom Caucus Chairman Bob Good, R-Va., Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, and others, some in animated finger-pointed discussions with him.

They are pressing Johnson to refuse the deal, with its \$1.66 trillion in spending for the year, and to instead consider a temporary measure that would keep the government open but force 1% across-the-board cuts that are required to kick in if the broader package falls apart.

The hard-right flank is also insisting that new immigration policies be included, which they say would stop the record flow of migrants at the U.S-Mexico border.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., said in floor remarks that Republicans should "shut the government down until you shut the border down."

But by Friday it was more centrist lawmakers making their way to Johnson's office, many of them who

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serve on the appropriations panels writing the spending bills, urging him to hold firm to the deal he struck. Some have suggested that Johnson should consider trying to pass a temporary measure that would fund the government for several more weeks, into March.

Biden signed the spending framework into law as part of a deal he struck last spring with McCarthy. It was agreed to by the other congressional leaders from both parties and approved by the House and Senate as part of an effort to raise the nation's debt limit to avert a federal default.

In the time since, congressional leaders have been working to devise the top-line spending numbers. McCarthy could never deliver on the final numbers before he was ousted after reaching across the aisle to pass a temporary measure in September and prevent a shutdown at that time.

Johnson and the other leaders Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate picked up where they left off and reached a top-line deal at the start of the year that the speaker is now trying to have approved.

NFL All-Pro: McCaffrey, Hill, Warner unanimous; 14 first-timers

By ROB MAADDI AP Sports Writer

Christian McCaffrey, Tyreek Hill and Fred Warner are unanimous choices for The Associated Press 2023 NFL All-Pro Team.

The 49ers' McCaffrey and Warner and the Dolphins' Hill received first-team votes from all 50 members of a nationwide panel of media members who regularly cover the league.

"No freakin' way," Warner said of being a unanimous pick for his third selection overall. "Wow, that's special."

Running back McCaffrey and linebacker Warner are joined by three San Francisco teammates: left tackle Trent Williams, fullback Kyle Juszczyk and tight end George Kittle.

Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson earned his second All-Pro selection, receiving 45 first-place votes. Dallas' Dak Prescott and San Francisco's Brock Purdy each received two first-place votes and Buffalo's Josh Allen got the other one.

Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald becomes an eight-time pick, tied for most by a defensive player and tied for fifth-most overall. Cowboys right guard Zack Martin is a seven-time choice and Eagles center Jason Kelce earned his sixth selection.

Fourteen players are first-timers, including three from NFC East champion Dallas: wide receiver CeeDee Lamb, who missed being a unanimous choice by one vote; cornerback DaRon Bland and kicker Brandon Aubrey.

"It's very rewarding," said Lamb, who led the NFL with 135 receptions and had 1,749 yards receiving to go with 12 touchdowns. "Obviously, all the hard work has paid off. It's humbling also."

Tampa Bay safety Antoine Winfield Jr., Detroit wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown and New York Jets linebacker Quincy Williams — each snubbed for the Pro Bowl — made the All-Pro team.

"That's the highest of them all so it's an honor but I got to keep working," said St. Brown, who helped the Lions win their first division title in 30 years.

Winfield had six forced fumbles, six sacks, four fumble recoveries and three interceptions this season, becoming just the fourth player with at least five sacks and seven takeaways since sacks became a stat in 1982. He edged Atlanta's Jessie Bates by two points.

"Coming into the season, it was one of my goals," said Winfield, who forced a game-changing turnover in the Buccaneers' division-clinching victory last week. "I put the work in and it's just cool to see how everything played out. I'm blessed."

Williams' younger brother and teammate, defensive tackle Quinnen Williams, was an All-Pro last season.

"That's a big accomplishment," Quincy Williams said. "Grateful for the work I put in. This is amazing."

Hill made it for the fifth time, fourth as a wideout, after leading the league with 1,799 yards receiving. Pittsburgh edge T.J. Watt, who led the NFL with 19 sacks, earned his fourth selection, and Cleveland edge Myles Garrett got his third.

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McCaffrey made it for a second time following an outstanding all-around season. He ran for 1,459 yards and 14 TDs and caught 67 passes for 567 yards and seven scores. Kittle also got his second selection as the 49ers earned the NFC's No. 1 seed.

"If you would've told my 6-year-old self that I was going to have that opportunity at some point, I'd be incredibly happy," Kittle said. "My goal every single year is to be great at every aspect of being tight end because I think it's the most fun position."

Jackson also was an All-Pro in 2019 when he was the NFL MVP. He helped the Ravens (13-4) finish with the best record in the league this year and the AFC's No. 1 seed while playing his best in the biggest games against the best teams. The Ravens had 10 wins against teams with a winning record. Jackson finished with 3,678 yards passing and 24 TDs and also ran for 821 yards and five scores.

Lions right tackle Penei Sewell, Chiefs slot cornerback Trent McDuffie and left guard Joe Thuney and Ravens safety Kyle Hamilton are among the first-timers.

Four of the six special-teams players are first-timers, too. They are: Aubrey, Steelers special teamer Miles Killebrew, Saints punt returner Rashid Shaheed and Jaguars long snapper Ross Maticcik. Packers kick returner Keisean Nixon and Raiders punter AJ Cole got their second nods.

Chiefs interior lineman Chris Jones, Ravens linebacker Roquan Smith and Jets cornerback Sauce Gardner earned their second straight selection.

This was the second year for the AP's new voting system. Voters chose a first team and a second team. First-team votes are worth 3 points, second-team votes are worth 1.

Are divorce albums breaking new ground? Miley Cyrus, Kelly Clarkson, Kelsea Ballerini make the case

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When the 2024 Grammy nominations were announced, one thing was immediately apparent: Women outpaced men in the major categories.

The leading artists — superstars like SZA, Taylor Swift, and Olivia Rodrigo — reflect an incredible diversity of skill with acclaimed albums that mine all corners of the human experience.

One such corner: divorce.

An influx of new releases from Kelly Clarkson, Miley Cyrus and Kelsea Ballerini reimagine the divorce album in all its complexity. While the music industry has long been youth-obsessed, there may be something to the fact that these musicians are all women in their 30s and 40s and consequently possess a kind of self-assuredness and rich, emotional maturity. In a culture where relatability is currency, relationship stories with the weight and wisdom of age register as fresh. If all popstars are teenaged, where does that leave the rest of us? Perhaps the depth of a breakup ballad is felt more acutely when a public split plays out in tabloid headlines — and there's a lot more to lose.

Cyrus' malleable pop "Flowers," one of AP's picks for best songs of 2023, is a pep talk-turned-empowerment banger — the sound of a woman learning about herself again after a decadelong relationship ended in divorce. She's raked in five nominations, including album of the year for "Endless Summer Vacation."

Then there's Clarkson's "Chemistry" — a big-belter release she's described as a "relationship album" that's up for best pop vocal album.

And in the world of country, which has a long tradition of women performing songs about divorce and domesticity, Ballerini's "Rolling Up the Welcome Mat" is up for the genre's best album.

These records vary greatly but share a similar emotional core: They were written while grappling with marriages falling apart.

In 2020, Cyrus split from actor Liam Hemsworth and Kelly Clarkson ended her marriage to Brandon Blackstock. Two years later, Ballerini and her husband Morgan Evans divorced.

Musically, those endings opened up new realities. Clarkson pursued courageous ballads that stretched her elastic vocal range, Ballerini experimented with pop production and Cyrus wielded her weather-worn voice like a weapon. Their albums came out of painful periods in which each performer was redefining herself.

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Ballerini is part of a long lineage of women in country making music about divorce and heartbreak — running the gamut in tone from vengeful to celebratory. Marissa R. Moss, author of “Her Country: How the Women of Country Music Became the Success They Were Never Supposed to Be,” points to Loretta Lynn’s groundbreaking 1973 hit “Rated X” as setting the precedent for future musicians.

What’s interesting, now, is the modern ways in which divorce is articulated on these records.

Ballerini’s album — particularly the song “Penthouse” — challenges stereotypical domestic roles and “demonstrates financial power,” Moss said.

“I bought the house with the fence, enough room for some kids,” Ballerini sings. Later, her home becomes claustrophobic, an allegory for her marriage: “And I thought that would make it all better, and maybe forever wouldn’t feel like the walls closing in.”

The record gets at the idea that even when women attain financial autonomy and remake traditional marriages roles, they’re still not necessarily able to find freedom within its confines.

“I don’t think a quote-unquote divorce album is the first time that I have felt like it’s different being a woman in country music, that’s for sure,” Ballerini told The Associated Press, about gender expectations in the genre.

Men, too, have long written about marriages ended, but in the current moment, women lead the charge. Other artists writing in and around divorce include Adele, Kacey Musgraves, and Carly Pearce, another 2024 Grammy nominee.

Ballerini, for her part, understands why people relate deeply to the songs on her album that deal with divorce.

“It’s something that was taboo to talk about, especially from a woman’s perspective, for a really long time,” she said. It goes “back to like giving a voice to myself and validating my own feelings and my own life and my own journey and hoping that other women feel that too and feel validated.”

People often expect divorce records to contain exclusively sad songs. While Ballerini, Clarkson and Cyrus exorcise grief on their albums, they express gratitude as well. These records are sad and empowering, often both at once.

“The feeling people seem to have is that sad music is expressing their own sadness, not the sadness of the artist — but you feel like the artist is trying to express your sadness,” Joshua Knobe, a Yale professor and researcher, said. He led a team of academics whose 2023 study found that listeners are drawn to melancholic music for similar reasons as they’re compelled by sad conversations — because they are seeking connection.

Or, as Ballerini said, listeners want to feel validated.

“People like success. They like talking with people who succeed,” Knobe continued. “But that’s not the thing that makes people feel a profound connection to another human being.”

If negative emotions register as more complex than positive ones, perhaps that makes for more opportunities to connect. Divorce records often traverse a spectrum of feelings, with Cyrus, Ballerini and Clarkson’s songs allowing the listener to experience the full breadth of the artists’ love and pain. That is no doubt noteworthy.

Or perhaps award-worthy.

Why does Iowa launch the presidential campaign?

By WILL WEISSERT and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

Iowa assumed its position as the state that votes first for a presidential nominee more than 50 years ago. But its 1972 caucuses didn’t feel very historic.

Two folding tables at state Democratic Party headquarters were enough to accommodate all staff and media present. No TV cameras rolled. Results from around the state trickled in on two phone lines because the party didn’t want to pay for a third. Just one person, a then-25-year-old anti-Vietnam War activist who helped engineer the Iowa caucuses, did the counting.

“I did borrow a memory calculator to speed up the process,” recalled Richard Bender, now 78, with a

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laugh. "That was state of the art."

"We did not have any clue how big this was going to get," he said.

So big that the Iowa caucuses became an entrenched part of U.S. politics and launched some unexpected candidates toward the White House. In 1976, Iowa propelled former Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter, the little-known one-time peanut farmer. In 2008, the state gave Illinois Sen. Barack Obama his first win over Hillary Clinton, one of the most storied names in Democratic politics.

But when Iowa's Republican caucuses start the 2024 election process on Monday, the way voters begin choosing the two major parties' nominees will look different.

The order in which states vote has changed. So have some of the rules.

It's a sign of our tumultuous politics, and also how the two front-runners — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump — have moved party levers to give themselves an advantage, at times sowing chaos and confusion.

HOW DID IOWA BECOME FIRST TO VOTE?

The way that presidential nominees are selected has changed significantly over the years — and hasn't always involved the will of the voters.

For decades during the 1900s the process was dominated by state and local party bosses, giving rise to the notion of the "smoke-filled room," where top leaders were said to huddle secretly to determine their presidential candidate.

That legend began with the Republican convention of 1920, when party leaders met secretly in a three-room suite at the still-operating Blackstone Hotel in Chicago and Warren G. Harding emerged as the party's surprise presidential nominee.

The party machine model continued until the bloody 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, when police clashed with street protesters including students opposing the Vietnam War. Democrats later said the chaotic scenes contributed to Republican Richard Nixon's subsequent victory. As a result, the Democrats created a commission seeking to empower women, minority voters and young people in selecting their presidential nominee.

The post-1968 Democratic reforms had a lasting effect on Iowa. New party rules required more time to pass between the state party's four tiers of conventions, which ranged from local to statewide. That forced Iowa's Democratic leaders to start the process earlier in the calendar.

When it became clear Iowa's caucuses could move ahead of New Hampshire — where the primary had kicked off presidential voting for decades — officials jumped at the chance.

"We finagled a little bit," Bender recalled.

In January of 1972, the corn-producing state tucked within America's heartland hosted the Democratic Party's opening presidential contest for the first time. Republicans followed four years later.

HOW ARE NOMINEES CHOSEN NOW?

Voters today weigh in on who should be the major parties' general election candidates through a series of contests held over the first half of the year.

Candidates accumulate delegates — those people who will formally select the nominee at the parties' national conventions this summer — based on state-level performance, using complex rules that vary by party and place. Officially, neither party will have a nominee until a candidate wins the number of delegates needed at the convention to clinch the nomination.

Besides the delegate race, how a candidate performs early on is critical to gaining campaign momentum and media attention. That's why the order in which states vote matters so greatly.

It's also why candidates for years have spent so much time in Iowa, from stopping at the state fair to chat up voters while working the storied pork chop grill to talking policy at swanky GOP dinners or tiny town halls deep in corn country.

"Primary voters in later states pay attention to what happened in early states and they react to what they learn," said David Redlawsk, a University of Delaware professor and co-author of a book about the Iowa caucuses.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT FOR 2024?

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This year, Iowa will again hold the first Republican contest. But Biden directed the Democratic National Committee to shake up the party's primary calendar to start in South Carolina, which used to follow Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada.

South Carolina, where the the population is 26% Black, has a primary electorate that's much more representative of the Democratic Party's diverse coalition than Iowa and New Hampshire, two of the whitest states in the nation. The state also is safer political terrain for Biden, who struggled badly in Iowa and New Hampshire in 2020 before a victory in South Carolina resurrected his campaign.

The DNC also voted to put Nevada on the same day as New Hampshire, followed by Georgia and Michigan — other more diverse states — next after South Carolina, which votes Feb 3. But Georgia Republicans refused to move their state's primary date and New Hampshire opted to push ahead with its primary on Jan. 23 anyway. Biden won't be on the ballot, but could still win as a write-in candidate.

Iowa Democrats also opted to go ahead with voting on Monday, the same day as Republicans. But they'll do so by mail and say results won't be publicly announced until March, so they comply with party rules letting the other states go earlier.

Biden, 81, is expected to win the Democratic nomination. The president faces token opposition from Minnesota Democratic Rep. Dean Phillips and progressive author Marianne Williamson.

Meanwhile, Republicans have continued to open with Iowa.

Trump, 77, is the party's overwhelming favorite, though he faces several significant GOP challengers, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, 45, and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, 51. He also has been indicted multiple times, and a trial for one criminal case could begin in the middle of the primary campaign.

While their campaign strategies have varied, the GOP candidates know one of the keys to winning over Iowa voters is spending time in person courting them and embracing some of the state's political traditions.

DeSantis completed an Iowa campaign milestone by visiting all of its 99 counties. Haley greeted voters at the Iowa State Fair. Trump tossed autographed footballs into the crowd at a fraternity house ahead of a college football game.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NEXT?

But winning — or losing — in Iowa isn't everything. In the earliest contests, candidates are really playing an expectations game.

In the 1976 caucuses, Carter finished second to those who chose not to commit to any candidate — but it was far better than expected and served to lift his campaign. In 1992, Bill Clinton finished fourth in Iowa but notched a stronger-than-expected second-place New Hampshire finish, declaring himself the "Comeback Kid."

Trump lost Iowa in 2016 to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, but then dominated in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada.

This year, GOP voters will gather in local schools or other community sites for hours to be part of caucuses, which are party-run events conducted by local officials and volunteers.

Voting is open only to registered Republicans. Those who show up — typically a fraction of the state's eligible voters — hear from representatives of the campaigns before making their selections.

Trump is hoping for a commanding win so he looks unstoppable going forward. If he's successful, Iowa can claim to once again hold a central role in U.S. politics, and in how the nation chooses a president.

Worried about losing in 2024, Iowa's Republican voters are less interested in talking about abortion

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A man in Iowa stood up at a recent town hall and told Ron DeSantis he had an “easy” question: How would the Florida governor address abortion when it’s sure to be a big issue in the coming 2024 presidential election?

DeSantis said he’d talk about it “the same way I did in Florida. I just articulated kind of, you know, where we were, what we do.”

He continued for nearly four minutes without using the word “abortion.” He instead criticized his rival Donald Trump for failing to appear in debates and Nikki Haley for her campaign trail gaffes.

Abortion has largely been absent as an issue in the lead-up to this year’s Iowa Republican caucuses, a remarkable change in a state that has long backed religious conservatives vowing to restrict the procedure. Part of the change is because Republicans achieved a generational goal when the Supreme Court overturned a federally guaranteed right to abortion. But it also underscores a pervasive fear among Republican candidates and voters alike that vocalizing their desire to further restrict abortion rights in 2024 has become politically dangerous.

Democrats outperformed expectations in the 2022 midterms and several state races last year campaigning on the issue. And President Joe Biden’s reelection campaign plans to make abortion rights central to its strategy this year.

“At this stage, if we’re going to continually lose elections because of that issue, I’d say dump the whole damn thing and let God be the judge,” said Greg Jennings, a 68-year-old retired painting contractor from Clear Lake, Iowa, who was attending a rally for Trump.

In interviews with more than two dozen GOP voters around the state in the past week, almost none cited abortion as one of their top issues this election year, instead pointing to concerns about the border, the economy or America’s standing in the world. That’s not to say there aren’t strong exceptions among some evangelical voters who represent a core segment of the Republican base.

Brian Downes, a Winterset, Iowa, resident, said abortion is a “huge” issue for him. He said he would only change his plans to caucus for Trump next Monday if the former president reversed course and embraced the pro-choice movement.

Downes urged his party not to ignore their opposition to abortion rights.

“Pro-life presidents have won going, let’s say, going back to Ronald Reagan. Always pro-life. The Bushes, pro-life. Trump, pro-life,” he said. “They won. That didn’t cancel any of them. So that’s just an old story that just won’t die.”

But Downes appears to be in the minority.

Cindy Leonhart, a 68-year-old wearing a DeSantis button on her shirt after she heard the governor speak last Friday, said she doesn’t believe that abortion should be legal but said: “It’s not a decisive issue for me.”

Earlier in the Iowa campaign, DeSantis and some others in the primary criticized Trump for refusing to endorse a national abortion ban. Trump has at times highlighted his role as president in appointing the Supreme Court justices who helped overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But he’s also argued Republicans shouldn’t lock themselves into positions that are unpopular with a majority of the public and argued that the Supreme Court gave abortion opponents the right to “negotiate” restrictions where they live.

DeSantis and other GOP hopefuls now increasingly speak of a need for “compassion” for women. Asked about a six-week ban he signed in Florida, DeSantis this week on Fox News defended the law as protecting life and that it was “compassionate to be able to respect that and to be able to protect that going forward.”

Haley, the former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor, has repeatedly said that she would sign any national abortion restrictions passed by Congress if elected president, but that Republicans are unlikely to have enough seats or supportive members in their ranks to pass them.

“The fellas just don’t know how to talk about it. Instead of demonizing this issue, you have to humanize this issue,” she said in a separate Fox News event this week. Haley is the only woman in the Republican

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primary field.

Trump, in a Fox News town hall of his own Wednesday night, took credit for having "terminated" Roe and told a woman who opposed abortion and asked about the issue that he "loved" where she was coming from but "we still have to win elections."

He blamed DeSantis' ban at six weeks for the governor's stagnant poll numbers and said, "If you talk five or six weeks, a lot of women don't know that they're pregnant in five or six weeks. I want to get something where people are happy."

Angela Roemer, who attended a Haley event last week, described herself as pro-life but said she doesn't like how ugly the politics of abortion have become.

"It used to be an issue for me," said the 56-year-old from Solon, Iowa. "I guess it's not a real hot-button issue today."

"Women in general are getting smarter about birth control and about how everything works," she said.

At a campaign rally in Newton on Saturday, Trump didn't dive into the issue on stage, but his campaign handed out fliers that touted his appointments to the court and spotlighted a 2020 quote from his former Vice President Mike Pence, calling him "the most pro-life president in history." Pence, whom Trump has repeatedly attacked for refusing to try to overturn his former boss' 2020 election loss, dropped out of the primary last year after criticizing Trump for not endorsing a national abortion ban.

Steve Scheffler, the Iowa GOP's Republican National Committeeman and president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, said that if the Supreme Court hadn't overturned Roe, the issue would probably be more pressing in this presidential race.

But Scheffler said Iowa voters may feel that with the court's ruling and a law signed by GOP Gov. Kim Reynolds last year banning abortion after six weeks, the state's Republicans may feel they've "kind of addressed that."

"It's an issue that's very important to these evangelical voters but because that's where we're at here in Iowa, I suppose maybe there's other issues that are really important right now," Scheffler said.

Dan Corbin of Cedar Falls, the voter who put DeSantis on the spot at his town hall, said afterward that whether Republicans want to talk about it or not, Democrats have made it clear they will press the issue in 2024.

Corbin, who plans to caucus for Haley, said he likes the way she speaks about the issue and that Republicans overall "need to have a strategic approach" and not "demonize women that are having to make that decision."

"I don't believe in abortion in any way, shape or form," he said, "But I think it's going to make the Republicans less attractive."

Today in History: January 13

Trump becomes first president to be impeached twice

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Jan. 13, the 13th day of 2024. There are 353 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 13, 2021, President Donald Trump was impeached by the U.S. House over the violent Jan. 6 siege of the Capitol, becoming the only president to be twice impeached; ten Republicans joined Democrats in voting to impeach Trump on a charge of "incitement of insurrection." (Trump would again be acquitted by the Senate in a vote after his term was over.)

On this date:

In 1733, James Oglethorpe and some 120 English colonists arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, while en route to settle in present-day Georgia.

In 1794, President George Washington approved a measure adding two stars and two stripes to the American flag, following the admission of Vermont and Kentucky to the Union. (The number of stripes

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was later reduced to the original 13.)

In 1898, Emile Zola's famous defense of French military officer Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, "J'accuse," (zhah-KOOZ'), was published in Paris.

In 1941, a new law went into effect granting Puerto Ricans U.S. birthright citizenship.

In 1964, Roman Catholic Bishop Karol Wojtyla (voy-TEE'-wah) (the future Pope John Paul II) was appointed Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, by Pope Paul VI.

In 1982, an Air Florida 737 crashed into Washington, D.C.'s 14th Street Bridge and fell into the Potomac River while trying to take off during a snowstorm, killing a total of 78 people, including four motorists on the bridge; four passengers and a flight attendant survived.

In 1987, West German police arrested Mohammed Ali Hamadi, a suspect in the 1985 hijacking of a TWA jetliner and the killing of a U.S. Navy diver who was on board. (Although convicted and sentenced to life, Hamadi was paroled by Germany in December 2005 and returned home to Lebanon.)

In 1990, L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the nation's first elected Black governor as he took the oath of office in Richmond.

In 1992, Japan apologized for forcing tens of thousands of Korean women to serve as sex slaves for its soldiers during World War II, citing newly uncovered documents that showed the Japanese army had had a role in abducting the so-called "comfort women."

In 2000, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates stepped aside as chief executive and promoted company president Steve Ballmer to the position.

In 2001, an earthquake estimated by the U.S. Geological Survey at magnitude 7.7 struck El Salvador; more than 840 people were killed.

In 2011, a funeral was held in Tucson, Arizona, for 9-year-old Christina Taylor Green, the youngest victim of a mass shooting that claimed five other lives and critically wounded Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

In 2013, a Cairo appeals court overturned Hosni Mubarak's life sentence and ordered a retrial of the former Egyptian president for failing to prevent the killing of hundreds of protesters during the 2011 uprising that toppled his regime. (Mubarak was later ordered released.)

In 2018, a false alarm that warned of a ballistic missile headed for Hawaii sent the islands into a panic, with people abandoning cars on a highway and preparing to flee their homes; officials apologized and said the alert was sent when someone hit the wrong button during a shift change.

In 2020, at a royal family summit in eastern England, Queen Elizabeth II brokered a deal to secure the future of the monarchy; it would allow Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, to live part-time in Canada.

In 2022, the Supreme Court found that the Biden administration had overstepped its authority by requiring that employees at large businesses get a COVID-19 vaccine or test regularly and wear a mask on the job; the court allowed the administration to proceed with a vaccine mandate for most health care workers.

Today's birthdays: TV personality Nick Clooney is 90. Comedian Charlie Brill is 86. Actor Billy Gray is 86. Rock musician Trevor Rabin is 70. Rock musician James Lomenzo (Megadeth) is 65. Actor Kevin Anderson is 64. Actor Julia Louis-Dreyfus is 63. Rock singer ru(Madness) is 63. Country singer Trace Adkins is 62. Actor Penelope Ann Miller is 60. Actor Patrick Dempsey is 58. Actor Suzanne Cryer is 57. Actor Traci Bingham is 56. Actor Keith Coogan is 54. TV producer-writer Shonda Rhimes is 54. Actor Nicole Eggert is 52. Actor Ross McCall is 48. Actor Michael Pena is 48. Actor Orlando Bloom is 47. Meteorologist Ginger Zee (TV: "Good Morning America") is 43. Actor Ruth Wilson is 42. Actor Julian Morris is 41. Actor Beau Mirchoff is 35. Actor Liam Hemsworth is 34. NHL center Connor McDavid is 27.